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The Critical Tradition at Rhodes University: Retrospect and Prospect

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Introduction

Steven Bantu Biko came to Rhodes University in 1967 as a University of Natal (Black Section) delegate at a NUSAS (National Union for South African Students) congress held in Grahamstown. He discovered that apartheid was alive and well at Rhodes. In observing a segregationist ruling, the university had prohibited accommodation for blacks on campus. Biko, together with other student delegates from Wentworth (Natal), put forward a motion to adjourn the conference and simultaneously invited his fellow white delegates to join him at a non-racial venue in the nearby townships of Grahamstown. The motion was defeated. It was a critical moment in the history of student and black struggles in South Africa. There were two major consequences of this decision by the white-dominated student body. Firstly, it exposed the very severe limits or even irrelevance of liberalism in the face of the racist repression of apartheid; and secondly, it set in motion a trajectory of independent black-led struggles which were vital to the eventual demise of apartheid in 1994. Biko left NUSAS and two years later launched the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) at the University of the North (Turfloop). SASO was one of the key organisations in the Black Consciousness movement which spread across the country leading directly to the Soweto uprising and the national revolt of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Ten years after the NUSAS congress at Rhodes University, Biko was arrested and detained in Grahamstown. Ten days later he was dead. Grahamstown and Rhodes University are central to the unfolding understanding of the linkages between universities and apartheid. This special issue of the *African Sociological Review* is devoted to one of the untold stories of South Africa's dark past – the role of its universities. It is based on the papers delivered at the Critical Tradition Colloquium held at Rhodes University in August 2004 to celebrate its centenary year. The Rhodes Centenary opened up space for many considerations of the institution's life and its times. Most of this

was celebratory but the corner of the Centenary reported in these pages, looks back to the university's experience during the apartheid years and beyond. Although not a sombre occasion, the gathering of Rhodes alumni as well as former and present staff and students was contemplative and focused on the difficulties faced by those who were opposed to apartheid and who, importantly, took a stand on the issue.

The Colloquium was devoted to the Critical Tradition at Rhodes University which we defined very broadly to encompass diverse voices in a conversation about the past, present and future of the university. Our objective in organsing the Colloquium was threefold: Firstly, we hoped to provide a platform for critical engagement on the history of Rhodes University, how it was experienced by critical scholars and students, how they were shaped by this history and how that history continues to inform current choices and policies.

Secondly, we wanted to celebrate a broad tradition which seeks to uncover hidden assumptions and is prepared to question various claims to authority. Rhodes has produced a rich repository of critical thinkers and we were concerned with ensuring that the contribution of this tradition to the university should be acknowledged as an integral part of the many reasons that the university had to celebrate.

Our third objective concerned the future. We were keen to provide the intellectual space for a critical discussion to feed into the way forward for Rhodes University in order to contribute to its varied and unfolding identity. We were convinced that bringing together so many critical voices would lead to an important debate about the future journey of the university. In as much as the university shaped many of its alumni, they, in turn, have had an enduring influence on the university. The Colloquium provided the intellectual space designed to harness that influence.

Universities and Politics: Apartheid and Beyond

Some hidden places have still to give up their accounts of what happened during and before apartheid. The ongoing fracas over apartheid's military archives is such an instance; some places, we can be sure, will never reveal their pasts except, perhaps, in the novels that remain to be written. One place where stories have still to be told and which will not wait for the novels are South Africa's universities. Recalling the past is often difficult, but not unusual, within the academy. After the Berlin Wall collapsed, for instance, a slow, but steady, flow of stories on the complicity of academe in the development of the Cold War and the perfection of both its ideology and weapons that sustained it began to flow from America's universities. This confirmed the increasingly important conceptual recognition that there is a link between organised forms of knowledge and political power.

How are we to know what happened in (and to) South Africa's universities under apartheid? How are South Africa's universities currently positioned in

the telling their tales? What is likely to happen to South Africa's universities as they tell these stories? How do these stories find their way into currents and practices in South Africa's universities today? And will they help to shape the future? Finding the answers to these questions will understandably not be easy.

A modest beginning was be made at Rhodes University, in August 2004. A two-day colloquium, structured around the themes of student and staff experiences at Rhodes, and in Grahamstown, over six decades – from the 1950's to the present – opened a window on the institution's past. But it also allowed the university to reflect on what happened, and when, and why, and what lies ahead.

The Colloquium considered some of the seminal events and episodes in the university's past and helped to reveal how the actions of both students and staff changed the university and the society. It also opened a window on how they, in turn, were influenced, in varying contexts, by the university and the apartheid system within which Rhodes and other South African universities operated.

The purpose was not to open up old wounds. Certainly many who attended Rhodes (and other South African universities) over the apartheid years were wounded – but the idea rather was to look honestly at university and society during apartheid and beyond. The intention was not to point fingers at the institution or at individuals who may, or may not, have driven an agenda that was pro-apartheid, or for colonialism, or supportive of both minority rule and white privilege. While collusion with apartheid was certainly revealed in many of the papers at the Colloquium, what we need to understand is the manner in which South Africa's dark moments predisposed students and staff to various forms of action, political and other.

Higher education plays an inordinately important role in the experience and so in the lives of both individuals and communities. Yet this is not properly understood in South Africa. Many Rhodes graduates, broadly defined as critical, were crucially shaped by what happened at the university. The Colloquium offered an opportunity to explore how exactly were they shaped, what agency emerged as a result of their being at Rhodes, and how were they constrained by the many limitations of apartheid. How did different students and staff respond to these constraints and in what kinds ways did they contribute to change at the university and beyond?

As we have said, our interest in organising the gathering concerned the future, too. What do these critical thinkers make of their own, the university's, and indeed the country's future? Indeed, what does it means to be critical – in the past and today? Can officialdom – university or other – genuinely embrace critique and survive? Does critique always have to be external to the inner workings of an institution in dark times? Does this help it survive? And what does 'critical' mean for individuals in the new South Africa? An astonishing feature of the new South Africa is how critical activists and individuals have become compliant, even complicit, citizens. Can we understand why this is so?

And does a university, like Rhodes, have a professional responsibility to train critical minds? Can critique help us resolve South Africa's many contradictions, now and in the future? And what does this mean for a university in a democracy?

There are many questions, to be sure. But asking questions is in the best tradition of serious scholarship, especially the critical kind. And answering these questions will provide some insight into the effect that apartheid had on the institutional life of the country. In an age when the easy answer is all too easily preferred to the long haul offered by reading, thinking and writing, two days and two nights in Grahamstown are certainly not enough, but they may well be an important beginning for Rhodes and for other South African universities.

Colonialism, and other forms of racial discrimination upon which the apartheid doctrine came to be built, plainly influenced the life of Rhodes University notwithstanding that St Andrew's College, out of which the university was born, 'was founded to train priests drawn from local communities, both black and white'.[1] Of course, apartheid's ending did not erase economic inequality and social injustice and, importantly for an educational institution, the academic preparedness of students for university. Rhodes University, like every other South African institution, experiences this legacy every single day. The heritage of race-based inequality presents South Africa's universities with, arguably, their biggest challenge: each of them is touched by its overarching embrace.

The experiences reflected in these pages were not confined to Rhodes University. Every university in South Africa was deeply influenced by apartheid. But perhaps we can claim that Rhodes was the first university in South Africa to face up to its past. Confronting the past, as all South Africans have come to know, is not easy. The country's universities did not use the canopy offered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to talk to and of their pasts. Indeed, the flourishing of Broad Transformation Forums (BTF) at almost every South African university in the final years of minority rule might be seen as a way of escaping the formalities of the truth-for-amnesty pact that underpinned the country's political settlement. This unwillingness, even inability, to face up to the apartheid past was also reflected in individual academic disciplines: no account was given, for example, of the complicity of Strategic and Security Studies in South Africa's destabilisation of the southern African region. There are countless other examples. So the issue of how to make known the past and, as importantly, how to position this past with regard to the complexity of academic and intellectual life and institutional history, has been largely unexplored. It is almost as if there has been a total amnesia about these crucial periods in our history. This Colloquium was intended to jar the memories of the past by those who had experienced, in many different ways, the repression of apartheid, in order to expose and to understand.

Rhodes University: Imperial past, African future

In opting for a Colloquium, our hope was to draw individual experiences closer to understandings of dissonant voices in academic institutions during times of repression and great political turmoil. In this endeavour, the format chosen by the organisers was largely successful. Participants were frank and forthright in their criticism of the university, their immediate peers, their teachers and the administration. It was of course not possible to reach back a full century, but some of those in attendance were associated with Rhodes University for almost fifty years. Where intimacy and memory failed, accounts of more distant times at Rhodes relied on the archives and other historical accounts. From these we learnt that, from very beginning, and notwithstanding the highest and most noble ideals of those who founded the institution, the university was caught in a web woven by the politics of those and successive, times. At this core, was the perennial South African issue – race discrimination. The lonely stand by G.F. Dingemans – one of the university's four founding professors – in his efforts to admit an Indian student to Rhodes in 1933, reported by Paul Maylam in his paper, is an example of how the meta-narrative of both politics and society determined policies and procedures within Rhodes University. A number of times in his piece, Maylam returns to Rhodes University's unhappy entanglement with the issue of race.

Paul Maylam offers an historical gaze. He mentions three episodes in the university's past which reveal a pattern of ready compliance with the racist dictates of apartheid. Firstly, Rhodes awarded State President C.R. Swart, a noted segregationist, an honorary doctorate. Secondly, the university denied Steve Biko a place to stay overnight – which we have already mentioned – and thirdly there was the so-called Basil Moore affair. For Maylam, these episodes characterise a relationship of collusion with, rather than opposition to, apartheid.

From Maylam's historical gaze, we turned to a fresh eye, an African eye, and a decidedly post-apartheid gaze. Jìmi Adésina, Nigerian-born, Rhodes Professor of Sociology, offers a clear and accessible account of the challenges that face Rhodes, and other South Africa universities, in their quest to affirm 'their African identities'. Issues of symbol and substance are drawn together and the complexity of the search for a new identity – free of the European-gaze – that Rhodes University faces in its second century. While Rhodes University's vision and mission statement mentions very clearly that it 'proudly affirms' its African identity, there has been very little debate about what that actually means in practice. This is a pressing problem especially in the context of a university, which according to Maylam, was established to bolster the British Imperial connection. Adesina's contribution goes a long way towards opening up the debate about the meaning of an African identity.

Academic Freedom

Strictly speaking, the two papers that follow Maylam's history and Adesina's vision stand outside of a collection that is preoccupied with the Rhodes experience. A word of explanation is therefore in order. For many years Rhodes University has organised an Annual Academic Freedom Lecture. Named after a former professor of Philosophy, the Annual D.C.S. Oosthuizen Lecture has reaffirmed the university's commitment to the principles of Academic Freedom which were entirely corroded as much by racist legislation and practice as by university complicity in apartheid. Because of the Centenary year, the format of the Oosthuizen Lecture was changed somewhat. Instead of a single lecture, a panel of philosophers was invited to a symposium to look at the topic of academic freedom and the place of a university in society through the prism offered by Daantjie Oosthuizen's life and his legacy. This took place on the eve of the Critical Tradition Colloquium.

The papers from that symposium included here are by André du Toit, Emeritus Professor of Politics from the University of Cape Town (UCT) and an important scholar in the teaching of that discipline in South Africa, and Dr Andrew Nash, a graduate of Stellenbosch and UCT. Like du Toit, Nash is an inspiring figure in South African intellectual circles even though, at present, he works as a publisher for Monthly Review Press in New York City.

In du Toit's critical account of the history of the search for Academic Freedom in South Africa, Rhodes University stands outside the tradition of South Africa's Liberal universities. This point is confirmed by Paul Maylam's reading of the institution's history. Professor du Toit's intention, however, is not to look backwards. Instead he considers contemporary threats to academic freedom in South Africa including the instrumentalist pressures on higher education, the issues of commerce-based research, and the relationship between university and state. While du Toit is interested in the liberal impetus offered to Rhodes University by Daantjie Oosthuizen's life, Nash offers an account of Oosthuizen's intellectual journey and provides a close reading of his writing. These, as Nash shows, had a major impact on Oosthuizen's political choices and, ultimately, on the fashion in which he was viewed within Rhodes University. Within this collection on the Critical Tradition at Rhodes University, then, is a story within a story.

Varieties of Critical Traditions

This opens the space to say something about the organisation of the material and the choices we, as Editors, faced. The workshop was organised on thematic lines: 'Reflections on History at and of Rhodes University'; 'Rhodes under Apartheid' (two sessions); 'Shaping Identities at Rhodes and Beyond'; 'Student Dissent at Rhodes under Apartheid'; 'Rhodes University Today', and 'Predicting and Constructing the Future of Rhodes University'. In addition, the

Vice-Chancellor, Dr David Woods, delivered a keynote address at a dinner on Saturday 20 August, 2004.

As we approached the publication of the material, it made sense for us to draw a line, not thematically, but between the experience of students and of staff of the university during the apartheid years. Now, of course, this (like most divides) is arbitrary: Jacklyn Cock, Louise Vincent and Sam Naidu whose contributions are included here under the category of Staff, were students at Rhodes, in three chronological periods: Professor Cock in the late-1960s, Dr Vincent in the late-1980s and Ms Naidu in the mid-1990s. Professor Trevor Bell, called a member of staff here, enrolled at Rhodes as a student in 1952. And James Christie, included here as a student, taught in the Sociology Department in the early- and mid-1970s, as did Kirk Helliker a full decade later. It also seems necessary to add that T. Dunbar Moodie and Eddie Webster, who both who studied Sociology at Rhodes, have both become figures of considerable import in Sociological circles both in South Africa and abroad, as has Devan Pillay who is an Associate Professor at Wits.

Terence Beard, who was appointed to the Department of Philosophy and Politics in 1959, has offered a critical and personal account of his years at Rhodes. Like Maylam's, his paper refers us to three significant moments in the history of the university and in its relations with the apartheid state. The first is the 1962 decision by the university Senate and Council to award an Honorary Doctorate to the then State President, C.R. Swart. This was to be a cause celebre, at Rhodes, in Grahamstown and within the country. Indeed, the issue was wider than South Africa. The University's Chancellor, Basil Schonland, whose father, Selmar, had been a leading figure in the formation of the university, resigned. Secondly, Beard easily moves between the personal and the political. He speaks about the victimisation that he, then a member of the Liberal Party, and his colleagues felt at the hands of the Rhodes Administration. This account certainly suggests how academic disciplines were prejudiced by the political positions taken by formal and informal hierarchies within Rhodes. Finally, Beard raises question which are also touched upon by André du Toit: the deepening corporatisation of higher education and the resulting utilitarian pressures on tertiary education.

The economist Trevor Bell picks up this latter point in a discussion of his own discipline. Moving back and forth across five decades Bell brought to the conversation some perennial problems, especially the endemic issue of poverty – Bell calls it 'the harsh realities of daily life' – in the Eastern Cape which, at Rhodes, was the dual focus of investigation by economists and anthropologists. This work found a strong institutional form in the foundation, in 1954, fifty years after the founding of the university, of the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) But Bell, like many other experienced scholars is worried that the critical project – in South Africa and elsewhere – has been jettisoned in favour of contract and policy work. Academic salaries are to blame for

this development, certainly, but the cost in terms of the academic enterprise in general is high.

Jacklyn Cock's essay opens by invoking an iconic moment in apartheid: the detention without trial of Steve Biko in Grahamstown on 18 August 1977 with which we opened this Introduction. Drawing from her wider oeuvre, Cock is concerned with locating Rhodes University within South Africa in the brutal years of apartheid modernity, 1977 to 1981. She provides a self-critical reflection of her own engagement in the struggles around two crucial repressive processes of the time in Grahamstown and its surroundings; the forced removals and detentions.

The idea of Terror (and Terrorism) has returned to political and social discourse in the early-21st Century. Professor Cock points towards forms of state terror under apartheid, especially deaths in detention and the forced removal of people. Examples of both occurred near Grahamstown. While these are itemised by Jacklyn Cock, her political interest lies in mapping the response by the university and its wider community and critically reflecting on the inappropriateness of her own response. She cites the contribution of what the writer Noel Mostert called 'the Frontier's small group of beleaguered radicals'. She names both the Glenmore Action Group and the Surplus People's Project. And while recognising that Rhodes was not a 'homogenous political community', Professor Cock does name an impressive list of names making the point that 'there was... [at Rhodes]. important scholarship, protest and support... but much was not done'.

In the 1970s, under the inspirational leadership of a leading figure, Guy Butler, Rhodes University established itself as the premier national institution in the study of English. A term much in vogue nowadays is entrepreneurship: however one looks at Butler, this he was. Poet, Biographer, intellectual and institution builder – he inspired the creation of the 1820 Settler's Monument, conceived (with others) the Grahamstown Festival and initiated the teaching of Journalism at Rhodes University. An unanswered question remains whether Butler was a member of Rhodes famous 'Old Guard' or a thorn in the side of a project which aimed to define and ensure the survival of the English-speaking minority in South Africa.

Sam Naidu's journey at Rhodes University begins with 'the White Liberalism' of Guy Butler and ends in postcolonial studies. En route, she invokes the memory of the Marxist critic and long-time member of the Rhodes Staff, Nick Visser, who, had he not passed away, would certainly have been at this Critical Tradition Colloquium. The once acclaimed 'English in Africa' course which was initiated by Butler, she reports, is defunct, 'mainly due to a lack of student interest and staffing constraints'. She calls for change, for relevance at Rhodes and in its academic offerings in this field – 'we cannot stave off direct engagement' – and at the same time nostalgically, almost relishes 'the air of peacefulness, serenity and orderliness' on the Rhodes campus.

Another student who became a lecturer is Louise Vincent, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political and International Studies. This piece reports from the post-apartheid chalk-face at Rhodes University – it tells 'stories about race and identity among the present generation of Rhodes students'. Her interest is in the constructed nature of race and racial discourse and in reports of the continuing suspicion, ten years into the post-apartheid period, across the racial divides. Many believe that this kind of reportage and analysis has no place in a South Africa but Dr Vincent is unrepentant, '(e)ven if the dog of racism is indeed asleep at Rhodes – and I doubt it is – we should be prepared to give it a vigorous shake in order respectfully to continue to engage with learn from and understand more fully our past and its continuing implications for the present'.

The contribution by Vincent's departmental colleague, Thabisi Hoeane, is also interested in race. He is, however, less concerned about his own position at Rhodes and, indeed, his position as an intellectual with the issue of colour than he is with professionalism, making a contribution, and changing Rhodes University 'from a previously exclusively white dominated institution to a truly representative South African institution'.

If the foregoing seven essays offer a perspective on the 'Critical Tradition' at Rhodes University from the 1950s to the 2000s, then those we have chosen to call 'students' match them over the five decades but are more representative in terms of both race and gender. T. Dunbar Moodie came to Rhodes in 1958 and was persuaded by another legendary Rhodes professor, James Irving, to read Sociology. The decision, as Moodie writes, 'changed the way I saw the world'. Can there be any finer achievement in a university career and any stronger claim to the status 'university' than this? If the Sociology classics – Durkheim, Weber and George Mead – were the staple diet of Sociology in Irving's time, Moodie's first exposure to Marx was in the Rhodes Library where he read *The Communist Manifesto*. He charts his journey from a Christian to a Marxist via many discussions about social determinism, politics, religion and society.

Another Rhodes influence on Moodie was the work of the Anthropologist, Philip Mayer, whose work was also noted, with great appreciation, by Trevor Bell. Daantjie Oosthuizen, who we met earlier in this introductory essay, was also an important formative figure. Outside of the classroom, Moodie was influenced by a variety of sources but one deserves more than a passing mention. This was the strong influence at Rhodes, during the late-1950s and deep into the 1960s, of the theology students – colloquially called 'The Toks'. Surely, their story is another biographical project which is crying out to be written from Rhodes University.

If Moodie was profoundly influenced by James Irving, so were James Christie and Eddie Webster whose essays follow. Christie opens with his first day at Rhodes: a dining room meeting with two acclaimed Rhodes alumni, Charles van Onselen and Tim Couzens – both of them, like Christie, in their very first hours on the campus. The three have remained friends, James Christie

happily reports, 'forty three years later'. In a university of 1,600 students, conversations and exchanges were intense, and interdisciplinary too: a truly 24-hour university before the term became popularised by the managerial fad that has enveloped higher education. When Christie returned to Rhodes to teach after unhappy experiences at the LSE and the University of Durban Westville – then located in Salisbury Island, Durban – he discovered a new cohort as eager to learn as was his own. But in all this ferment, and across two generations, both students and staff were 'unsure of the limits of resistance and unsure of its consequences'.

Eddie Webster was in the same intake as Christie. He locates his paper in historical sociology, his upbringing within the confines of English-speaking South Africa, but with recent experience of Europe and an awakening interest in decolonisation. Studying history with a third Rhodes legend, Winnie Maxwell, Webster crossed a metaphorical intellectual road to study, later, at Balliol College, Oxford, where he engaged with Sociology and Socialism. His account includes strong, near evocative, accounts of the university residence system and the life and times of student politics. Webster was elected to the SRC in 1963 serving as its President, a post that brought him in conflict, as he reports, with his prowess on the rugby field.

Throughout his account Webster respectfully recalls the names of his peers, including that of another Webster, David, who came to Rhodes University from the then Northern Rhodesia. Dr David Webster, of course, would graduate from Rhodes and London, and would become one of the country's leading anthropologists. He would also certainly have been at this Colloquium had he not been assassinated by the apartheid regime, paying for his intellectual and political interests with his life.

The decision by the Rhodes authorities to collude with the state security powers, reported in Barry Streek's essay, could be seen against the international mood of the times: the Cold War years of the late-1960s, and early-1970s. More likely, however, was the fixity of a small town parochialism and simple fear. If some students and some staff were activist, or critically-inclined, we must accept Barry Streek's account that the 'Rhodes University authorities were far from progressive'.

Kathleen Satchwell, now a High Court Judge, but in her day, like Webster and Streek, President of the Rhodes SRC, provides a meticulous account of the Rhodes Student of her day from 1969 to 1978. She points out that most students came to Rhodes from affluent white families; most had been influenced by Christian National Education; most knew little of the 'despised language of Afrikaans'; almost every one was Christian; and most knew little of a world beyond white Southern Africa. Most were, in short, beneficiaries of the apartheid system. Although located in Africa, Rhodes University students knew little of Africa. Her Hall, Hobson, was 'a white enclave in the country of the Mfengu and the Thembu'. In this context, social explosions of 'volcanic

proportions' were 'entirely parochial and without broader political content'. However, Judge Satchwell's own journey towards an understanding that 'the political is personal' – to use the feminist phrase – was rooted within her 'typical South African experience – confused, conflicted, and critical'.

Zubeida Jaffer came to Rhodes (as a post-graduate student) under the so-called 'Ministerial Dispensation'. She found a university which conferred on her a second class status. In 1978, she and other black students were forced into separate residences as the university administration, without consulting the students, complied with government fiat. Although offered the wardenship of a separate residence for non-white women, Jaffer chose, rather, to move into shabby digs on the outskirts of Grahamstown. In her account of these events, Jaffer is highly critical of Rhodes University's official account of this history in the Centenary publication.[2] Using this criticism as a point of entry, Jaffer expresses doubt on the claims of transformation at Rhodes from her position on the Rhodes University Council. And she returns to a theme that necessarily runs through all these presentations: Grahamstown as a microcosm of South Africa. What can Rhodes University do to 'assure the people of this town that this is their university'? Although much work has been done in this direction in recent years, this remains a crucial challenge for the university.

Devan Pillay calls his experience of Rhodes 'life changing'. 'It was a time when my Marxism developed, when I engaged in national political activity, aboveground and underground, and when I was arrested, and later convicted of ANC activities'. Of all these contributors, Professor Pillay talks of the importance of sport – not the rugby so enjoyed by Eddie Webster, but soccer – and the boycott of university sport by black students. This prohibition freed black students, however, to cross Grahamstown's infamous Kowie Ditch and to build links with the Township. Although the university was embedded in a strand of liberalism, Pillay suggests that more critical teachers in Journalism, Sociology, Political Studies and History opened space for radical thinking. Quite why the apartheid government allowed this intellectual space to remain open remains, for him, a puzzle. If Rhodes is to continue with a critical tradition, as Devan Pillay hopes, it must 'always articulate the interests of those without power – particularly the poor and the marginalised – in the pursuit of social harmony and justice'.

If a Rhodes Sociologist James Irving 'changed the way' Dunbar Moodie saw the world, another Sociology professor, Eddie Higgins, 'lit a fire' in Kirk Helliker. It burnt, Helliker insists, not because of Rhodes University but despite of it. '[T]he space for critical thinking was not built into the structure of Rhodes as a social entity', he argues. Rather than reaching deep into sociological theory to explain how the university produced generations of critical thinkers, himself included, Helliker turns to a theory of Great Women – in particular Marianne Roux and Jacklyn Cock – both of whom in the face of great intimidation, 'sought quite consciously and with great conviction to open up and shape a

space for critical reflection at Rhodes'. Helliker, a Canadian citizen, was unceremoniously deported by the South African regime in the mid-1980s. They simply refused to renew his residence permit.

Wrenched from his heart, Shepi Mati has produced a paper of great depths, literary and other. His own roots lie deep within the soil of the Eastern Cape, and it, rather than Rhodes, is his alma mater. He is a 'graduate of his people, who are known to generations of Rhodes scholars as only Alfred, Maria, Jane and John, names that are not theirs, but imposed upon them for the convenience of whites who refused to and fail to pronounce our names'. Mati's telling of the Rhodes story in this fashion brings to this collection a compelling sense that there are still too many silences, especially at the quotidian level where university meets workers and the black community that lie beyond the ring of privilege that surrounds Rhodes. Shep Mati includes in his paper, two of his poems. This one, perhaps, captures the sense of despair felt by many black students during apartheid:

Graham's Town Ghost town!
I thought I'd left you
But you haven't left my heart
Those wild jols
The noise of your student evenings
Those tormented beggars
The Church bells on solitary Sunday evenings
The spies we drank with in the pub
Hidden among the saints
Such loneliness
Such sadness

Dr Ashwin Desai's paper returns to some of the themes that run through other papers: the place of the Sociology Department, the sports boycott and the segregated residences of the late-1970s and early-1980s. He provides a roller-coaster ride involving politics, sex, sport, violence, alcohol and friendship. His personal journey of sociological debate is almost indistinguishable from his political awakening and the many twists and turns in both local and national struggles. His story is told from the wisdom of an insider who never shied away from controversy; indeed, he thrived on it.

It would certainly be surprising, given the reach and the sweep of apartheid, that Rhodes University would have escaped its insidious reach. Each of these papers and, surely, many thousand stories beyond them, tell of opportunities lost, of moments when Rhodes – its governors, its administrators, its professors, its teachers – should have made different decisions about students, about courses, about the community which surrounds the university. But within the institution's walls, critical candles were lit in the minds of staff and of students.

How are we to see the impact of the Critical Tradition on the stories told between these covers? How has it affected Rhodes University? Dunbar Moodie's thoughtful essay ends with an interesting idea on the power of traditions, especially critical ones. 'Traditions encapsulate us, he writes, 'binding us to closeness with one another, marching in lock step. Critical traditions, however, are by definition more open. We carry them with us as sheet anchors, providing ballast but not direction, keep us into the wind but not precisely defining our course... the critical tradition I learnt at Rhodes, modified over the years, continues with me, for better or for worse. We wore certain racial and gender blinkers, but precisely because it was a *critical* tradition, it enabled us to grow'.

Notes

1. See 'Let School Leaders Deliver', *Financial Mail*, Johannesburg, July 15, 2005, p. 16.
2. Richard Buckland and Thelma Neville, *A Story of Rhodes. Rhodes University 1904 to 2004*, Johannesburg, Macmillan, 2004.

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Rhodes University: Colonialism, Segregation and Apartheid, 1904-1970

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This year of the university centenary is a time for celebration, but there is also a need to engage in critical self-reflection upon the university's past, present and future. This Colloquium can play a valuable role in offering a space for such reflection. A continuing critical engagement with issues surrounding the ethos, practice and functioning of Rhodes University (indeed, any university) is vital to the institution's well-being. For decades such engagement was constrained by the authoritarianism and repression exercised by successive apartheid governments. Today the main threat to critical academic discourse comes from the growing corporatisation and managerialism which are afflicting many universities around the world.

This paper is thus written in a critical vein – not with an aim to denigrate, nor as a kind of self-flagellation. It is produced in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – in the belief that disclosure about the university's past and an honest appraisal of its place in South African society can have a positive, liberating effect, and remind us always to be on guard against complacency.

What follows is not a history of Rhodes University, but rather a few reflections on some aspects of its history from 1904 until 1970. My starting-point is that Rhodes University, far from being the apolitical academy that it has often claimed to be, has been institutionally embedded in the politics of the country from the university's inception. It is true that research into the university's records reveals very little evidence at all of overt political involvement at the institutional level. The minutes of Council and Senate, for instance, show up an overwhelming concern with day-to-day academic and administrative matters. But more or less hidden within these records are some clues to the university's ideological and political leanings. Moreover, the silences can be equally revealing.

Today Rhodes University's harshest critics sometimes refer to it as a 'colonial institution'. If we look back at the founding of the university a century ago this label certainly carried meaning then. The university (or university college as it then was) was not founded simply as an institution of higher learning. It was also part of a great project – to bolster the British imperial connection.

After the South African War the British High Commissioner, Milner, strove to 'reconstruct' the war-torn country along 'English' lines. His anglicisation policy rested in part on the promotion of 'English-style' education. The estab-

lishment of a college of higher learning in the Eastern Cape fitted into this policy. Milner feared that a rising Dutch/Afrikaner cultural movement in the Western Cape would pose a threat to British supremacy. So Rhodes University College's 'cultural and political role', in the words of John Darwin, 'was unambiguous: it was designed to reward and consolidate the proverbial loyalty of the Eastern Province. But it was also meant to be the engine room of English cultural ascendancy in South Africa'.[1] This was made clear by the London secretary of the Rhodes Trust, Charles Boyd: the college, he wrote, was 'designed to extend and strengthen the Imperial idea in South Africa'.[2] The headmaster of Kingswood College expressed the same sentiment: 'I take it the Rhodes College is to imply Higher Education under the best of Imperial influences'.[3] When the Cape Town secretary of the Rhodes Trust wrote to the British War Office appealing for the free grant of the Drostdy buildings, he too emphasised that the new college would strengthen the imperial idea in South Africa 'where so far the only decent University education to be had is at Stellenbosch, under influences notoriously anti-Imperialist'.[4]

The naming of the new institution clearly reflected the imperial connection. The original plan was not to name it after the empire-builder. In March 1903 the sub-committee set up to consider the founding of a college in Grahamstown proposed that the institution be called The Eastern Province University College. Four days later the sub-committee met again and came up with a revised twofold proposal – that the name be the Rhodes University College, *and* that the Rhodes Trust be approached with a view to obtaining a substantial grant.[5] Clearly the proposed new name was put forward as a bargaining chip. How could the Rhodes Trust refuse such a request that would honour the name of the benefactor? It was a smart move, and it worked. The cause was helped by the election of Jameson, Rhodes's greatest ally and collaborator, as MP for Grahamstown in the Cape parliament early in 1904. Jameson was also on the board of the Rhodes Trust. His influence in securing the funding from the Trust for the college was considerable. So too was the influence of George Parkin, the first organising secretary of the Trust. He visited South Africa in 1903 and became convinced that 'the ideas of Mr Rhodes will be carried out better than in any other way by building up an institution of higher learning at Grahamstown'.[6]

So, posthumously, Rhodes would give his money and his name to the new college – even though Rhodes had had little association with the Eastern Cape during his life-time. In the early 1890s he had wanted to found a university, but in the Western Cape. His plan was to build it on his Groote Schuur estate, and to fund it with profits from the worker canteens at the Kimberley diamond mines. According to Herbert Baker, Rhodes's architect and close friend, Rhodes used to joke that 'he meant to build the University out of the Kaffir's stomach'.[7] The plan was conceived at a time when Rhodes was trying to foster closer relations between English and Dutch at the Cape: he hoped that English and Dutch

students would study together at the new university (Rhodes's conception was thus different from the idea underlying the founding of Rhodes University College – that it serve as a counter to Dutch/Afrikaner culture). Rhodes's scheme fell away because of opposition from the largely Dutch Victoria College in Stellenbosch, which thought its own interests would be damaged by Rhodes's proposed university. Eventually, though, fifteen or so years after Rhodes's death, the University of Cape Town would be built in an area of the Groote Schuur estate donated by the Rhodes Trust.

In the years after its founding Rhodes University College's connection with the British Empire continued to be cemented in symbolic ways. In 1907 the college authorities set about establishing a 'Founder's day'. One professor suggested that this should coincide with Empire Day, 24 May. Eventually the choice of day was entrusted to Jameson. He proposed 12 September, the day (in 1890) on which the white pioneers had hoisted the Union Jack at Fort Salisbury. The proposal was accepted by Senate and Council, thereby linking the founding of the university to the colonisation of Southern Rhodesia.[8] Founder's Day has nothing to do with the founding of Rhodes University.

In the early 1920s key figures were continuing to see Rhodes University College as an important centre of British imperial influence. One such figure was Milner, a board member of the Rhodes Trust since its inception in 1902, and chair of the Trust from 1917 to 1925. During his term as chair he was still stressing the role of the college, and Grahamstown's private schools, as a bulwark against Afrikaner nationalism.[9]

How, therefore, would Rhodes be affected by the accession to power in 1924 of Hertzog's Pact government, dominated by the National Party? Might the university become a site of contestation between Afrikaner nationalism and the British imperial ideal? The answer would seem to be, not at all. One of Hertzog's primary objectives during his premiership was to promote and strengthen racial segregation, particularly at the political and territorial level. He did not, though, try to impose segregation on universities, allowing each institution to decide on its own student admission policy.[10]

The Rhodes authorities failed to take advantage of this freedom, preferring to adopt a segregationist policy in keeping with both Hertzog's own thinking and the white supremacist ideology of the time. In 1933 Professor Dingemans, one of the four founding professors, proposed that an Indian student be admitted to Rhodes. The proposal was firmly rejected by Council, which resolved, with no votes against, 'that Rhodes University College is not in a position to agree to the admission of non-Europeans as resident or non-resident students'.[11]

Almost thirty years after its founding Rhodes was entrenching itself as a segregated university. This admissions policy seems to have gone unchallenged for fourteen years. In 1947 a motion was put to Council to rescind the 1933 resolution. Although this motion was passed 14-4, the new admissions

policy adopted hardly represented a radical break with the past. It was resolved (in a 12-6 vote) 'that the Council, on the recommendation of the Senate, may consider applications for admission from Non-European graduates in exceptional circumstances'.[12] It was also agreed that such students be required to live in 'approved lodgings' (which I take to mean segregated accommodation).[13] A few weeks later Senate requested that black students be admitted to the January 1948 summer school. But Council again reiterated that admission be restricted to 'non-European graduates'.[14]

Rhodes was clearly expressing and conforming to the segregationist ideology and practice that characterised the established social and political order in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century. This is further illustrated by the introduction into the university curriculum, in 1939, of a course entitled 'Administration of Child Races, with special reference to South Africa'.[15] It is important to stress that the university authorities chose to operate as a segregated university when it was not legally bound to do so, long before the enactment of obligatory segregation in 1959.

Some might point to mitigating factors. The cautious admissions policy was defended at the time on the grounds that Rhodes did not want to draw students away from Fort Hare.[16] Moreover, Rhodes was not alone in its discriminatory practice among universities in the English-speaking world. Wits and UCT admitted very few black students in the 1930s: in 1937 Wits had ten such students, UCT forty.[17] Earlier in the century most universities in the USA practised racial discrimination. For some years after World War One Princeton totally excluded black students, and Harvard, Yale and Columbia restricted their intake of blacks (as wells as Jews and Catholics).[18]

It was in the 1950s and 1960s that Rhodes really lagged behind the other so-called 'open' universities in South Africa – so much so that one can scarcely describe Rhodes as an 'open' university at that time. Between 1947 and 1959 there were fifteen applications from black graduates for admission to Rhodes. Of these, three were accepted.[19] Moreover there is evidence of a disturbing institutional acquiescence towards apartheid. In 1954 the university awarded an honorary doctorate to the Minister of Education, J.H. Viljoen. The previous year Viljoen had shown himself to be an eager proponent of university apartheid during a parliamentary debate.[20]

During the mid-1950s it was becoming apparent that the NP government was going to introduce a policy of university apartheid. In anticipation of this, voices of opposition were heard, particularly from UCT and Wits (which by 1957 had, between them, about 500 students of colour on their campuses). In 1956 the councils of both UCT and Wits passed resolutions stating their principled opposition to academic segregation. Early in 1957 there were mass meetings of staff, students and convocation at UCT and Wits, with the passing of resolutions against university apartheid. Deputations from the councils and senates of UCT, Wits and Natal met with the Minister of Education and pleaded

with him not to proceed with the legislation. Petitions, carrying thousands of signatures, were also submitted to parliament by UCT and Wits in opposition to the impending university bill. There followed in mid-1957 protest marches by staff and students of Wits and UCT.[21]

Where was Rhodes University amidst all this activity? Mostly absent and largely silent. Before 1959 the university did not join any deputations, nor did it organise petitions or protest marches, as far as I can ascertain. There is, though, a letter from the Registrar to the Department of Education, dated February 1957. This states the university's objections to the proposed alterations, without any consultation, to the Rhodes University Act of 1949, and to the plan to detach Fort Hare from Rhodes. The letter does not convey any strong, principled opposition to university segregation[22] – which Rhodes was in no position to convey as it was still essentially a segregated university. At this time Rhodes could not count itself among the open universities.

Two years later, in 1959, as university apartheid was being enacted in parliament, Rhodes offered a rather more robust institutional response. On graduation day in April over 1000 members of the university community – including the vice-chancellor, council and senate members, staff and students – participated in a protest march against the so-called Extension of Universities Bill and the Fort Hare Transfer Bill. The vice-chancellor, Dr Alty, used the occasion to voice the university's position in an address to the gathering. He stressed that this was not a political protest. His main objection to the bills was that they eroded university autonomy. Universities should have the right to decide for themselves who to admit as students. 'In our university', he went on, 'we have, for our own reasons, admitted relatively few non-Europeans, but none the less, we are jealous of our right to decide these matters for ourselves'.[23] Even a student like Hugh Lewin (who would later spend seven years in jail for sabotage activities) could write a letter to *Rhodeo* stating that opposition to the bills did not imply support for university integration, which was 'impractical' at that time.[24] My (albeit limited) research suggests that Rhodes's institutional response in 1959 did not really challenge university apartheid.

Rhodes's official stance was apolitical. It is better described as acquiescent and accommodating towards the apartheid state. Three episodes in the 1960s bear this out. First, in 1962 the university awarded an honorary doctorate to the state president, C.R. Swart. As Minister of Justice from 1948 through the 1950s Swart had been responsible for the repression of opposition organisations (which had not yet resorted to armed struggle). By honouring Swart the university was tacitly endorsing his repressive actions. The award evoked protest from many members of the university community – which the university authorities did their best to suppress. Letters of protest were sent to *Rhodeo*, but Alty pressured the editor not to publish them. Senate passed a motion, by 28 votes to 6, deploring the action of staff members who had publically dissociated themselves from the award of the degree.[25] When Swart

came to receive his degree he was greeted with prolonged two-minute applause.[26]

The second episode occurred five years later. In July 1967 the annual congress of the multi-racial National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was held on the Rhodes campus. Three months before the congress the university council had agreed that segregated accommodation for black delegates be provided on campus – men staying in Livingstone House and women in Piet Retief House.[27] In June, about ten days before the congress, Council changed its mind. Fresh legal opinion had suggested that it would 'probably' not be legal for the university to accommodate black delegates in residences. The vice-principal, Dr Rennie, reported to Council that 'every care is being taken to ensure that Rhodes does not transgress the law in any particular'. The Minister of Community Development had not only refused permission to accommodate black delegates, but had also prohibited mixed social events. Accordingly a mixed tea party to welcome delegates would not take place. Council entrusted the matter to the vice-principal (who was acting vice-chancellor in the absence of Dr Hyslop).[28]

The prohibition was imposed, forcing African students to find township accommodation, while other 'delegates of colour' were put up in private homes.[29] The decision reflected the extreme caution of the university authorities – it is hard to believe that there would have been any legal repercussions had the April decision not been overturned. However the university's stance would have significant political consequences. The events surrounding the 1967 NUSAS congress represented an important moment in the growth of the black consciousness movement. Steve Biko, one of the delegates, was dismayed by the reaction of white NUSAS delegates to the ban. He believed that the NUSAS executive, knowing in advance of the ban, should have made alternative arrangements. He therefore proposed at the congress that proceedings be suspended. Rejection of his motion left Biko hurt and angry. He became deeply disillusioned with NUSAS's multi-racialism and set about planning a separate organisation, SASO (the South African Students Organisation), for black students.[30] The action of the Rhodes authorities may well have triggered the founding of the black consciousness movement in South Africa.

The third episode – the controversy surrounding the non-appointment of Basil Moore in 1969 – caused some upheaval within the university. In December 1968, Senate confirmed the recommendation of a selection committee that Basil Moore be appointed to a temporary lectureship in Systematic Theology in 1969. This recommendation was overruled by Council on the same day. In March 1969, Senate, by a vote of 30-2, reaffirmed its recommendation that Moore be appointed. Again, the following month, Council overturned the recommendation. Council's actions provoked a set of protests. In May a student body meeting resolved that Council be requested to reveal its reasons for not appointing Moore. When Council refused to do this

another student body meeting, on 31 July, resolved that students would assemble in the quad in the afternoon of the following day when a Council meeting would be taking place – to await Council's response to a request that SRC representatives be allowed to address the Council meeting on the matter. When this was also refused there followed a sit-in in the Council chamber. This resulted in the eight-week rustication of thirteen students and the dismissal of a temporary lecturer in Politics, David Tucker.[31]

What was this episode (outlined here very sketchily) all about? And what does it reveal about the thinking of university management at the time? Basil Moore had been SRC president at Rhodes in 1962, and a part-time lecturer in theology at the university from 1965 to 1968. In 1967 he had also become the first president of the University Christian Movement (UCM), having been one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the organisation. The UCM had been founded after the more established Student Christian Association had resolved to conform to apartheid by dividing itself into ethnic/racial units. It may have been viewed as radical at the time, but the UCM was essentially a non-racial, non-violent organisation concerned to reflect in a Christian way on social, political and theological issues.

The Rhodes Council's stance in the Basil Moore affair was very much in tune with the repressive, reactionary line of the apartheid state at the time. A memorandum by the vice-chancellor, Dr Hyslop, submitted to Council in February 1969, gives an indication of the kind of thinking that must have determined Council's veto. In this memorandum he expressed the fear that the UCM would be a vehicle for both the American Black Power movement and the international 'student power' movement. He was convinced that the recent unrest in overseas universities had resulted from the close interaction and cooperation between small numbers of staff members and militant students. The UCM was one such body that brought together staff and students. Moore's appointment therefore would be a threat to the university.[32] Little did Hyslop realise that the non-appointment of Moore would lead to the kind of unrest that he feared. Not only was this case poorly handled by university management, but it also reflected the innate conservatism, even paranoia, that afflicted them at the time.

Founded as a university to promote 'Englishness' and further the British imperial project, Rhodes University for the first sixty-five years of its existence operated within, and conformed to, a social and political order based on racial discrimination. The university has generally projected an apolitical image. However an ostensibly apolitical stance can be seen as political in that it often implies acquiescence and tacit acceptance of the status quo. This, I argue, has been the case with Rhodes during these years – revealed in its discriminatory admissions policy, its readiness to award honorary doctorates to prominent apartheid politicians, its excessive caution in handling residential arrangements at the 1967 NUSAS congress, and its reactionary stance during the 1969 Basil Moore crisis. These tendencies and episodes suggest institutional

complicity in the South African racial order, rather than opposition to it. This needs to be acknowledged, but it must also be recognised that within the university community during these decades there have been individuals – staff and students – who have spoken out and acted against the discrimination and exploitation that have been so much part of South African history in the twentieth century.

Notes

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Realising the Vision: The Discursive and Institutional Challenges of Becoming an African University

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1. Introduction

At the 1992 General Assembly of CODESRIA,[1] Archie Mafeje,the South African social scientist, presented a paper with the sub-title: 'Breaking bread with my fellow-travellers'. The paper itself was vintage Mafeje: an eloquently written *tour de force*, which took no prisoners; but (and this is my point of departure) it was a discourse defined by its sub-title. It was 'breaking bread' with people with whom, as academic and public intellectuals, he shared common cause and aspirations about the continent and its peoples. I could well sub-title my presentation 'Breaking bread with my fellow-travellers' but that would not be quite original. If not as subtitle, at least as sub-text, I would like to engage in breaking bread with fellow-travellers. Breaking bread with one's fellow-travellers may suggest different entry-points and takes on a subject but there is a shared concern with nourishing all those who partake in the meal. Like a Bedouin evening meal, it is also not something to be rushed.

Thinking through the future of Rhodes University and breaking bread with fellow-travellers around the subject will not suggest a singularity of perspective, objective or entry-point. Ultimately it is about a contested terrain of aspirations, hopes, and means of realising both. My entry-point is the Vision Statement of the University, which includes:

> Rhodes University's vision is to be an outstanding internationally-respected academic institution which proudly affirms its African identity and which is committed to democratic ideals, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility.

The emphasis of my discussion will be on the segment of the statement that speaks of Rhodes University *proudly affirming its African identity*. This is for two reasons. First, it was not always so. The commitment to proudly affirming its identity as an African institution was published in 2001[2] for the first time. It was only in 1991, its 87th year of existence, that Rhodes University first affirmed a 'recogni[tion of its southern African setting' – which lasted until 2000. The critical change in the 2000 Vision Statement is primarily about commitment to affirming the African identity.

Second, Rhodes had, much earlier than 1991 or 2001, affirmed 'values' that were premised on its having 'a history of high achievement and [being] an institution committed to meeting the challenges of the present and the future'.[3] Much earlier in 1983, the Academic Freedom Committee had 're-affirmed [its] belief in academic freedom' involving access to the university without regard to creed or colour'; the university's obligation 'to guarantee the rights of participants in the opportunities and privileges made available by belonging to a university'. It was also premised on the acknowledgment that 'free universities cannot exist in an unfree society'. Again, it was not always so!

These shifts and moves from collusion with regimes of race-based oppression and privilege were themselves the results of rapidly changing environments (internal and external to the university) in which the university was operating. The philosophical discourses on the nature of questions, alternative moral dilemmas, and ethics of resistance in comfortable disengagement from active commitment to the side of the oppressed and disposed, must come across as sterile when 15 and 16 year-olds in South Africa's townships were willing to defend their own freedom and right to dignity with their lives. The walk to becoming what Neville Alexander called a normal society was long and arduous.

Rhodes's vision of affirming its 'African identity' raises two complementary questions: What does it mean to affirm one's African identity? And in the case of a university, what does it mean to be an African university? A Vision Statement is *aspirational*. As in such efforts, realising a *vision* requires a clear understanding of (a) the 'current state', (b) the 'desired state', and (c) the trajectory or path of moving from current to desirable state. Path-dependency is something easily recognised in Development Studies generally, and Development Economics specifically. It is equally true that the essence of identifying the possible problem of path-dependency is precisely to help shift the trajectory or development path. Breaking bread with fellow-travellers, committed to the institutional Vision, requires that we open up the space for a critical reflection on the nature of not only the current state but the possible trajectories of arriving at the desired state.

Venturing into the space of 'breaking bread' is appropriate because not only is the possibility of change available, so too is *institutional* will. Nothing highlights this better than the recent acknowledgment, when raised by a few members of staff, that Rhodes's 12 September 'Founders' Day' had more to do with the hoisting of the settler imperial flag in what became Rhodesia than with anything that happened in Grahamstown in 1904 or after. The swift response of the Vice-Chancellor, Senate, and Council to the complaint and the subsequent change of the Founders' Day is an eloquent testimony to the institutional will.

For the purposes of my discussion of *realising the vision*, I will limit myself to two sets of challenges: the discursive and institutional. I do this in the context of answering the two questions I highlighted earlier: What does it mean to

affirm one's African identity? And what does it mean to be an African University? What are the prevailing discursive and institutional challenges that need to be overcome in facilitating the realisation of the vision?

2. Africanity, African Identity and African University

Given the racial classificatory system that underscored settler colonial and Apartheid systems, and the retention of race classification in post-1994 South Africa, the word 'African' may have specific and limited effectivity. While collective self-description by non-Europeans as 'Black' was a distinct legacy of the Black Consciousness Movement, 'African', 'black' or 'Black African' have more restrictive meanings. They aim to refer to the 'indigenous' peoples of the current geographical space that makes up South Africa. This is, obviously, not the intention of the Vision Statement, and it is far from my understanding of Africanity and becoming an African University.

2.1. Africanity and Afrian Identity

Against the vicissitudes of race-speak and classification, I will suggest a specific tradition of Africanity which arose from a 'historically-determined rebellion against the domination of others'.[4] What is significant, especially for 20th century Africa and its Diaspora, is the double-logic of its formation and expression. On the one hand, across the continent – from Tunis to Cape Town; from Cape Verde to Mauritius – was a forging of bonds of shared identity defined by opposition to the imperial order. What is important is that skin tone and pigmentation have very little to do with this forging of shared Africanity and African identity. It was a heritage that defined, as icons of African revolution and liberation, a host of individuals from Ahmed Ben Bella to Patrice Lumumba; where Kwame Nkrumah and Gamal Nasser will share common cause. It mattered little that neither of the pair could have been defined as belonging to the same racial category. As Mafeje reminds us, when Patrice Lumumba was murdered, his family found home in Egypt. Lest this be seen a romanticised misconception of an episodic instance in the national liberation project in Africa, I would like to draw attention to Africa's continental organisation of social scientists, CODESRIA. People of 'Arab-descent' or 'Asiatic descent' are no less 'African' than someone from the Congo. When Mahmood Mamdani was elected the President of CODESRIA in 1998, the idea that his candidacy could be questioned on the ground that his progenitors were Punjabi immigrants to Uganda would have been considered as preposterous. It was not 'political-correctness'. We simply knew him as a Ugandan colleague (and I dare say, comrade). Issa Shivji is as much ours as Babu Mohammed – both Tanzanians. Nor is this a case of of a 'black African' accommodative 'instinct'[5]. Frantz Fanon, a 'black' Martinique person, was considered as much Algerian by the FLN leadership and the Algerian people as a 'native' Bedouin.

On the other hand, there is the globally-shared affinity to Africa. Africanity will refer as much to people whose ancestral home is Africa, be they on the African continent, Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America, and so on. From W.E.B. Du Bois to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, we have people who regardless of the tone of their skins defined themselves as *Africans*.

To put the issue in perspective, the premise for the shared sense of Africanity – hence, African identity – is not purely a matter of progenitors, descent, pigmentation or morphological differences. Ruth First did not enter Mozambique as a European; she did as an African! Africanity crosses a host of other fault lines. You are as likely to find Jews and Gentiles among Ethiopian Amharic as anywhere else in the world. To reiterate the point, being African is not a matter of pigmentation or location: it is about being *self-referentially* 'African' – it is *a commitment to Africa*. It is possible to be physically located in Africa but not be of Africa; it is possible to be physically located outside Africa but be self-referentially *African*. This is what defined the global notion of Pan-Africanism.

Further, to speak of African identity is not to speak of a single identity but as something spatially bound and defined by commitment to Africa – although highly differentiated. Again, while one can speak of a spatially-bound context, there will be differentiated lines of such engagement and commitment. This has implications for the scholarship, intellectual vocation, and the university. While scholarship committed to the poor is desirable this cannot be the only measure of it. Intellectual vocation committed to the poor and the powerless may be a preference but that in itself is not what defines the nature of African scholarship or a university. Antonio Gramsci's idea of 'organic intellectuals' is hardly compatible with a singularity of intellectual commitment and practice. What then defines a university within this context as African? I will address this issue at two levels – one is a matter of drawing lessons from similar ventures in Africa and elsewhere: where colonial universities became 'national' universities. I use the term 'national universities' not in the sense of narrow nationalism but seeking relevance in its locale without disconnecting from the universal idea of university, as an academe. The other is conceptual, in helping to make sense of what is essential and immanent in the notion of universities and what are the mutable aspects derived from specificity sociational life (or better still lives).

It is important to remind ourselves that before Oxford and Cambridge, there was Timbuktu – on the banks of what is now called River Niger, in West Africa. Although 'not as centralized as al-Karawiyyin of Fez (Morocco) or Al-Azhar of Cairo', Timbuktu consisted of a number of independent schools ('of transmission'). The most famous of these schools and widely recognised as a centre of higher learning was Sankore (Sankara). By the 14th century, these were fully functioning institutions 'where the courses of study offered were essentially open to all students who could qualify'.[6]

2.2. The Idea of African University as Practice

Since a Centenary celebration (such as Rhodes University's) invites nostalgia about history, I will draw from the field of history to illustrate three separate but related forms of scholarship that defined the idea of an African university. Here I draw short examples from Ibadan (Nigeria), Dakar (Senegal), and Dar-es-salaam (Tanzania). In 1958, two years before political independence, Nigeria had one university affiliated to the University of London. In a population of about 45 million, the total student population was less than 600. Since its inception 10 years earlier, it had offered History as a degree course but it was History as it would have been taught at the University of London, Oxford or Cambridge.

Central to the colonial historiographic project was not so much that it was difficult to do African History as that Africa (and Africans) had no history before its encounter with mercantilist Europe. In 1960, the year of Nigeria's formal independence, Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike (1917-1983) was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Ibadan: the first African vice-chancellor of what was meant to be a small, elitist, Oxbridge institution. The challenge for Dike was fundamentally about the content of scholarship and relevance to national rather than imperial aspirations. It was national aspiration driven by the scholars themselves not the State. History, which was Dike's own discipline, became a major focus for recruiting and training new staff and students and fundamentally transforming the teaching and practice of the discipline. What emerged was the Ibadan School of History. It was one that saw oral sources not as an obstacle but a constraint in contexts where there were no written sources. The idea of African history was born out of this passion for scholarship that connects local needs with a boundless spirit of excellence and international comparability – rigour, intense peer scrutiny, and output.

I have argued elsewhere[7] that while the Ibadan School of History displaced and discredited racist colonial historiography, it did not transcend received historiography: it did history as the history of great men, and sometimes great women. Its enduring contribution, contrary to my earlier critique of it, was not merely methodological (oral sources as a means of doing history) but in the *will* to give an African content and focus to the discipline. It went on to produce history from other sources, especially the Sahel and North and East Africa. What it did, however, was to give second generation, postcolonial students like me a sense of connection: connecting the scholarly vocation in secondary and post-secondary education with my sense of my cultural and sociational space in the global arena. Its publications, such as *Tariq*, became the staple that made me fall in love with history. The 'stories' I read were my stories, told by my people for my people! I did not encounter history as something alienating and disconnecting from my pre-school self and self-worth. University was an inspiring continuation of what I learnt on the knees of my grandmother. The venture in Ibadan was not only in relation to history. The whole spectrum of its offerings –

from chemistry to political studies – was animated by this ferment. Remarkably, all these happened when the state had very little to do or say about who taught what, to whom, and in what manner.

The Dar-es-salaam School of History took historiography beyond history as the stories of great men and sometimes great women. In historiographic terms, the problematic that the Dar School contended with was, to paraphrase it: Who built the pyramids? Surely it was not the Pharaohs! Who writes the stories of the thousands of labourers, the architects, and so on who put up the structures? It was a search for history not simply as the stories of great men/women but of ordinary people as well. Dar-es-salaam was a haven of vociferous left wing activism. If nothing else, it sought to write history in a counter-hegemonic manner. The Dar School reflected the ferment of the late 1960s and the 1970s in Africa and the brimming enthusiasm for the emancipatory project. If its historiography was at the other end of the class spectrum from that of the Ibadan School, it nevertheless shared a common commitment: the passion for an engagement with its African context. The Dar School was historiography with a class attitude, but a class attitude with an afrocentric mindset.[8]

Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986), and the ferment of his version of Egyptology, was what defined the University of Dakar. Diop's Africanity was shaped by what he considered the falsification of Egyptian history. Egypt was nowhere near Senegal. So what makes this a venture in the construction of the African university concern? The reaction to imperial racist historiography that drove the Ibadan and the Dar Schools also drove Diop. The effect of such racist historiography was indivisible, Diop would have argued. Diop's argument was that Egyptian civilisation was an African civilisation, in contrast to the claims of European Egyptologists. As Director of the Radiocarbon Laboratory at the Institut Fundamentale d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) at the University of Dakar, his concern was to apply the tools of science to valorise this and similar claims; it was putting science at the disposal of a people. IFAN and history remain central to the University of Dakar's self-identity. It is a measure of the national prestige of Professor Diop that the university where he worked most of his life would be renamed Cheikh Anta Diop University in his memory and honour.

Three clusters, three methodological and epistemic foci; but all driven by a shared commitment to their locales. For each, Africa was the locale. I wish to argue that local relevance is never at odds with global and rigorous scholarship and being internationally reputable: a debate around such an idea is essentially a false debate. The assumption that a preference for the local undermines the global is a false dichotomy. Oxford and Cambridge will define themselves as English universities; much the same way as Harvard will define itself as American. It is inconceivable that anyone will argue that Oxford's fundamental Englishness (albeit with aristocratic pretensions) is a negation of its global reputation. No one will consider calling Oxford an English university an anathema; why would Rhodes becoming an African university be inherently

so? I am less concerned at this stage as to whether this commitment is to the poor and the powerless or the rich and the powerful. History with a bias for the poor and the powerless but driven by a regurgitation of received paradigms will still be problematic for me.

3. Realising the Vision: Discursive and Institutional Challenges

What has all this got to do with discursive and institutional challenges at Rhodes? Let me return to my premise of 'breaking bread with my fellow travellers'. This is not a matter of career hedge-betting; issues concerning university education are, systemically, more serious than life and death. The implications of an educational system that damages the inner self of students may not produce body counts but are fundamentally damaging nonetheless. Get things right and the harvests are enormous for everyone. For the remaining part of this presentation, I will highlight a few discursive and institutional challenges for realising the vision. Many of these are drawn, analytically and anecdotally, from my experience at Rhodes.

3.1. Challenge One: the Liberal English Tradition

A lot of stock has been put on the reputation of Rhodes University as a liberal, English-speaking university. As Paul Maylam reminds us, there is little doubt that when Rhodes University was established it was as an integral aspect of a much wider imperial project. Whatever might have been the political dominance that conquest of the colonies might have wrought the ascendance of Afrikaner nationalism and the National Party would seem to have reduced the political space available for English-speaking South Africans. Much of what has come to be defined as the liberal critique of nationalism might present itself as occupying a moral high-ground from which to condemn Apartheid, but it does so in the context of the loss of that political space and influence. It is important to make a distinction between three ideational strands that were highlighted at the Critical Traditions Colloquium at Rhodes University in August 2004. One is radical socialist, the second social democratic, and the third liberal. Much of what was presented as liberalism at the Colloquium (in much of the discussion of liberal tradition) is more appropriately activism of a *social democratic*, not liberal, strand. Liberal tradition, especially Classical English Liberalism that continues to be presented as a worthy tradition at Rhodes University constitutes a discursive challenge for realising the vision. Frederich von Hayek[9] highlighted two strands in liberalism: the Continental and Classical English Liberalism. 'Continental or constructivist' strands of Liberalism were defined by:

> Not so much a definite political doctrine as a general mental attitude, a demand for an emancipation from all prejudice and all beliefs which could not be rationally justified, and for an escape from the authority of 'priests and kings' (p.119).

Hayek, as one would expect, was quite sceptical about those strands of liberalism that 'profess a belief in individual freedom of action and in some sort of equality of all men'. However, 'this agreement was in part only verbal', since individual freedom and equality have different meanings from those in the Classical English tradition. The latter has a far more pernicious focus and intentionality, and was more attuned to Hayek's:

> The liberal demand for freedom is... a demand for the removal of all manmade obstacles to individual efforts, not a claim that the community or the state should supply particular goods. It does not preclude such collective action... but regards this as a matter of expediency and as such limited by the basic principle of equal freedom under the law.[10]

This individual freedom, Sally[11] reminded us, 'is the bedrock of the free market economy'. The idea of a minimal government is immanent in classical liberalism. What is important for our discussion here is that it is not only Constructivist or Continental Liberalism that emerged in opposition to the absolutism of the feudal order; Classical Liberalism did as well. The opposition to absolutism signified the contention between the emergent bourgeois/petty bourgeois classes and the old feudal order. The difference, I will argue, is in the reach of the rights that were argued for. In spite of the protestations to the contrary Classical (English/Scottish) Liberalism won rights for no-one outside the class forces that it represented. From the rights to vote (either adult-male suffrage for men or universal suffrage, which included women) to the rights of workers to organise and bargain collectively, these rights have been won when radical social forces contested the terrain of public life and wrested for themselves these rights. What is unique about liberalism, generally, is how easily liberals acquiesced with the horrendous deprivation and violence done to the *Insignificant Other* around them. The defence of class, gender or race-based privileges in the colonies was couched in the language of freedom, and equality rather than equity. The two blocs of liberalism that I mentioned above have coalesced around two major contemporary political forces. Classical English Liberalism is the progenitor of *Neoliberalism.* By contrast the tradition and the discourse of Constructivist Liberalism is carried on in *Social Democracy*.

The idea that you must oppose a government simply because it is government carries a peculiarly counterproductive Hegelian mindset that sometimes comes through as nostalgia for the 'good old days'. Its source is in Classical English Liberalism, and much of what counts for liberalism in South Africa today derives from this tradition.[12] In the face of Afrikaner nationalism and monopoly of the political space, oppositional discourse derived from Classical Liberalism would seem to occupy a higher moral ground. I will argue that the continued adherence to this tradition has the tendency, inherently, to justify, rationalise, and acquiesce with injustice and inequity; and for continued defence of class/race/gender privileges. Often, the defence of these privileges is couched in the language of *individual* freedom and liberty and against

government encroachment. In the university setting, this will be presented as academic/intellectual freedom.

In contrast to the liberal idea of academic or intellectual freedom, I would like to posit the 1990 *Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility*.[13] The Declaration, which was adopted by an assembly of African intellectuals, not only affirmed the autonomy of institutions, (Section B, Articles 11 and 12) but the obligations of the state to the institutions (Articles13-18). It not only affirmed the rights of the intellectuals to pursue knowledge and disseminate it but the social responsibility of intellectuals and the rights to education and participation in intellectual activity, and so on.

To insist on minimalist government, as Classical Liberalism does, is to hinder the possibility of leveraging resources for validating the rights of hundreds of thousands of young men and women to receive education – the type of education that is dignifying to the person(s).

3.2. Challenge Two: Curriculum Transformation and Euro-gaze

As my discussion of the experiences of history at Ibadan, Dar-es-salaam and Dakar indicate, central to a proud affirmation of institutional African identity is the question of what to do with inherited modes of knowledge production and their content. When they encounter the colonial 'natives', colonial epistemology and pedagogy demand of them to ascend to the colonial metropolitan culture – or more appropriately, the invented cultural practices of the dominant segments of the metropolis. This is in spite of the fact that the pedagogy itself is underscored by the assumption that the colonial 'natives' may parody but could never be on equal footing with the natives of the metropolis.

I will suggest that this project of encountering the 'natives' produces schizophrenia in those invited to do so. The disconnection between pre-school collective memory and what is considered valuable enough to be taught in the school produces an alienating education – and here I speak largely of the humanities. The schizophrenia that results, in its worst forms, swings from acute self-loathing to intense anger against the educators and what they may represent. I can point to examples of the former in what currently goes under the banner of postmodern, postcolonial literature on and in Africa.

Let me pose the question more starkly in terms of the content of our curriculum. We may not be responsible for what St. Andrews College or Victoria Primary School (in Grahamstown) teach, but is there a shared awareness that much of our curriculum reproduces the fixation on Europe and the disconnection with the collective memories of the non-European (by descent) segments of our student body. To draw examples from the disciplines – and I am firmly committed to discipline-based education[14] – that are most important for me: Philosophy, Sociology, Politics, and History. Economics is another matter entirely.

What, for instance, is it about the philosophy we do that minimally acknowledges that we are surrounded by a sea of Xhosa ontological discourses and narratives? The same could be said for the others, not only in regurgitating received epistemic frameworks, but in seeking to derive nomothetic (the universal explanatory) from idiographic (cultural, specific) narratives of our locale. How is it that very little is known among anthropologists and sociologists about the works of Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane, to mention but two? We have all heard so much about Steve Biko, but how many of our colleagues and students have ever read Biko? When we talk about our Eastern Cape anthropology, how many of us and our students know of or has ever read anything Govan Mbeki wrote about the 'peasantry' in the Province? At the 2004 Congress of the South African Sociological Association, we had Professor Magubane as the Keynote speaker. It was the first time several of our colleagues seen, met or read him. It was the first time many of our younger colleagues had ever heard of him. The encounter was extremely mutually beneficial for those present: sociologists, young and the not-so-young. Given the resurgence of the so-called Two-Economy argument, I am not sure many people in the policy-making arena in our country have read him or Mafeje, considering that the definitive critique of the Dualist argument was written by Archie Mafeje in 1969, when he was Head of the Department of Sociology in the University of Dar-es-salaam.

The point here is not simply one of lack of access; it is the reproduction of a disposition that places very little value on and often refuses to engage with alternative modes of knowledge production and outcome. I have encountered course outlines after course outlines in our social sciences and humanities where scant reference is ever made to African scholarship and social thought north of the Limpopo. In a recent example, a graduate-level course was offered in *Social Transition* in a department to which I was the External Examiner. If the course had been offered in North America or Europe one would not have been any wiser. There was a lot about Foucault and Derrida but not a single reference to anything written on the subject by any African, Asian or Latin American scholar that I could identify. Considering that South Africa's transition itself is one of the more exciting examples of the late 20th century, the 'oversight' was all the more confounding.

Yet, my experience is that many of our students are incredibly eager to interact with these alternative sources of making sense of the world or intellectual narratives. Dr Greg Ruiters (Rhodes Politics Department) introduced an offering in *African Politics and Government* last Term to the 3rd Year Political Studies students. The effect was incredible. I can attest to similar responses from my sociology students (undergraduate and honours-levels) who tell you that this was the first time anyone ever taught them about Africa. When our scholarship jumps from a restricted notion of South African scholarship (without engaging the knowledge production of the 'natives') to Europe or

Brazil, etc., our students and ourselves are the poorer for it. The issue, I should emphasise, is not European contra African. To repeat an argument made about sociology, we cannot speak of Global Sociology when what comes through as sociology is the 'globalisation' of specific European idiographic discourses – on the back of an imperial colonial project. Two years ago, I was discussing with a colleague (not at Rhodes) the issue of *African Sociology* as against *sociology in Africa*. His reaction after a few moments of reflection was 'but that can't be sociology'. When I asked why, his answer was, but what about Marx, Weber, and Durkheim? To do sociology was to do Weber, Marx and Durkheim! Note that Marx, for instance, was never self-consciously a sociologist, and Weber never held a chair in sociology. Indeed, as Ha-Joon Chang reminds us, Weber 'was in fact a professor of economics in the Universities of Freiburg and Heidelberg'.[15] Anthony Giddens invented the Trinity of Sociology – all male, all European – and we cannot seem to get out of the framework. If I say that I wish to present a course or a paper on German or French Sociology, for instance, there will be no angst or suspicion of drumming down standards. It is an entirely different response if I raise the issue of a course in African Sociology. Yet as Arthur Lewis claimed he was advised by Frederich von Hayek, when he was asked to teach '"what happened between the wars" [WWI and WWII] at the London School of Economics: the best way to learning a subject was to teach it'![16] In other words, not knowing should be no hindrance to engaging with a subject in the transformation of our curriculum.

Is this a request for some cultural-nationalism? My answer is firmly 'No', but is sociology about an approach to the study of society or what some dead sociologists said? You need a shift in the mindset to make the venture of exploring possible. The essential thing about paradigms is not that they shift. It is that they are blinkers. They define the horizon of sight and cut out some others. The same will apply to other disciplines, not just philosophy or sociology.

Proudly affirming our African identity requires that we add to our scholarship (of nomothetic) ventures a desire to engage with the ideographical discourses of our locale and get our students and ourselves not only reading ourselves but becoming familiar with a huge body of African scholarship. The alternative is to offer alienating education to those that a Eurocentric discourse offers no immediate affinity.

3.3. Challenge Three: 'Institutional culture'

A critical obstacle in institutional transformation is the manner in which we understand the amorphous, yet palpable entity that we refer to as 'institutional culture'. Often because of the tendency to confuse the tendentious and ephemeral with the substantive, certain institutional practices are considered so essential that an attempt to change them will provoke considerable resistance. For the purpose of this paper I wish to make a distinction between two aspects

of what we often refer to as institutional culture. I will suggest that central to what we often refer to as 'institutional' or 'organisational culture' are two distinct elements. The first aspect concerns organisational and behavioural values that derive from the core mandate of an organisation. These are activities essential to the mission and identity of the genre of institutions to which the specific organisation belongs; these activities and values define the *raison d'être* (the reason for existence). Take away those values and activities and the organisation ceases to belong to that genre.

The second aspect concerns what one will consider as the 'sociational' aspects of organisational life and group dynamics. Borrowing from Imré Lakatos, these sociational aspects of organisational life constitute the 'protective belt' around the core aspects of an institution's culture. Being products of sociational dynamics, these practices and values may mark the organisation out *within* its genre but are mutable and are products of group dynamics within specific contexts, spatial and temporal. While we refer to the 'protective belt' as defined by the 'sociational aspects of organisational life', it is important to keep in mind that the definition of the 'core' is the product of human agency in patterns of social interaction, and that both aspects exist in a dynamic relationship. What is significant about the outer, protective belt is that it is the more mutable, more situationally specific dimension of 'institutional culture', but is often confused with what is immanent about an organisation.

This distinction between the core values and mission, on the one hand, and the peripheral, sociational dynamics, on the other hand, is important in understanding what needs to be protected and what could easily change in the transformation of an organisation without undermining its core values and mandate. They are also important for what one will refer to as the appropriateness of transformation models in addressing the challenge of transformation.

Applied to a university, one will argue that central to its *raison d'être* are the production and dissemination of knowledge. A university will be different from other institutions within the further and higher education sector, for instance, in the centrality of knowledge production to its very reason for existence. Knowledge production comes not only from the work of the research staff, but from their students as well. A doctoral degree work, for example, is normally required to be a substantive contribution to knowledge. The dissemination of knowledge may take different forms: from training of students[17] to applying the knowledge produced in different aspects of life. It is, perhaps in the extension of the latter that the question of 'community service' comes, but it is of value, and essential to a university's core values, when it involves the dissemination of knowledge produced. A university's *raison d'être* is defined by its function of training of students, in addition to the core function of knowledge production. Arising from these are a set of values (norms) that are essential for the fulfilling these core mandates. For instance, the idea of *academic freedom* rather than being an esoteric idea is valued because it is

essential for knowledge production; it facilitates the performance of this core mandate. External adjudication or scrutiny of one's work is valued because it serves the function of quality assurance in the framework of knowledge production. So it is not enough to claim that one has discovered something, the process and the discovery are opened up for external adjudication. The same applies to a candidate's doctoral thesis being subject to external adjudication and scrutiny (to the knowledge producer). And this is where the distinction between the 'core' and 'peripheral' comes in.

To take the example of external adjudication, while we accept that a knowledge producer's work needs to be subject to peer-scrutiny, how we actually go about doing this may differ across institutions and/or countries. A doctoral thesis may be externally scrutinised by a panel of assessors internal to the institution (as in the US) or by external examiners. In the case of the latter, the actual process can vary from cases where theses are sent to the external adjudicators without an oral examination (*viva voce*) being required (as in South Africa), or with a *viva voce*. The latter can take place in a room (as in the UK) or in a town hall (as in Sweden). While these forms can give distinct colourations to the specific requirement of external scrutiny (the core value), the forms that they take is a matter of sociational dynamics that developed over time and in given circumstances. It is possible to change the latter without vitiating the former. Indeed the value of changing the more mutable (outer protective layer) aspects of organisational life is in the extent to which it enhances compliance with the core requirement of external adjudication.

The importance of this model is that it allows us to make a distinction between two sets of existing practices: those that in essence are dimensions of sociational dynamics but are no more than that and those that are *essential* to the realisation of the core mandates of an institution. The corollary of this is that it alerts us to issues relating to 'appropriateness of model'. In other words, whether the model of change is appropriate to what is essential about an organisation. The spectres of 'corporatisation' and 'managerialism', for instance, have drawn the displeasure of many academics not because they may not work but that they tend to undermine the core mandate and functions of the university as an institution. The collegiality essential to the process of knowledge production is often undermined by transposing the model of change that is derived from an environment of commodity production. The latter is driven by a sense of market share, profit margin, and proprietary hold on what knowledge is produced. It may (and does) contribute to knowledge production, but it undermines the dissemination process which is vital for the accelerated process of sharing, critiquing, and reassessment; all essential to the essential value of knowledge production.

The relevance for Rhodes University in the quest for realising the vision it sets for itself is to make a distinction between those practices and norms that are products of specific location, history, and sociational dynamics; and those

which are *essential* to the fulfilment of the university's *raison d'être*. The implications for the vision of a university that proudly affirms its African identity help to focus our gaze on those practices and norms that are non-essential to the core mandate of a university *and* the university's sense of Africanity. By the same token, it alerts us to the importance of taking our *locale* seriously in fulfilling the core mandates of a university, and asking the question: What are the specifics of positioning the university to take advantage of these locales? Knowledge production and dissemination is local and global; specific and generic. The issue is not a pursuit of either or but a dynamic interplay of the two.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have concerned myself with a specific aspect of a much wider issue of institutional transformation; in this context the vision declared by Rhodes University of *proudly affirming its African identity*. I have sought to highlight the journey to that decision. I have sought to provide some answers to the questions: What does it mean to affirm one's African identity? What does it take to realise the vision? What does it mean to be an African university? Because all these are quite vexing issues I have sought to provide a sociological framework for separating the essential from the transient in what we understand as *institutional culture*. Given the manner in which Africanity and African Identity resonates within the South African scholarly setting, I have focused on what I consider the pan-African ideas of Africanity. Further, I have flagged the examples of three universities that followed distinct epistemic paths for affirming their Africanity *without* undermining what is essential to the university: its *raison d'être*. I believe this is important, when taken together with the model of what we often call institutional culture. While these issues derive from the specific experience of Rhodes University, I will argue that they are more generic to South African universities generally, and the more privileged ones, in particular. Each of the three universities that I used to illustrate the epistemic shifts in doing history (historiography) faced the challenge of shifting from colonial institutions to national institutions sensitive to their *locales* and actively embracing these locales. Yet it was in doing this that they enhanced the quality of their contributions to the global spheres of knowledge production. A lot of the specific sociational practices and ethos that derived from the colonial reference points,[18] our 'protective belt', fell away without undermining the central mandate and values of an institution like Ibadan, are a case in point. If anything, it was in defining themselves in the context of their locales and relevance in a postcolonial context that they gained global recognition as centres of excellence in knowledge production and dissemination.[19] The three cases cited also draw attention to how we understand state/university relations or the impetus of transformation from colonial institutions to postcolonial national imperatives. The most critical periods of contribution

came when academics themselves recognised the needs to embrace their locales; these processes were driven autonomously of the state. This is crucial because we are often in danger of defining *academic freedom* so narrowly and in a profoundly self-serving manner that we fail to recognise its corollary: *the social responsibility of intellectuals*. It does not need state (or extra-university) intervention to stimulate the latter.

I have flagged curriculum transformation as critical to a demonstration of how we embrace and assert our African identity. These are often not issues that can be forced into the classrooms unless the academics, quite self-consciously, take the step to retrain themselves and overcome the preponderance of *euro-gaze*. This is no idle concern. If in the practice of our vocations we promote the schizophrenia in many of our students; fail to pay attention to the ontological discourses and collective memories from where they come, much less validate these, then we fail in our primary task of enlightening and giving our students wings so they can fly. Ultimately, it is about critical self-interrogation.

Notes

1. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Archie Mafeje. 1995. 'Theory of Democracy and the African Discourse: breaking bread with my fellow-travellers', in Eshetu Chole and Jibrin Ibrahim (eds.) *Democratisation Processes in Africa.* Dakar: CODESRIA Books.
2. Rhodes University. 2001. *Rhodes University Calendar 2001*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
3. Rhodes University. 1991. *Rhodes University Calendar 1991*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
4. Archie Mafeje. 2001. 'Africanity: a commentary by way of conclusion', *CODESRIA Bulletin* Nos. 3 & 4, p.16.
5. Bakare-Yusuf (2004) followed a tradition of writers who explain synthesis in many African contexts in existential terms: in her case, what she calls 'polyrhythmic powers of accommodation' of external-derived cultural symbols and ideas. Cf. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf. 2004. '"Yoruba's Don't Do Gender": a critical review of Oyeronke Oyewumi's The Invention of Women: making an African sense of Western gender discourses', in CODESRIA. 2004. *African Gender Scholarship: concepts, methodologies and paradigms.* CODESRIA Gender Series 1. Dakar: CODESRIA.
6. Cf. J.F. Ade Ajayi, Lemeck K.H., Goma & G. Ampah Johnson. 1996. *The African Experience with Higher Education*. (The Association of African Universities, Accra in association with) James Currey: London. (pp.10-11).
7. J. Adesina. 2001. 'Sociology and Yoruba Studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the vernacular?', *Annals of the Social Science Academy of Nigeria,* No.13. A shorter version was published in *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 6. No.1 (2002).

8. I use 'afrocentric' to refer to the scholarship that takes the African condition 'as the central problematic and object of the production of knowledge' (Adesina op cit, p.60). As Kwesi Prah noted, this should not be confused with ethnocentrism or being a xenophobe (K.K. Prah. 1997, 'Africanism and the South African Transition', *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 23, No.2.
9. Frederich von Hayek. 1982. *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economic and the History of Ideas*. London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, (pp. 119-120).
10. Hayek, op. cit., p.132.
11. Razeen Sally, 'What is liberalism?', *ama-gi*, Vol. 1 No. 2. (http://www.lse.as.uk/clubs/hayek//1-2/sally.htm.)
12. An icon of South African 'liberal' opposition to Apartheid was reported by a Port Elizabeth newspaper to have claimed that the quality of debate in the South African National Assembly was higher under Apartheid than it is now. Yet this was the parliament from which about 90 percent of the population was denied access! What, one might ask, is the moral premise of such a claim?
13. See Mamadou Diouf and Mahmood Mamdani (eds.) 1994. *Academic Freedom in Africa*. Dakar. CODESRIA Books Series. (Appendix B).
14. I think that the argument around discipline and inter-disciplinarity derives from conflating two separate but related processes: one research and policy advice; the other, training. Research is inherently inter- or multi-disciplinary. However, one should not confuse that with foundational training of a conceptual and methodological nature. Interdisciplinarity works only because different disciplines bring to the table (of research and policy advice) their specific strengths.
15. Ha-Joon Chang. 2002. *Kicking Away the Ladder: development strategy in historical perspective*. London: Anthem Press, p.6.
16. Sir Arthur Lewis. 1979. 'Autobiography', (on occasion of his being awarded The Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 1979). (www.nobel.se/economics/laureates/1979/lewis-autobio.html) Accessed 18 August 2004. To quote Lewis in full: 'I got into the history of the world economy because Frederich Hayek, then Acting Chairman of the LSE Department of Economics suggested that I teach a course on "what happened between the wars" to give concreteness to the massive doses of trade cycle theory which then dominated the curriculum. I replied to Hayek that I did not know what happened between the wars; to which he replied that the best way of learning a subject was to teach it'.
17. I use 'student' rather than 'learner' because, beyond finding new and 'sexier' words for describing what we have always done, I am not sure what the value of the latter is as a description of a group of people who are trained in the university. We are all learning and students of something: from the professor to the rookie Freshman/woman.
18. 'This is how it is done at Oxford' being one such reference point.
19. The cynic may ask why the decline over the last two-and-half decades. The discussion of this belongs to a different context. For further discussion see the two volumes by Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe and Adebayo Olukoshi (eds.) 2004a, *African*

Universities in the twenty-first century. Volume 1: Liberalisation and Internationalisation. Dakar: CODESRIA. And 2004b *Volume II: Knowledge and Society*. Dakar: CODESRIA. See also Ade Ajayi, Goma and Johnson, op.cit.

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The Legacy of Daantjie Oosthuizen: Revisiting the Liberal Defence of Academic Freedom

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Introduction

The classic formulations of the liberal notion of academic freedom in the South African context date from the period of the late 1950s and early 1960s when the 'Open Universities'[1] had to define their stance in the face of the onslaught of Verwoerdian apartheid ideology and rampant Afrikaner nationalism. Adumbrated in the hallowed T. B. Davie formula ('our freedom from external interference in (a) who shall teach, (b) what we teach, (c) how we teach, and (d) whom we teach') and articulated more extensively in two short books, *The Open Universities in South Africa* (1957) and *The Open Universities in South Africa and Academic Freedom, 1957-1974* (1974), jointly published by the universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand, these classic formulations were, above all, concerned with a defence of academic freedom essentially conceived as the *institutional autonomy* of the university vis-à-vis possible interference or regulation by the state.[2] Forty years on, it is time to revisit these classic defences of academic freedom from the very different vantage point of the newly democratic South Africa. Both the external and the internal contexts of academic freedom have radically changed. Not only has the statutory framework of the apartheid state been dismantled and the ideological force of Afrikaner nationalism spent but the former 'open universities' have themselves been transformed in various ways (though not in others). The relatively small-scale collegial institutions almost wholly dependent on state subsidies are now part of a massively expanded tertiary sector subject to the macro-politics of educational restructuring as much as the domestic impact of the managerial revolution within the university itself. In this new context academic freedom no longer has to be defended primarily against the external threat of state intervention; rather it has to be defined in relation to basic democratic norms of accountability and in the often non-collegial context of the contemporary academic workplace.

More specifically this paper will be concerned with revisiting the work and legacy of Daantjie Oosthuizen as a contribution to the development of a 'critical tradition', both at Rhodes and beyond. Oosthuizen was a product of the Stellenbosch philosophical tradition who had been appointed to the Chair of

Philosophy at Rhodes in 1957. Over the next decade until his untimely death at the early age of 43 in 1969, he wrote a number of seminal papers on key issues of political morality and the critique of ideology. Posthumously a selection of these papers, edited by Ian Bunting, was published in 1973 under the title *The Ethics of Illegal Action*.[3] Other papers, including one on academic freedom, were published as Occasional Publications by the Rhodes Philosophy department in a series entitled *Philosophical Papers* (the predecessors of the journal subsequently launched from the 1970s). Of particular relevance to our concerns is the paper, 'Oor Akademiese Vryheid', written in Afrikaans and published in Series 2 of the *Philosophical Papers*,[4] along with the essay 'On Loyalty' in *The Ethics of Illegal Action*. Perhaps because they addressed the philosophical fundamentals rather than the political headlines Oosthuizen's papers were not taken up in the manifestoes issued on behalf of the liberal universities at the time. From our different vantage point of a post-apartheid democratic South Africa it may be a salutary exercise to revisit these papers in order to ask such questions as the following:

- What do Daantjie Oosthuizen's critical analyses of the key issues bearing on academic freedom in the 1960s look like today?
- To what extent did they conform with the classic liberal defences of academic freedom articulated at the time?
- Did he conceive of academic freedom primarily in relation to the external threat of state intervention, or to what extent did he address issues of academic freedom within the domestic context of the university?
- What were the explicit or underlying notions of collegiality, autonomy and accountability involved in the articulations of academic freedom at the time compared to current perspectives?
- What could be identified as the legacy of Oosthuizen with a view to the development of a possible critical tradition in the South African context?

I will proceed, after some preliminaries, with a close reading of the paper 'Oor Akademiese Vryheid', taking in some passing references to such other publications of Oosthuizen as may be relevant.

Preliminaries

It may be relevant to our topic of the legacy of Daantjie Oosthuizen that, as a student of philosophy starting out in the 1960s, I had a strong sense of his impact on the philosophical scene although my personal experience of, and contacts with, Daantjie Oosthuizen actually were quite minimal. When I began studying philosophy at Stellenbosch Daantjie had already left the campus and only Johan Degenaar was left of the dissident triumvirate – James Oglethorpe, Daantjie Oosthuizen and Johan Degenaar – who had contributed so markedly as graduate students to the Stellenbosch Philosophy Department over the previous decade. In his detailed account of the Stellenbosch philosophical

tradition, Andrew Nash has shown how the generation of Oosthuizen, Oglethorpe and Degenaar represented both the flowering of an intellectual tradition with deep local roots going back to the 'Liberalism struggle' in the Dutch Reformed Church during the 1860s but also its intellectual crisis as this generation found itself unable to articulate a coherent response to the political and ideological conflicts of the 1940s and 1950s.[5] Quite literally Oosthuizen constituted a direct link between the Stellenbosch tradition and the topic of this Round Table, i.e. the development of a Critical Tradition at Rhodes. At one level his move to Rhodes, along with his years in Oxford in 1962 and 1968, marked Oosthuizen's own shift from phenomenology and existentialism to analytical philosophy; more pertinent to our concerns is the way in which, at another level, he brought to Rhodes key elements of critical thought rooted in the Stellenbosch tradition.

As a first year student at Stellenbosch in 1957 my own induction into philosophy was strongly shaped by two essays standardly set as core requirements for the first year course: one essay on Socrates, and another essay on the nature of the university. As lecturer, Johan Degenaar of course offered a supreme example of the Socratic mode of teaching in practice. More than the philosophico/theological systems of Karl Heim, Arnold Loen and Kierkegaard which constituted the official curriculum of the Stellenbosch Philosophy Department, it was the Socratic tradition of philosophising which had the greatest formative impact. When as a graduate student in the early 1960s I first encountered Daantjie Oosthuizen on a return visit to Stellenbosch from Rhodes we were all initially somewhat bemused by his transformation into an 'analytical philosopher'. But there was no problem in recognising the familiar kindred spirit of the philosopher as a Socratic figure, now studiously fitted out with a pipe, who insisted that he had no authoritative answers to impart and only functioned as a gadfly by questioning our assumptions and stimulating critical questions. I do not recall that we discussed academic freedom, the morality of apartheid or Afrikaner nationalism at the time of this visit. But going by his publications, these were among his core concerns at this time. As we will see below, though, the Socratic figure will provide an important key to the understanding and interpretation of these texts and their relevance to a critical tradition.

Framing the problem of academic freedom

While the official positions of the 'Open Universities' at the time articulated the issue of academic freedom self-evidently as a matter of defending the liberal tradition and its core values, this is not quite the way in which Oosthuizen, for his part, approached the problem of academic freedom in his paper 'Oor Akademiese Vryheid'. Instead he carefully framed his analyses of academic freedom in a number of specific ways which require closer scrutiny. First he specifically framed the entire discussion as a test case for the possibility of

engaging in an 'oop gesprek' (a term taken from Van Wyk Louw and literally meaning an 'open conversation'). Second, he posed the issue of academic freedom in the context of current ideological conflicts, and more specifically of Marxism and Afrikaner Nationalism as against 'Romantic' Traditionalism. (Significantly this framing made no explicit reference to the Liberal tradition). And thirdly, his more detailed analysis of the concept of academic freedom itself was primarily concerned to establish whether, and if so in what way, this term could make any coherent sense at all. Given the gravity of the threats to the universities posed by apartheid legislation and security measures at the time, this amounted to a surprisingly defensive, even self-defeating, strategy. I will briefly deal with the significance and implications of each of these three ways of framing the issue of academic freedom in turn.

(i) Academic freedom: an 'open conversation'?

The most basic and general way in which Oosthuizen framed his analysis of the concept of academic freedom was in terms of the need for, and the possibility of, an 'oop gesprek' about academic freedom. This was a distinctly loaded term. It was above all associated with the premier Afrikaans poet and intellectual N.P. van Wyk Louw who during the 1950s published a series of articles under this rubric in *Die Huisgenoot*, later issued in book form as *Liberale Nasionalisme*.[6] For Louw 'die oop gesprek' had signified a quest for rational and critical intellectual debate, committed to universalist values while remaining grounded in Afrikaner culture and nationalism. Oosthuizen did not share Louw's cultural commitments, not even in the form of 'liberal nationalism' or of 'loyal dissent'.[7] In his most extensive set of papers, published under the title *Analyses of Nationalism* in the first series of *Philosophical Papers*,[8] Oosthuizen provided a clinical and radically sceptical deconstruction of 'Afrikaans', 'Culture', 'Nationalism' and all its works. Yet he appropriated Louw's key term as loadstar for his own analytical and critical enterprise. What was the significance and implications of addressing the issue of academic freedom in terms of the possibility of an 'open conversation'?

Significantly Oosthuizen did *not* locate his analysis of academic freedom in the context of a particular tradition such as the liberal one, seeking to affirm it as a fundamental value or principle within it. On the contrary, his point of departure was the need to escape ideological constructions of all kinds (by implication that of the liberal tradition as well). He started out by pointing to the fact that 'in our country conversations, more especially open conversations, on academic freedom, are a rarity' (p.2).[9] Concerns with academic freedom tended to be just so many ideological constructions which only apparently dealt with the same subject matter but actually were solipsistic monologues talking past each other. In actual practice discourse on academic freedom, as with other topics, tended to consist of 'sermons, speeches, orations, perorations and other forms of monologue', (p.2) and not of an 'open conversation' in any serious

sense. At least two basic conditions had to be met for a proper conversation to be possible on some subject: 'people had to talk about the same matter, and their claims needed to be open to refutation' (p.4). This was not the case with the prevailing ideological conflicts about academic freedom where the different parties each constructed their own self-enclosed intellectual domains. Oosthuizen diagnosed this pervasive intellectual condition as one of 'ideological schizophrenia' in need of 'logical therapy' (p.2). Moreover, within this context there were those who claimed that all discourse was inherently prone to ideological conflicts of this kind, and that an open conversation on subjects like academic freedom was not possible. Oosthuizen took this as his basic challenge: his primary task was to demonstrate the very possibility of an 'open conversation' about academic freedom, i.e. that it was possible for different parties to engage in a discourse where refutable claims could be made regarding the same subject matter. He concluded the paper accordingly: 'I have set out to demonstrate that there are no grounds to claim that an open conversation on academic freedom is impossible' (p.22).

Compared to the prevailing articulations and defences of academic freedom by representatives of the 'Open Universities', Oosthuizen's analysis constituted a significant radicalisation of the problem. Intellectually and philosophically much more was at stake than defending the institutional autonomy of the liberal universities against the onslaught of apartheid ideology and a security state. The ideological challenge to the very possibility of an 'open conversation' on academic freedom involved nothing less than the prospects of any rational and critical intellectual culture as such. In this sense the problem of academic freedom constituted a test case for a non-ideological and rational 'Critical Tradition'. In Oosthuizen's own concluding words: 'My attention was directed at the possibility of an open, honest conversation, rational and progressive, about the concept of academic freedom' (p.22).

ii) Ideological framing of the problem of academic freedom

It will already be evident that Oosthuizen framed the problem of academic freedom primarily in terms of current ideological conflicts. This will not be surprising for a paper written in the 1960s at a time when, domestically, Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid ideology reigned supreme while internationally the ideological conflicts of the Cold War were predominant. However, the precise terms in which Oosthuizen construed the ideological framing of the problem of academic freedom are more than a little unexpected. On the one side he posed those ideologies, specifically Marxism and Nationalism, which constructed the university in instrumental terms as a means to some greater end, be it the emancipation of the proletariat or the survival of the nation (pp. 1-3). (Note that for the purposes of this argument no distinction was made between the ideologies of Marxism and Nationalism). On the other side, though, we do *not* find the ideology of the Liberal tradition as might have been expected in the

circumstances. Instead, Oosthuizen characterised the ideological counterfoil to the instrumentalist ideologies of Marxism and Nationalism as 'a tradional university romanticism (which) considered the university as cut off from all ties to society, and (which) described academic freedom as complete independence of spirit' (p.1).

Implicitly this way of framing the problem of academic freedom amounted to a double critique of that Liberal tradition within which the classic defences of academic freedom by the 'Open Universities' had been located. Not only did Oosthuizen thereby consider the Liberal position as equally 'ideological' compared to Marxism and Nationalism, but the substance of the Liberal position on academic freedom was also characterised in decidedly pejorative terms as one of 'Romanticism'. The pejorative nature of this 'traditional university romanticism' was spelled out in considerable detail and with an unmistakable critical animus: 'Universities, so it is said, have the romantic aura of a long history. The nature of the university lies in its deeply rooted traditions... Just what that nature is can not be easily defined. It is something mystical. It is the representation of art and culture, of scholarship and science, of a transcendence of the mundane and the local, something of especial quality, comprehending the spirit of all ages and places...' (pp.3-4). This traditional university romanticism also informed the liberal conception of academic freedom itself: 'Now it is just this mentality which constitutes academic freedom ... The precious distinctiveness of academics must be protected. Different laws must apply to them than to ordinary business people, mundane politicians or lumbering clerics. True academic freedom can only be nurtured in the absence of any obligations to the state, the church and the nation' (p.4). As an ideological construction, this Liberal Romanticism of academic freedom, just as much as the ideologies of Marxism and Nationalism, constituted an obstacle and threat to an 'open conversation' about academic freedom.

Two questions are raised by Oosthuizen's characterisation of the liberal position on academic freedom as an ideology of traditionalist romanticism. Firstly, can this possibly be an accurate account of Oosthuizen's position?! Could the Chair of Philosophy at Rhodes University in the 1960s, at the time of Verwoerd and Vorster, really have criticised the liberal stance of the 'Open Universities' on academic freedom as an ideology of traditionalist romanticism?! Surely he must have meant to target some popular or distorted version of the liberal position on academic freedom as distinct from the basic principle of institutional autonomy. Surely Oosthuizen could not possibly have disagreed with the substance of academic freedom, adumbrated in the T. B. Davie formula as 'our freedom from external interference in (a) who shall teach, (b) what we teach, (c) how we teach, and (d) whom we teach'. However, on this point the text of his paper 'Oor Akademiese Vryheid' was quite clear. This was how he summarised the 'traditionalist romantic' position on academic teaching:

> Traditionalists for their part will claim that the individual lecturer must be the sole arbiter on what he considers as true; this means that academic freedom consists in the absence of interference in the right of a lecturer to say what he wants and, if needed, to tamper with the illusions of the youth entrusted to his care (p.12).

There could be no doubt that it was the T.B. Davie principle of academic freedom itself which he had in his sights in targeting the 'traditionalist romantic' position on academic freedom. But if Oosthuizen thus unambiguously cricitised the liberal principle of academic freedom as an ideology of traditionalist romanticism, then this must give rise to the second question: What, then, was his own position on these issues? What, if anything, did he propose as the meaning of academic freedom in place of the T.B. Davie formula of liberal academic freedom espoused by the 'Open Universities'? I shall return to this issue below. For the moment we only need to note the radical implications of Oosthuizen's ideological framing of the problem of academic freedom as applied to the liberal tradition itself.

(iii) Problematising the coherence of the concept of academic freedom

The third and perhaps most radical way in which Oosthuizen framed his analysis of the concept of academic freedom was by problematising its significance and coherence. This could not simply be taken for granted but needed to be demonstrated through rigorous analysis which Oosthuizen set out to do in his paper. As a 'strategic' move in the political context of the 1960s this must have appeared to be astonishingly wrong-headed. With the liberal universities under direct threat of intervention by the apartheid government of Verwoerd and Vorster and in the face of increasing political censorship, of the bannings and detentions of academics, of security crackdowns on student movements, etc. the response of the Chair of Philosophy at Rhodes University on the issue of academic freedom was that, first of all, it was necessary to demonstrate the significance and coherence of this concept through rigorous analysis! Evidently this was not primarily meant to impress the Security Police or the ideologues of apartheid. Nor could it have been very effective as a rallying call for beleagured academics in the ranks of the universities at the time. Why did Oosthuizen find it necessary to opt for such a defensive, if not self-defeating, 'strategy' on the issue of academic freedom?

From his paper two answers would appear, one directly and the other more indirectly. The direct explanation was the extent to which discourse on academic freedom at the time had become ideologised. As we have seen, in Oosthuizen's view the prevalence of ideological constructions of academic freedom on all sides precluded any proper conversation on this topic: 'Such ideological views of academic freedom only seem to be concerned with the same topic and are thus unable to enter into a conversation. Attempts to reach agreement at least on the topic to be discussed are hindered by an ideological dialectic which make the meanings of words dependent on world views' (p.1).

This amounted to a pathological condition of 'ideological schizophrenia' which required 'logical therapy' (p.2). Here Oosthuizen is implicitly alluding to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. Indeed, his logical therapy for the schizophrenic condition of ideological discourse on academic freedom consisted in a dose of ordinary language analysis: the way to establishing the significance of the concept of academic freedom consisted in analysing 'what we can learn from the ordinary, everyday usage of words in Afrikaans or English' (p.1). Presumably, though, this also committed him to the Wittgensteinian position that in its own right philosophy could not provide any substantive truths or principles, and that its logical therapy could at best 'show the fly the way out of the fly bottle'.[10] This was one version of the prevailing consensus in analytical philosophy during the 1950s and 1960s that, as a substantive discipline capable of discovering truths measuring up to the criteria of scientific knowledge, 'political philosophy was dead'.[11] Normative theory could not, and should not, make any claims to authoritative insight on issues of practical policy and morality. (It would only be during the following decades that 'grand theory' would make a comeback led by Rawls' *Theory of Justice*). Faced with an urgent practical and political issue like that of academic freedom and the plight of the open universities in an apartheid society, the philosopher could not, and Oosthuizen certainly did not, make any claims to special expertise or authoritative insight. As a possible defender of the significance of academic freedom the philosopher was the most vulnerable of champions: in Oosthuizen's view the philosopher had to make his case 'in the market place' (pp.8ff) – an implicit reference to Socrates – but in that rough and tumble he would not be able to count on any special expertise.

It was in this self-consciously humble spirit, then, that as an 'gnorant' philosopher, i.e. one who like Socrates knows that he does not know, Oosthuizen posed the basic problem of the significance of the concept of academic freedom. 'The crux of the matter lies in the question: what criterion do we utilise to determine whether we are dealing with true or fake academic freedom? How do we know when we are dealing with the true Jacob or with imposters? That is indeed the crucial issue' (p.2). The way forward, he proposed in Wittgensteinian spirit, was to apply the logical therapy of analysing the rules of ordinary usage to the domain of academic freedom: 'We have to start down to earth... with the question of the market place: what do we understand under the term "academic freedom" in ordinary usage... The question is what are the criteria of significance in using this concept' (pp. 8,11). That may not have been the most effective strategy to counter the onslaught of the apartheid state on academic freedom in the universities, but it was the intellectually honest place for the (Socratic) philosopher to start.

Logical therapy: Analysing the concept of academic freedom

Having posed the problem of academic freedom not only in opposition to the prevailing ideological constructions, but also as a concept whose very significance and coherence needed to be established, Oosthuizen turned to his constructive analysis of, and argument for, academic freedom. His analysis proceeded in two stages. First, he analysed the logic of the basic concept of freedom, and secondly he turned to the significance of academic freedom by means of an analysis of the meaning of the core academic action of 'teaching'. In terms of his Wittgensteinian conception of philosophical analysis as 'logical therapy', both cases focused on the rules of these terms in ordinary usage in order to dispel the schizophrenic hold of the prevailing ideological constructions.

(i) The logic of 'freedom'

Oosthuizen's basic analysis of the logic of 'freedom' unsurprisingly followed the standard accounts by Isaiah Berlin and others of liberty as *negative freedom*.[12] He rejected the essentialist conception of 'freedom' as naming some typical condition or state. Freedom is a relational and contextual concept typically expressed in terms of 'being free from … (some obstacle or coercion)': 'The expression "I am free ..." is logically incomplete. ... The concept "feedom" is primarily a negative concept ... implying an obstacle, coercion or obligation which has been removed' (p.9). Significantly Oosthuizen found no reason to refer to 'positive freedom' in Berlin's sense of 'freedom to...', except in a derivative sense: 'Freedom means "to be rid of", and implies "so that I am now able to."' (p.9). The relevant point, for him, was that in ordinary usage it made no sense to speak of freedom in general: 'Freedom, obstruction, coercion and obligation are relative concepts, and utterly context determined in their scope' (p.10). It followed that the standard distinctions between political freedom, economic freedom, personal freedom and academic freedom did not refer to different *types* of freedom each with their distinctive properties. Instead, in all these cases 'freedom' had the same negative and relational force; in each case it implied the absence of the respective obstacles, interferences or coercions applying in political, economic, personal or academic contexts.

For Oosthuizen this first stage of the analysis established two main conclusions: First, it showed that in ordinary usage 'freedom' did have a specific conceptual logic. There are (prescriptive) *rules* of usage to which we are bound in order to make coherent sense in practical discourse. The meaning of (academic) freedom, i.e. how we talk of '(academic) freedom' in ordinary (non-ideological) usage, is no arbitrary matter but needs to conform to the conceptual rules of ordinary (non-ideological) usage (pp.10-11). Secondly, the relevant question with regard to the concept of academic freedom was: 'which

forms of coercion, constraints, obstacles or obligation need to be removed before certain actions or institutions deserve to be characterised as "academic"' (p.11). The analysis of the relevant meaning of academic freedom thus leads on to an analysis of such core *academic* actions as 'teaching' and 'research'.

(ii) The significance of (academic) 'teaching'

With the second stage of his analysis Oosthuizen turned to the significance of the academic action of 'teaching', and with this we come to the heart of the matter for his understanding of academic freedom. His analysis of the significance of 'teaching' as an *academic* activity has a number of unexpected and indeed provocative features, and will lead us on to his conception of' 'an open conversation' and the nature of a possible critical tradition. To begin with, Oosthuizen rejected the common conception that academic teaching basically consisted in the transference of authoritative information by lecturers to students. Indeed, he deemed this process as amounting to *indoctrination*, using this latter term in an objective rather than in a pejorative sense (p.11). The transfer-of-information model of teaching did not go to the core of the actual practice of academic teaching at universities. 'Indeed', according to Oosthuizen, 'the measure of success for a lecture in some disciplines is often the opposite from what you would expect on this model; not that students come with questions to a class and go away with information, but that they come to class with information and go away with questions ...' (p.12). In practice the criteria we use to assess academic teaching did not so much apply to the truth or falsity of the lecturer's statements per se, but were rather concerned with their appropriateness or relevance ['saaklikheid'], to-the-pointness ['juistheid'] and analytical fertility. 'The character of lecturing in many subjects counts against the information-theory of academic teaching: instruction by means of formal lectures are often, and sometimes mainly, the opposite of indoctrination, i.e. the opposite of the presentation of "true" answers to ignorant, questioning students by encyclopedic, authoritative experts' (p.13). Moreover, the transfer-of-information conception of teaching played into the hands of ideological constructions of academic freedom: 'Teaching would only then be considered "academic" if the information conveyed by the lecturers was "true"... But in the humanities issues tend to become ideologised, and then not the academy, but the nation or the proletariat becomes the arbiter [of "truth"]' (p.12).

How then should we understand the meaning of academic teaching? Ultimately, for Oosthuizen, the paradigm for academic teaching is provided by the figure of Socrates, and we shall return to the significance and implications of the Socratic model not only for academic freedom but also for the nature of a critical tradition. At another level, though, Oosthuizen explicated the meaning of academic teaching with reference to Ryle's distinction between two kinds of knowledge, i.e. *knowing that* and *knowing how* (pp.13-14).[13] The crucial point was that it was *knowing how*, the inculcation of academic and scientific skills in

students enabling then to engage in independent rational thinking and research, rather than *knowing that*, the transmission of 'truths' or authoritative information to previously ignorant minds, which lay at the core of academic teaching. Students needed to be taught *how* to solve intellectual problems, *how* to apply basic rules and principles, *how* to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant questions or between logical and fallacious reasoning. This required practice, while it was also the case that the effective demonstration of these basic academic skills was not the same thing as the ability to say, at an abstract and general level, *what* these academic rules actually were (p.14). In short, Oosthuizen concluded that 'academic teaching is primarily concerned with the inculcation of techniques of analysis, reasoning and research... Lecturing does not in the first place aim at the dissemination of "truths"... Academic teaching is in the first place concerned with the initiation of students in the necessary knowing-how skills enabling them to do independent research' (pp. 14-15).

(iii) A discipline-based concept of academic freedom

What are the implications of this analysis of the significance of academic teaching for the concept of academic freedom? Here we can return to the core question for the meaning of 'freedom' in the academic context which had previously been identified as that regarding 'which forms of coercion, constraints, obstacles or obligation need to be removed before certain actions or institutions deserve to be characterised as "academic"' (p.11). More specifically, what were the implications for the nature of academic freedom if teaching primarily consisted in the inculcation of basic academic *knowing how*-skills? Taken together, Oosthuizen argued, a set of basic *knowing-how* skills constituted the nature of a particular academic *discipline:* 'The knowing how-techniques of a particular science constitute a discipline. The qualification "academic" is attributed to teaching or research in the first place because these actions are based on the acceptance of a particular discipline' (p.15). The meaning of academic freedom thus implicitly referred to the distinctive requirements of a particular *discipline*: 'Accordingly "academic freedom" refers to the absence of those factors which would be obstructive or irrelevant to the practice of that discipline, and to the presence of those factors which are conducive for, and relevant to, the conduct of that discipline. Stupid students or inebriated lecturers, for example, may be inhibiting to the practice of a discipline ...' (p.15). We may add that this analysis of the meaning of academic freedom nicely serves to distinguish it from *freedom of speech* with which it is often conflated. *Academic freedom* is *not* a matter of freedom of speech in the particular contexts of the campus or the class room; on the contrary, academic freedom as defined by the *disciplinary* constraints distinctive of academic teaching and research will often inhibit the freedom of speech of students as well as lecturers. Both lecturers and students are *not* free to say whatever they

want in the class room or in their writing, at least if they wanted their work to be regarded as 'academic' in terms of the relevant disciplines.

A number of further implications followed from this conception of the *discipline* as the relevant context for the meaning of academic freedom. Thus it followed that threats to academic freedom may arise not only from *external* intervention in, or coercion of, the university but as much from *internal* sources, even from academics themselves. 'According to this measure it would be a breach of academic freedom if an academic is obliged, *or himself decides*, to assess students and lecturers by criteria which are irrelevant to the practice of a particular discipline. From the nature of the case criteria such as race, ethnic origin, social standing or ideological convictions would not be relevant here... The only question which may be utilised as criterion for discrimination consistent with academic freedom, is whether students and lecturers dispose of the necessary abilities and are committed to strict disciplinary requirements' (p.15, underscoring in the original). Up to a point this assertion of academic freedom coincided with the well-known formulations adopted by the 'Open Universities' in the particular context of the universities in apartheid society. But only up to a point: the difference is that the *disciplinary-based* conception of academic freedom was not primarily about the institutional autonomy of the universities. Indeed, for Oosthuizen the institutional structures of the university could well pose threats to academic freedom. Among the potential threats to academic freedom were the university executive and even Senate itself: 'It would be outside the competence of the Rector of a university to make my personal motivations for a particular research project a disciplinary matter, or to oblige me by a Senate decision to focus my attention on a subordinate question within my disciplinary area, or to desist from research into a matter considered to be outside my terrain. Senate may well make a friendly request of academics. It's a free country ["Vra is vry"]. *But Senate does not have the competence to oblige me*' (p.19, italics added). The disciplinary-based conception of academic freedom thus meant that, in the last instance, academics themselves were its sole guardians. Academic freedom did not so much mean that, free from external interventions, academics should be left to their own devices and given a licence to do and say whatever they wanted within the protected space of the university. On the contrary, academic freedom only made sense within the bounds of academics' own commitment to the disciplinary constraints constitutive of academic teaching and research. If academics themselves should fail in living up to this basic commitment then they would be responsible for the demise of academic freedom: 'If we ourselves for ideological reasons do not comply with the obligations our disciplines impose on us, then we may one day discover that *we* have denied our universities their very right to existence' (p.21, underscoring in the original).

(iv) (Academic) loyalty and the 'unseen university'

The relevant historical background to this determinedly self-critical view of the university and its institutional structures and practices may well have been the legacy of the 'Swart affair' at Rhodes as explained by Ian Bunting in his 'Introduction' to *The Ethics of Illegal Action* in relation to a cognate paper by Oosthuizen, 'On Loyalty'. In 1962 Rhodes's University Senate and Council had resolved to award an honorary degree to the then State President, Mr. C.R. Swart. When this led to a furore amongst members of staff and 26 Senate members signed a public letter of protest dissociating them from the award of this degree, they were castigated by senior members of the University on the grounds of 'disloyalty to Rhodes'.[14] In his paper 'On Loyalty', Oosthuizen distinguished between (contractual) fealty and loyalty proper where the latter implicitly involved a reference to shared moral and political principles and aims, the 'spirit' informing a joint enterprise rather than the formal rules. In the case of a university loyalty would thus relate to certain ideals such as the pursuit of truth, standards of intellectual integrity etc ('On Loyalty', pp. 33-34). The proper locus of academic loyalty is thus the 'unseen university' or 'unseen body of scholars', 'of which one is at least tacitly a member by joining a university staff or when enrolling as a student... For many people, and I may say, for many universities, it is of the *essence* of the obligations of all university teachers and students to uphold the often unspoken principles of this unseen college' ('On Loyalty', p.34, italics in the original). Thus understood loyalty to the 'unseen university' may actually require academics to disassociate themselves in protest from academically repugnant actions by the authorities of a particular university: 'It is not only one's right but one's duty, as a member of the invisible college... to disassociate oneself from a ruling which one finds repugnant' ('On Loyalty', p.34). In short, the institutional authorities even at liberal universities are not necessarily the best repositories for the ideals and principles of committed academic life while academics themselves may also in practice fail to live up to their own basic commitments.

This analysis of the somewhat paradoxical nature of 'academic loyalty' was evidently of a piece with Oosthuizen's position on the meaning of academic freedom. Not the institutional authorities of universities, nor even the body of academics themselves, can always be trusted to uphold academic freedom. In terms of a discipline-based conception of academic freedom they are all accountable to the 'unseen university' or 'unseen body of scholars'. In that sense Oosthuizen basically held a *collegial* view of academic freedom. Just what this would mean in practical or procedural terms is, of course, a different matter and one to which we may return in the conclusion.

Education, society and the state: The Socratic paradigm and the prospects for a Critical Tradition

To complete our account of Oosthuizen's exploration of the meaning of academic freedom I will turn to some enigmatic pronouncements thrown out in the latter parts of his paper. These concern his views, on the one hand, regarding the non-instrumental nature of *education* and, on the other, the position of *research on contract.* His pronouncements on these issues may give us some insight into his position on the relationship between universities and society as well as the state. In conjunction with some reflections on the significance of the Socratic paradigm this will enable us to consider the implications for the prospects of a Critical Tradition.

(i) The non-instrumentalist nature of (higher) education

Firstly, Oosthuizen's pronouncements on the nature of *education*. In the context of his analysis of the significance of academic 'teaching' (see above), Oosthuizen also made some cryptic statements regarding the nature of university education. To begin with, he endorsed the view that the university is not an 'ivory tower', and agreed that academic claims needed to take account of practical realities (p.16). Academic teaching was only part of a more comprehensive process, that of higher education. However, if universities are considered as institutions of (higher) education then it did not follow that they should serve some ulterior end: 'The end of education is sometimes sought outside education, and sometimes in the nature of education itself... The validity of both of these views depends on a basic assumption: that it makes sense to speak of the end of education. Both types of view presuppose that education... may be considered as a means to an end or as an end for certain means' (p.16). Oosthuizen categorically rejected all such *instrumentalist* conceptions of education. Being, or becoming, an 'educated person' was neither a means to some other end, nor an end in itself: 'If education is an instrumental means to some end, then it must be something like a taxi cab, or even worse, something like an individual taxi trip. And if it is an end, then it must be something which disappears when it has been reached' (p.17). But, in his view, education should not be considered as a process nor as a mental state at all; rather, it served as a criterion of assessment: 'Education refers to training processes of which we approve; "being educated" refers to the possession of certain humane skills ("menslike kundighede")' (p.18). This radically non-instrumentalist conception of education may perhaps be compared to the Humboldtian ideal of *Bildung*. Consider, for instance, Gadamer's account of the notion of *Bildung* in this tradition: 'Like nature, *Bildung* has no goals outside itself... In having no goals outside itself, the concept of *Bildung* transcends that of the mere cultivation of given talents, from which concept it is derived.... In *Bildung* ... that by which and through which one is formed

becomes completely one's own. To some extent everything that is received is absorbed, but in *Bildung* what is absorbed is not like a means that has lost its function. Rather, in acquired *Bildung* nothing disappear, but everything is preserved'.[15] Even so, the question remained as to what the relation of this kind of education practised at universities might be to the wider society and the state, more especially if the university was *not* to be an ivory tower.

Oosthuizen did not, at least in this paper, provide any explicit or extensive answers to this question. Perhaps one way to see what might be involved would be to reflect on the implications of the Socratic paradigm for the relationship of university education to society. In the context of his analysis of the significance of 'teaching' as an academic activity Oosthuizen raised the question whether, or in what sense, a Socratic teacher could make his students knowledgeable (p.13). More generally, the question would be what kind of impact or consequence a 'Socratic' higher education would have on society. The answer would, of course, in large part depend on the kind of society and state involved. In the case of an authoritarian society and/or an absolutist state 'Socratic' institutions of higher education are bound to have a subversive function. The Socratic method of teaching and education would tend to raise disturbing and unsettling questions in young minds about religious doctrines, established social norms and political truths. This was pretty much how Oosthuizen saw the university in his own time, embattled as it was by ideological certainties on all sides. But what if the external context for institutions of higher education is different, if they found themselves in an open society, amidst a pluralist culture and in a democratic state? What would be the function and significance of a Socratic mode of higher education in a liberal democracy? That is a question which Oosthuizen did not face, but which is very much pertinent to academic freedom in the 'new' post-apartheid South Africa.

(ii) Commerce-based research

Secondly, Oosthuizen's remarks on the position of *research on contract.* In the final pages of his paper Oosthuizen considered the differences between universities proper and research institutes run for commercial purposes. His purpose in making this comparison was, as we have seen, to bring out the distinctive ways in which academic activities such as teaching and research at universities should *not* be subject to extraneous controls or interference, even those exercised by the institutional authorities of the university itself. Given this, his remarks on the position regarding research on contract were surprising, and had significant implications. Assuming that the research done at research institutes for commercial purposes measured up to strict scientific standards, Oosthuizen was quite prepared to allow the director of an industrial research institute the powers he denied to the Rector of a University and even to the Academic Senate, i.e. to direct and circumscribe the conduct of particular research projects: 'The ability to oblige [individual researchers] does not fall outside the

competence of a director of an industrial research institute. The limits of the research, in terms of desirable as well as of permitted research, are in this case determined by the needs of society, and not just by disciplinary requirements' (p.19). In other words, in the case of research on contract this could be considered in purely instrumental terms, as a means to an end. But then, by implication, why would the same not hold in the case of the relation between the state and universities? In Oosthuizen's view this was the basic mistake made by Marxist and nationalist ideologies: they applied the relationship which obtained between a commercial enterprise and a commercially-based research institute to that which obtained between the state and universities. Still the question remained: why *should* the same relation not hold in this case? If the state subsidised universities, should it not similarly 'have the right to participate in the selection of students and lecturers, and to limit or direct research on the basis of extra-academic criteria' (p.19)? Oosthuizen's response came in two parts: first, he strongly affirmed that this just *is* the difference between a university in the proper sense and a commercially-based research institute that the former, unlike the latter, should not be subject to direction on the basis of extra-academic criteria. And if this is perhaps not an entirely satisfactory answer, then the second part of his response was that the issue 'in the first place concerned the nature of the state and only in passing touched on the nature of the university' (p.19).

(iii) The relationship between university and (authoritarian / democratic) state

At first sight this response by Oosthuizen might seem simply to dodge the question whether the state does not have a right to intervene in the affairs of the universities it subsidised, and to do so on the basis of extra-academic social goals or political policies. But on reflection his argument did raise some key issues worth further consideration. In the context of an apartheid society Oosthuizen was concerned with ideological approaches assuming an absolutist state which allowed no independent right of existence to other institutions of civil society: 'The argument posits an absolutist state according to which a university, *like any other institution*, could have no claims to rights or privileges against the state' (p.20, underscoring in the original). But in such an authoritarian or totalitarian society it followed that a university could exist, if at all, only on the terms dictated by the state: 'A totalitarian state of course always has the right, or rather the power, openly to negate the right of existence of a university by meddling with its rights and privileges, or toying with its subsidy. Every intervention of this kind affect not only those rights and privileges of the university but its very right of existence' (pp.20-21). This is clear and logical enough, but Oosthuizen's particular concern was with a more complex and ambiguous state of affairs, that where universities claimed some right of existence in the midst of an apartheid society and despite the threats of a

would-be absolutist state. The anomalous presence of independent institutions of civil society in such circumstances must imply a very different relationship to the state; they certainly could not owe their right of existence to the state. On the contrary, such a right of existence would have to be achieved *despite* the claims of the would-be absolutist state on them. This seems to be the force of Oosthuizen's cryptic statements that 'to say that a university has a right of existence in society implies that universities *must* have rights and privileges in that society. If a university has a right of existence in a society, then it ipso facto has the right to exercise those functions without which it could not be called a university' (p.20, underscoring in the original). With this we are thus back with the *discipline-based concept of academic freedom* at the heart of the university.

It is a pity that Oosthuizen did not further pursue these intriguing comments on the anomalous position of universities as the harbingers of an independent civil society in the midst of the apartheid society and in relation to a would-be absolutist state. But in so far as this is primarily an argument about the nature of the state, and only secondarily about the nature of the university, it must – at least from our present position in a post-apartheid and democratic society – raise some equally intriguing questions about the converse set of implications following from the democratisation of the state. If the *absolutist* state could not claim to direct the academic affairs of a university except by force of power, since to begin with it did not recognise the university's right of existence, what was the position in the case of a *democratic* state? If universities were subsidised by a *democratic* state, would that democratic state not have the right to participate in the selection of students and lecturers, and to limit or direct research on the basis of extra-academic criteria? Much would, of course, depend on the 'democratic' character of the state. If this amounted to a formal or procedural political democracy only, otherwise leaving the authoritarian and exclusionary social structures in place, this would presumably not make much of a difference to Oosthuizen's analysis of the relationship between the state and the university. But what if this was a *democratic* state and society in a more serious sense, one marked by a strong and independent civil society, a constitutional state with a robust civil rights culture, and one where the state governed on the basis of a proper democratic mandate? What would be the nature of the relation between universities and such a *democratic* state? If public resources are utilised to subsidise universities in such a democratic state and society, could this be claimed as their right by universities – while they at the same time refused accountability except on the basis of academic criteria? In a democratic state committed to recognising the right of existence of universities in general, and more specifically to recognise academic freedom in particular, the converse implication also follows, i.e. that academic freedom must be consistent with democratic accountability. This seems to be the current charge of Oosthuizen's legacy: can a disciplinary-based conception of academic freedom be reconciled with general notions of democratic accountability

applied to universities as part of an independent civil society? What would that amount to, both in principle and in practice?

In Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to offer some comments and assessments from our current perspective in a post-apartheid and democratic South Africa. My first comment concerns Oosthuizen's analysis of the meaning of academic freedom in relation to the classic articulations by the representatives of the 'Open Universities'. Implicitly and effectively, as we have seen, Oosthuizen's analysis amounted to a trenchant critique of this conventional defence of academic freedom within the liberal tradition as a 'Romantic Traditionalism'. Yet in the end the question must be raised how, or to what extent, his own discipline-based conception of academic freedom, in conjunction with cognate notions of academic loyalty to the 'unseen university', actually differed in substance from the 'Romantic Traditionalism' he rejected. My second comment concerns the implications for Oosthuizen's analysis of academic freedom of the shift in the external context from that of ideological conflict in an apartheid society to that of a post-apartheid and democratic state. More specifically I will be concerned with the implications of his notions of a non-instrumentalist (higher) education in conjunction with the Socratic paradigm for the prospects of a critical tradition in the context of a post-apartheid and democratic society and state.

(i) A (romantic and traditionalist) liberal despite himself?

My first comment concerns Oosthuizen's relation to the liberal tradition and the conception of academic freedom articulated by the 'Open Universities' at the time. As we have seen it was a notable (and perhaps unexpected) feature of Oosthuizen's analysis of academic freedom that he not only did not locate his own approach within the liberal tradition but implicitly rejected it in terms of a 'Romantic Traditionalism'. Moreover and more specifically, not only did he reject the 'Open Universities' concern with the institutional autonomy of the university as the core of academic freedom and instead argued for a different *discipline-based* conception of academic freedom, but he also characterised as 'traditionalist and romantic' the position 'that academic freedom consists in the absence of interference in the right of the lecturer to say what he wants' (p.12), i.e. one of the core components of the T.B. Davie formula. Yet when he came to spell out the specifics and implications of his own *discipline-based* conception of academic freedom we found that in practice these largely coincided with the familiar formulations adopted by the 'Open Universities' in terms of the T.B. Davie principles. Except for the latter's concern with the institutional autonomy of the universities, Oosthuizen's notion of academic freedom in

practice largely coincided – though for different reasons – with the liberal position. Where did that leave him in relation to the liberal tradition?

The vital question, of course, is how and by whom Oosthuizen's discipline-based conception of academic freedom could be given substance in practice: if it did not amount to academic license but involved a suitable form of *academic accountability*, then just what procedures or practices did this require? In principle it represented some sort of *collegial* notion of the university but precisely because of Oosthuizen's suspicion that institutional authorities could not be trusted as the guardians of academic freedom, his position gravitated to the notion of the 'unseen university or 'unseen college' espoused in his cognate paper 'On Loyalty'. But at this point it is hard not to turn Oosthuizen's pejorative castigation of 'traditional university romanticism' against himself. How did his *collegial* notion of the 'unseen university' differ from that deeply-rooted traditionalist conception whose nature 'cannot be easily defined. It is something mystical. It is the representation of art and culture, of scholarship and science, of a transcendence of the mundane and the local, something of especial quality, comprehending the spirit of all ages and places...' (pp.3-4)? Only if Oosthuizen could provide a tough-minded account of the implications of his disciplinary-based conception of academic freedom, insisting on the specific rules and obligations of the basic academic skills constituting a *discipline* rather than any 'mystical' notion of collegiality, would it be possible to differentiate his position from that of the 'romantic traditionalist'. In these writings he did not (yet) provide such a tough-minded account; based on his Rylean commitment to the development of 'knowing-how' academic skills. We may suspect that he would have been supportive of latter-day approaches to 'Critical Thinking'. But in the light of our recent experience in introducing critical academic skills-teaching into the core curriculum of the Humanities it is also fair to say that much more will be required than the basic Rylean distinction between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. In short, the implications of a discipline-based conception of academic freedom consistent with academic accountability still need to spelled out in more specific terms.

(ii) A Socratic critical tradition and the challenges of democratic transition

Secondly I would like to consider some of the challenges and implications of the democratic transition to a post-apartheid society for Oosthuizen's conception of academic freedom and of a Socratic critical tradition in higher education. There is a sense in which Oosthuizen's analyses of academic freedom in the context of the apartheid state and society of the 1960s were so profoundly *oppositional* in nature that he did not even begin to take on the more constructive challenges of thinking through the function of higher education and the role of a Socratic critical tradition in a more democratic society. This is

entirely understandable, and it would be anachronistic to expect that Oosthuizen could and should have addressed our contemporary problems from the very different vantage point of his own time. Nevertheless, our own current reflections on *the legacy* of Daantjie Oosthuizen must take up this challenge. In this regard it is relevant that, in passing, Oosthuizen several times indicated in the course of his analyses of academic freedom and of the nature of academic education and research that, in some sense, the more fundamental questions concerned the character of the state and society rather than just of the university per se. These are indications that Oosthuizen would have accepted that the transition to a democratic and post-apartheid South Africa requires a re-thinking of his conceptions of academic freedom and the nature of higher education. Would, or could, this rethinking also require a substantial modification in his *discipline-based* conception of academic freedom and of his *non-instrumentalist* conception of higher education?

In this regard it is worth pointing out that in the South African context, certainly compared to the 1960s, the transition to a democratic and post-apartheid society did not amount only to a radical change in the *external context* of the universities. It is not the case that Rhodes, or other South African universities of the 1960s, now find themselves confronted with a majority ANC government rather than the white minority rule of the Verwoerdian NP. Over that period the universities themselves have also changed in as radical ways, and not only in terms of the 'transformation' of their student bodies and to a lesser extent their staffing profiles but even more so through the expansion from small elite institutions to massified institutions of higher education, through the impact of the 'managerial revolution' on the governance structures of the universities themselves, and through a basic reorientation in their relation to the market place. This is not the place to provide a proper analysis of these profound changes in university culture and academic practice – except to ask what their implications might be for Oosthuizen's *discipline-based* conception of academic freedom and of his *non-instrumentalist* conception of higher education. On both counts it has to be said that these notions, attractive as they remain, are to some extent bound up with the different character of the universities of Oosthuizen's own time. Consider what we would understand under the notion of *academic disciplines* then and now. In Oosthuizen's case he evidently assumed that this idea referred primarily to the core disciplines of the Humanities, which in turn was the core Faculty of the University. Without saying so, he presumably also assumed that such disciplines were located in academic departments and vested in the Chair. Given the small scale and elitist nature of universities at the time this implicitly provided a fairly clear basis for definite notions of academic *disciplines.* But in one way or another most of that has changed. In the complex institutions of higher education of today, where the Humanities Faculties have been effectively marginalised, where departments increasingly are taken up in interdisciplinary programmes or 'Schools', where

the academic Chair and the Head of the Department more often than not has been disassociated, it is no longer at all clear what the very notion of academic *disciplines* entail. There are those who take all of this as so many reasons to indulge in nostalgic reminiscences of the way things were. But there can be no question of replicating the small elitist universities of 50 years ago in current circumstances, and I cannot think that Daantjie Oosthuizen would have wanted that effectively to be his legacy. That would indeed amount to a 'romantic traditionalism' with a vengeance! But if not nostalgia and romantic traditionalism, then we need to re-think the relevance of a *discipline-based* conception of academic freedom anew in our radically changed circumstances. Oosthuizen himself offered relatively little guidelines. It will be up to ourselves to think through whether a discipline-based conception of academic freedom in the context of contemporary universities still make sense.

Finally we may also consider the implications of Oosthuizen's non-instrumentalist conception of (higher) education in conjunction with the Socratic paradigm for the prospects of a critical tradition in the context of a democratised society and state. Would democracy make any difference to what Oosthuizen said about the radically non-instrumentalist nature of education, i.e. that it did not serve some ulterior end nor was it an end in itself? Perhaps not, and we should also not make too much of his otherwise intriguing comment that research on contract, unlike non-commercial research, could be subject to extraneous interference and direction for non-academic purposes. But the continuing relevance of the Socratic paradigm raises more interesting questions. As we have seen, the Socratic approach was bound to have a subversive function in the context of an authoritarian society and/or an absolutist state by raising unsettling questions in young minds regarding established truths. And in a democracy?! Would the difference be that in a democracy the critical thrust of the Socratic approach in higher education would be welcomed – and that it would thus no longer have the same general subversive function? To the extent that freedom of thought and expression as well as the right to opposition become institutionalised in a liberal democracy it would seem that a Socratic or 'critical tradition' would no longer have the same basic oppositional character. This may indicate a certain domestication of the Socratic spirit and the critical tradition (Marcuse's liberal tolerance as official ideology?) Or would it be incumbent on the Socratic approach and critical tradition to turn the tables precisely on these constitutive features of a liberal democracy? Somehow this amounts to a rather formalistic and empty reductio ad absurdum. Similarly the alternative option, i.e. that in a democracy there would no longer be any basic need for a critical approach, surely cannot be taken seriously. Living in our new South African democracy we must be only too well aware of the many and diverse challenges calling for a living critical tradition. The problem is just that we no longer have sufficient clarity about the function and significance of that critical tradition in our new democracy. The

legacy of Daantjie Oosthuizen is the injunction that we should return to the market place to rediscover the relevance of the Socratic spirit. Nor should we be at all surprised at the continuing need for a critical tradition even and especially in a democracy. After all, the historical Socrates operated in the historical birth-place of democracy itself (and consider his fate?!).

Notes

1. Rhodes University was not included in the declarations and publications initiated by the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand on behalf of the 'Open Universities' at the time.
2. See also André du Toit, 'From Autonomy to Accountability: Academic Freedom under Threat in South Africa?', *Social Dynamics* 2000 (26/1) pp. 75-133.
3. D.C.S. Oosthuizen, *The Ethics of Illegal Action and other Essays*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press SPRO-CAS, 1973.
4. D.C.S. Oosthuizen, 'Oor Akademiese Vryheid', *Occasional Papers*, (ed.), Rintelen Van Straaten, No 3, Philosophy Dept Rhodes University, March 1967.
5. Andrew Nash, *The Dialectical Tradition in South Africa*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2000, pp.125-139; cf also Nash, 'How Kierkegaard came to Stellenbosch: The transformation of the Stellenbosch philosophical tradition, 1947-1950', *South African Journal of Philosophy* 1997 (16/4) pp.129-139.
6. N.P. Van Wyk Louw, *Liberale Nasionalisme*, Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1958.
7. Cf. ibid., *Lojale Verset*, Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1939.
8. D.C.S. Oosthuizen, *Analyses of Nationalism*, Occasional Papers, No.1, Dept of Philosophy, Rhodes University, January 1965.
9. Ibid., 'Oor Akademiese Vryheid', *Occasional Papers* No.3 (1967). All citations from this paper have been translated.
10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1953, p.103.
11. P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1956, Preface p.vii.
12. Sir Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Freedom', in A Quinton (ed.), *Political Philosophy*, Oxford: OUP, 1965.
13. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, London: Hutchinson, 1949, Ch 2.; cf. Ryle, 'Knowing How and Knowing That', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 46 (1946).
14. Ian Bunting, 'Introduction', in Oosthuizen, *Ethics of Illegal Action*, p.6.
15. H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 1982, pp. 11-12.

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Dialogue Alone: D. C. S. Oosthuizen's Engagement with Three Philosophical Generations

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I Introduction

The legacy of D. C. S. Oosthuizen is best approached by viewing his work as an ongoing engagement with the philosophical ideas and assumptions of his time. In this discussion, I will try to interpret his work from something of a bird's eye view as engaging in dialogue with three philosophical generations: the Afrikaner intellectuals of his own generation; the liberal and broadly secular culture of English-language South African universities in the 1960s; and the new radicalism emerging after Sharpeville, initially in such contexts as the University Christian Movement, that was to become prominent in the 1980s, a decade after Oosthuizen's death.

I do not mean by this to suggest that these three generational engagements represent three different periods of Oosthuizen's life. In various ways they overlap with and inform each other. But I believe that understanding their continuity is essential to grasping the integrity of Oosthuizen's work. That integrity – the sense of his being 'made out of one piece', in the Afrikaans usage, rather than presenting different personae to the world according to what circumstances required – made a lasting impression on those who knew him.

I would surmise that it is also part of the reason why Oosthuizen's name is linked to the celebration of academic freedom at Rhodes University. For academic freedom is not just a legal right that a university enjoys in a formal and passive sense, but a commitment to constantly exploring the vital questions of the day in an honest and forthright way, without being swayed by considerations of power or fashion.

In classical Greece, the terms referring to free speech did not imply that one could speak without fear of the consequences. They implied instead that you lived in a community whose way of life promoted the civic virtues that would enable you to take on the risks of speaking freely when circumstances demanded that of you. It implied that you would be true to yourself rather than saying what others wished to hear.

The contemporary conception of rights as a kind of protection is often used to disguise relations of domination. Celebrating academic freedom on this model – that is, on the model of the right of a homeless person to buy a mansion,

or start a business, if only they can raise the money, or constitutional rights that can be defended by those who can afford the lawyer's bills – can become a way of ensuring that the freedom you celebrate is never actually put to use.

II Oosthuizen in Stellenbosch

Oosthuizen's engagement with Afrikaner intellectual life at Stellenbosch in the 1940s began his philosophical career and left its mark on all his subsequent work. Of the three overlapping generations I spoke of earlier, the Afrikaner intellectual group of his own generation is the only one we can speak of his engagement as a relatively completed project, not in the sense that he would have had nothing more to say if he had lived longer, but in the sense that we can see a clear trajectory to his development in this context.

Oosthuizen came to Stellenbosch in 1943. He became perhaps the central figure in a remarkably gifted and innovative group of young philosophers who, by 1947, if not earlier, were exploring new lines of argument and analysis that were unfamiliar to their teachers and were to leave their mark for decades to come both in Stellenbosch and in the broader field of South African intellectual life.

The most innovative among them were Oosthuizen himself, James Oglethorpe, who arrived at Stellenbosch in 1942, completed an M.A. in philosophy and a degree in theology, and later became a DRC missionary in Zambia, and Johan Degenaar, who began his studies in 1944, was later to abandon theology, was appointed as a lecturer in philosophy in 1948, and was a legendary teacher there until his retirement in 1991.

Although these three were most prominent, there can be no doubt, if one reads the graduate theses and student newspapers of the time, that the ideas that seized hold of them provided a vocabulary for a far wider group – a vocabulary drawn largely, though by no means wholly, from the existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard.

It is highly unusual – in any historical context, but certainly in South African intellectual history – to find a group of students pioneering new trends in this way. This became possible in Stellenbosch of the mid-1940s only because philosophy had come to occupy such a crucial role in its larger political and intellectual culture, and the stakes for philosophical argument had become so high. If not literally a matter of life and death, then at least a matter of heresy and orthodoxy, of being true to the past or the future, keeping ties of solidarity with the Afrikaner community or taking on demands that were seen as essential to progress and development.

Stellenbosch was the main educational centre for the Dutch- and later Afrikaans-speaking population of the Western Cape. In the aftermath of the South African War, it had a pivotal role both in the Afrikaans language movement and in the development of Afrikaner nationalism. But the social and

economic position of Afrikaners in the Western Cape remained very different from that of the rest of the country.

This was the one part of South Africa in which Afrikaners had a clear and long-established stake in capitalism. The wheat and wine farmers of the Western Cape formed the oldest stratum of the ruling class; a powerful and affluent elite that had been the major beneficiaries of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's fall from grace as governor in 1707. This was also the region in which Afrikaner institutions, the church, district banks, newspapers and publications, were most firmly entrenched.

In no other region of the country was Afrikaner political and intellectual life faced with the same sharp dilemma between embracing modernistion, which was essential to the interests of the capitalist social basis of its institutions, and opposing it in order to secure their political alliances with Afrikaners in the northern provinces, seeking to mobilise newly-urbanised workers and an embattled petty bourgeoisie against a hostile and alien mining industry. In this context, a distinctive philosophical tradition emerged at Stellenbosch that could neither fully embrace modernity nor resist it in the name of a pre-modern ideal.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, academic philosophy in South Africa was largely a colonial variant of British Hegelianism, sometimes more and sometimes less explicitly at the same time intended as a justification of the historical design of British imperialism. By the time Oosthuizen began his studies in the 1940s, philosophy at the other Afrikaans universities had orientated itself toward a neo-Calvinist cosmology. At the English-language universities, philosophy was often oriented toward science, adopting the positivist temper of the early philosophy of language, often becoming increasingly technical and removed from the topical issues of the day. Stellenbosch remained in a category of its own, developing a philosophical modernism in a largely ethical register, often critical of the claims of science.

A special burden was placed on the discipline of philosophy at Stellenbsoch by the protracted heresy trial of Professor Johannes du Plessis of the theological seminary. Proceedings in the Presbytery of Stellenbosch, then in the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, and finally in the Supreme Court, continued from 1928 until his eventual dismissal from the seminary, though not from the university, in 1932. There was considerable support for du Plessis at Stellenbosch. In the aftermath of his dismissal, the numbers of theology students declined dramatically and the study of philosophy thrived.

By the early 1940s, almost a quarter of graduate students at Stellenbosch were in the Department of Philosophy. Oosthuizen and his contemporaries came into a discipline that seemed to be opening up ever broader new horizons, but found that larger developments within Afrikaner politics were in the process of narrowing them down. His teacher, J. F. Kirsten, responded to this dilemma with a kind of dualism: on the one hand, recognising that our

knowledge of the world is in constant flux; on the other hand, asserting that eternal values anchor us in the midst of it; and then blurring the line between them.

Oosthuizen and his contemporaries effectively exploded this attempt to reconcile the norms of science and religion, arguing instead that all religious and ethical values required a leap of faith, an individual commitment that always had to be actively renewed. Rather than smoothing over the crisis of the philosopher under pressure to conform to a national movement, Oosthuizen argued that every moment of life was a moment of crisis and decision. Conformity with a dogmatic system of values was no more than an evasion of ethical and intellectual responsibility.

This Stellenbosch existentialism drew centrally on the work of Kierkegaard. This writer's work was written in Danish in the 1830s and 1840s. It was translated into German in the first decades of the twentieth century and fragments of it made their way into theological discussion in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s. Translation of his writings into English began in 1935. By 1947, Kierkegaard's work was at the centre of graduate research at Stellenbosch and it remained so for years to come. Oosthuizen was probably the first of this generation to seize upon Kierkegaard and certainly the one who used the philosophical framework he provided with most creativity and intensity.

Oosthuizen's M.A. thesis, completed in 1949, is an extraordinary work. Entitled *Die Verklaringsdrang* (roughly, *The Urge to Explain*, although *verklaar* suggest something more comprehensive than the English word, *explain*) and subtitled *Aesthetic-comical and fragmentary considerations concerning the philosophy of explanation in the direction of an existential dialectic*, its main text was no longer than 39 pages, followed by 82 pages of endnotes. The text contains no direct reference to any philosopher, other than brief discussion of Kant, although the notes refer to an extensive range of authors. But the argument is Oosthuizen's own.

Briefly, he argues that the urge to explain, which makes possible the dialectical reasoning – that is, reasoning that follows the movement of contradictions, rather than reasoning axiomatically from consistent statements – that is needed in order to provide a universal and necessary explanation of reality, requires a certain attitude. This he describes as the 'will to freedom'. However, this will to freedom proves to be self-undermining. To establish an unconditional beginning for all reasoning, it must negate all premises drawn from conventional wisdom. In willing freedom, according to Oosthuizen, the subject is deprived of all existing ties, and has no choice but to cast himself before God, where his true self is realised.

It is a pessimistic, even despairing, conclusion, and Oosthuizen is the first to point this out. A study of this kind is comical, he says, revealing that the author 'stands in an aesthetic relationship to matters that he should take seriously' – that is, ethically. Of course, he took them very seriously indeed.

Something of the same pessimism stands out in the student journalism of Oosthuizen and his contemporaries. Oosthuizen and Oglethorpe wrote prolifically for popular publication. Both of them were editors of *Die Stellenbosse Student* in the years immediately after the National Party election victory of 1948. Oglethorpe attacked apartheid directly, in a similarly existentialist register, arguing that by supporting apartheid for the sake of 'the right of the nation to survive' the DRC had abandoned 'its most precious possession, its faith'. Oosthuizen was more guarded, arguing, for example, that all sides to the controversy over university apartheid were equally determined to establish a new conformity and were fearful of real individuality.

The result of this generation's work was to present young Afrikaner intellectuals with a choice where none had existed before – that is, where the terms had not been developed in which to articulate that choice. It was not a choice between supporting or opposing the existing social and political order, but rather a choice between loyalty to that order or loyalty to the self in whose name that order had been established. It was, let us say, a modest kind of opposition to apartheid. But it placed an explosive charge beneath the façade of apartheid rule. It provided the impetus for Oosthuizen's continued enquiries into the ethics of apartheid and resistance to apartheid.

III After Stellenbosch – Oosthuizen's Trajectory

Oosthuizen never abandoned the themes that he had acquired from his work on Kierkegaard, but he pursued them in a very different philosophical idiom. I discussed his earlier work in its local context in Stellenbosch. To understand the choices that led to his shift to analytical philosophy in his later work, it is necessary to consider the larger context of Western philosophy in the twentieth century.

Oosthuizen's career, once his student days were over, was defined by adherence to not one, but both, of the major currents of twentieth-century philosophy: the school of phenomenology pioneered by Edmund Husserl, and analytical philosophy, with which the names of G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein are most often associated. These are the two currents that most clearly express the distinctively twentieth-century philosophical project of overcoming metaphysics – that is, leaving the attempt to discover a true structure of reality to the natural sciences – while seeking to keep alive questions of truth, meaning, and value. By the time Oosthuizen began his studies in the Netherlands, this project was coming clearly into view.

Husserl's phenomenology undertook to found knowledge on a study of the basic processes of consciousness that made it possible, reducing the study of consciousness to the question of how phenomena appear to it. That is, instead of seeking to grasp a larger purpose of the human mind, or a great idea under which its contents could be organised, it developed the procedures that would make it possible to say 'this is red' of a red object – to capture its redness, as

opposed to other qualities of the same object. It sought to integrate the findings of science into philosophy and also, in Husserl's later work, to criticise the philosophical orientation of the sciences.

Analytical philosophy began similarly with a critique of metaphysics and idealism in general. Rather than showing on the basis of logic that, for example, God exists or the world is good, it asked about what was meant by statements about God or the good. By focusing on language and logic, it was able to avoid conflict with the natural sciences or even, as in the case of logical positivism, take them as their model.

Oosthuizen's doctoral studies in the Netherlands dealt mainly with Husserl, and his first academic articles provide careful restatements of the problems and perspectives of Husserl's phenomenology. After a year of study at Oxford in 1962, working with Gilbert Ryle, his orientation shifted decisively toward analytical philosophy. His continuing interest in philosophical questions related to perception, imagination, and related issues testifies to the enduring influence of Husserl, even after Oosthuizen had abandoned the idiom of phenomenology.

The range and intelligence of Oosthuizen's writing and teaching was crucial to establishing a clear identity for philosophy at the English-language universities in South Africa, casting it as a modern and secular discipline, capable of fitting in with an intellectual climate often defined by the sciences. He was not alone in this, and it would likely have happened without him. But he set a template in many ways for the next generation of English-speaking philosophers in South Africa, a number of them his former students.

Put differently, Oosthuizen provided a mode of analysis that enabled philosophy in South Africa to function with a global network, although sometimes at the cost of paying far less attention to its South African context than Oosthuizen himself would have countenanced. His use of analytical philosophy created a model for philosophy as an academic specialisation, but surely he never intended that it become a technical discipline accessible to specialist alone.

Oosthuizen himself never gave a programmatic description of his work in analytical philosophy. But the aspect of it that most attracted him stands out clearly. It is well captured in a famous passage from the preface to G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1903), which might be read as an early manifesto for the analytic project in philosophy:

> It appears to me that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements of which history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely to the attempt to answer questions without discovering precisely *what* question it is which you desire to answer. I do not know how far this source of error would be done away, if philosophers would *try* to discover what question they were asking, before they set about to answer it; for the work of analysis and distinction is often very difficult... But I am inclined to think that, in many cases a resolute attempt would be inclined to ensure success.

Moore's programme offers a prospect of avoiding conflict about what questions are most important and how they are to be answered, or at least postponing it until all other means have been exhausted. It creates a preliminary field of discussion in which no-one need feel that their beliefs are under attack. All that is at stake is exactly what question they are seeking to answer in holding that belief. Once they have done that, it may of course turn out that there are in fact two or more questions at stake, each of which require a different answer, or that there is a logical or conceptual mismatch between question and answer, so that analysis of the logical form of a specific belief might take the place of more contentious discussion of its merits.

What was a new prospect when Moore offered it in 1903 is by now the air that most philosophy students breathe in the Anglo-American world, including the traditionally English-language universities in South Africa. For Oosthuizen in South Africa in the early 1960s, analytical philosophy offered the hope of making philosophical discussion possible where it was frequently made impossible by fundamental ideological conflicts.

Oosthuizen's personal and philosophical commitment to a Socratic model of teaching and communication was thwarted by the insistence – particularly among Afrikaner neo-Calvinist philosophers, including his colleagues at Bloemfontein – that religious commitments were decisive for all philosophical questions and that, short of persuading your interlocutor to adopt your own belief system, no philosophical progress was possible.

Analytical philosophy provided a modest programme, but one that could take small steps at least in the direction of clarifying beliefs and assumptions through debate and dialogue where no such progress was possible before. It offered the starting-point not of philosophical or theological abstraction, but of the everyday meanings of words, of concrete examples that would enable anyone who understood them to make the distinctions required to bring them in relation with our concepts.

The weaknesses of the analytical approach might not have been as apparent. It never addressed the possibility that conflicting philosophical or ethical beliefs might be related not to misunderstanding about what question was being answered, but to real social conflicts. In a context where beliefs were confused, or sought to respond to a range of separate problems at once, it could provide no incentive for anyone holding such beliefs to submit them to philosophical analysis. In this sense, it projected the philosophical classroom onto the rest of the world, assuming the commitment to intellectual clarity that Moore may have expected from his colleagues at Cambridge.

Above all, this approach ran the danger of multiplying distinctions and qualifications indefinitely – that is, without a clear sense of the degree of clarification needed to guide individual or collective norms or actions. If the main weapons in its armoury are those of logical and conceptual clarification, what incentive is there turn to other tasks? That incentive had to come from the real

world rather than from philosophical enquiry. But much depended on the philosopher's capacity to recognise and interpret the demands of their time and place.

IV Oosthuizen and the Radical Challenge

Oosthuizen's critique of Afrikaner nationalism came to a kind of culmination in the papers collected as *Analyses of Nationalism* in the first issue of *Occasional Papers* of the Department of Philosophy at Rhodes University (subsequently called *Philosophical Papers*). It was to be developed further in topical lectures, largely criticising attempts to justify apartheid on moral grounds. But increasingly the focus of Oosthuizen's work shifted toward the ethical problems involved in resisting injustice – a shift that is evident in the essays collected by Ian Bunting under the title *The Ethics of Illegal Action*.

Although he seldom, if ever, refers explicitly to the emerging movement among students and Christians to develop a radical critique of apartheid and attempt new forms of organisation and protest, it is clear that it is this generation that he is addressing. In the vacuum created by the crushing of African resistance to apartheid, culminating in the Rivonia trial in 1964 and the imprisonment of the ANC leadership, white student activism took on a significant role in extra-parliamentary opposition to apartheid. The founding of the Christian Institute, under the leadership of Beyers Naudé, led to new forms of activism within the churches.

The dissolution of the Student Christian Association in South Africa also created an opening for the formation of the University Christian Movement in 1967, much influenced by developments in the United States, including Black theology and protests against the Vietnam War. The UCM had a strong presence in Grahamstown, with Basil Moore serving as its first president. Oosthuizen spoke at UCM meetings on occasion and his support was clearly valued by its members.

Probably the most extensive, if one-sided, account of the UCM is that provided in the *Sixth Interim Report*, published in 1975, of the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Organisations, appointed by Prime Minister John Vorster. The Report does what it can to portray the UCM alternatively as a front for Marxism and Black theology (or to suggest that these are interchangeable) and to question its Christian credentials. It makes what it can of any sign of sexual or drug-related activity, or indeed any sign that UCM members formed part of a broader youth culture, with its characteristic patterns of experimentation and confusion. The Commission's reasoning is almost always tendentious and often just absurd. But it is probably true that many of the activists drawn to the UCM and similar organisations were not always clear about what they were rebelling against.

There are many reasons to suppose that the radical activists of this generation would have been disposed to listen carefully to what Oosthuizen had to

say. First, his critique of apartheid was posed in moral, rather than pragmatic terms. He was not arguing in the first place that apartheid was a counter-productive way of defending white interests, as many liberals did.

Second, although his ethics often rested on the most widely-accepted usages, it kept a conception of the individual as constituted in encounter with other people. He and others of his generation of Stellenbosch existentialists never really adopted the liberal model of the human being as the possessor of her or his attributes, values, etc. 'A Christian act of defiance', he writes in the title essay of *The Ethics of Illegal Action*, 'is unique and intimately connected with the character and history of the person who for Christian reasons feels that *he*, and no-one else, ought to act in this illegal manner on this particular occasion'.

Third, the nature of this fledgling movement was such that it was naturally oriented towards philosophy. How strongly this need was felt, may be seen from the way in which the philosophical work of Richard Turner was assimilated in student organisations and the trade union movement in the early 1970s.

Fourth, and not to be underestimated, Oosthuizen's personal qualities – his honesty, generosity, and lack of pretension – must surely have made him an attractive figure to a generation faced with hierarchy, privilege, and entrenched hypocrisy. A professor without concern for the outward signs of status is the exception today, and was surely that much more exceptional then!

It is easy to imagine that many individuals in that emerging movement drew strength from Oosthuizen's critical contributions, but hard to see how the movement they were part of could have done so. His philosophical ethics, in dealing with illegal forms of resistance, tended constantly toward the conservative middle ground. 'A Christian act of defiance', he says in the same sentence I quoted earlier, 'will have to be such that it is undoubtedly Christian, that is, the one and only appropriate reaction for a Christian to undertake had he been in that situation'. He constantly puts himself in the position of the individual standing at the threshold of political commitment, ruling out of consideration the possibility that the threshold might be crossed.

In his own life, as distinct from his philosophical work, it is clear that Oosthuizen was less hesitant. One of his former colleagues has described Oosthuizen's role in attempting to skirt the banning order on Terence Beard, in defiance of the Grahamstown security police. In that context, he embodied another ethic, as in his testimony on behalf of Hugh Lewin, his former student convicted of sabotage initiated by the ARM. But Oosthuizen could make of this ethic a larger, collectively accessible, political horizon.

Oosthuizen's ethic of dialogue was in this sense self-defeating, it seems to me. To preserve the position as potential interlocutor from which he could engage in the widest possible range of dialogue, he forfeited a political position that could actually be put forward in that dialogue. Although he abandoned Kierkegaard's existentialism, he retained its pessimism about any theory of

ethical and political change. Dialogue alone – that is, dialogue without a theory of ethical change – became dialogue without a real interlocutor.

V Concluding Remarks

There is much in Oosthuizen's life and work that richly deserves to be remembered and kept alive on an occasion like this one: the ethical intent of his philosophising; his consistent focus on the burning questions of South African society, no matter how painful or intractable; his intellectual seriousness, insisting that short-cuts, or failure to think things through, would be a recipe for trouble; his willingness to explore new approaches and perspectives, drawing on existentialism, phenomenology and analytical philosophy without treating any of them as sectarian truth. All of these qualities were manifest in a peculiar integrity, and the humility that was its counterpart.

Oosthuizen's limitations were the result of the same qualities for which he is rightly remembered. In a deeply-divided society, he found himself unable to locate himself – or more accurately, his philosophical work – on either side of the divide, at a time when the emerging movement for liberation was critically in need of a philosophical framework. Whatever Oosthuizen's personal sympathies may have been, his conception of philosophy required him to remain at the threshold, to focus on the tasks of the philosophical preparation in a way that effectively denied there was a historical task for which this preparation was needed.

The question of whether Oosthuizen's work will speak to a fourth philosophical generation in South Africa – of whether his legacy will have a life that extends beyond those who knew and respected him personally – depends on the unfinished work of the period of radical critique and protest whose beginnings he saw in organisations such as the Christian Institute and the UCM.

The study-programmes, workshops, and often inchoate 'happenings' of NUSAS and the UCM took on more definite form in the period after the Soweto uprising of 16 June, 1976, and especially in the insurrectionary years of the 1980s. Worker education projects in FOSATU and later in many unions affiliated to COSATU, the labour movement's commitment to democratisation as an educative force, the project of People's Education initiated by the Soweto Education Crisis Committee, the growth of a Marxist historiography of South Africa, and the intellectual radicalism of university departments or clusters of departments, community newspapers and small, often illegal or semi-legal, publications – all of these held out the promise that systemic analysis of the fundamental structures of society, by or in engagement with large numbers of oppressed people, could become both a *tool* of liberation and part of its *content*. Whatever their differences, all these initiatives, and others, were fueled by the belief that a free society, after the end of apartheid, would massively increase the space and resources for critical enquiry and debate.

This is not what the end of apartheid has brought. On the contrary, space and resources have been rationalised, commercialised, placed in the service of the market and of capitalist profitability, and the perspective of public discussion is that of the technocrat. Sadly, the universities are playing their part in the re-orientation of South African intellectual life away from engagement with such questions and toward the needs of the marketplace and technocratic solutions imposed from above.

Looking back on that moment of the 1980s – let us say, the long decade of the 1980s, with its roots going back to the 1960s and its impact surviving here and there until today – it may seem that some part of its conception of liberation was a product of the excitement of the times. But it drew also on deeper and longer-standing patterns of South African intellectual life, which are increasingly forgotten or discarded now.

One of the major analysts of the liberation struggles of southern Africa, John Saul, in his forthcoming book, writes about the 'next liberation struggle' in southern Africa. That struggle is still in embryo, and it is as easy to scoff at its manifestations as it was forty years ago to scoff at radical student organisations. It will have to emerge on a very different, far more globalised, terrain than did the struggles against apartheid, Portugese colonial rule, Rhodesian UDI, and the like.

If Oosthuizen's legacy is to live on at all, this will happen through his work being developed to that it has something to say in that context. Whether his name is attached to that legacy is perhaps not the most pressing issue. On an occasion like this, it is right for us to celebrate Oosthuizen and commit ourselves to the ideals of academic freedom. But if this is to be more than a sentimental gesture, it also requires us to think about how the larger intellectual and moral endeavour which Oosthuizen exemplified can provide resources for that next liberation struggle.

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Rhodes Past and Present: A Critical and Personal Assessment

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Approaching a topic such as the critical tradition and its history at Rhodes University in present-day South Africa is not easy for someone in my position, for what seems to be a common view, that Rhodes is and always has been a liberal university in the broad sense of that term, is a view which is at odds with my own experience. The most that can be said is that Rhodes, in the early days of apartheid, only reluctantly and when there seemed to be no alternative, condemned the policy of apartheid education as first enunciated and subsequently implemented by Dr. Verwoerd's National Party government. Academic staff who continued publicly to voice their opposition were frowned upon, as I soon discovered.

I had come at the beginning of 1960, from the University College of Fort Hare, then a constituent college of Rhodes, from which, together with seven others staff members, I had been sacked, 'for undermining apartheid' according to the Minister of Bantu Education. I was invited to replace Alan Slee, who had run politics at Rhodes, when he resigned to take up a position in what was then Tanganyika.

The Department of which I became a member, the Philosophy Department, was headed by that remarkable figure, Professor Daantjie Oosthuizen, whom I was privileged to work with for nine years. He certainly put Rhodes on the map as far as philosophy was concerned, and the Department fast earned a reputation for its tough critical and analytic approach. Far from attempting to evangelise, propagandise or convert students to any particular viewpoint or creed, the department was concerned to develop their critical and analytical abilities. It was undoubtedly the best Philosophy Department in the country, a position which I think it still holds. At the same time Daantjie was a self-effacing, modest and gentle person who served as an inspiration to generations of students. Upon my arrival, Politics became a sub-department of Philosophy.

Fort Hare had been deeply divided between those who supported the education policies of the National Party government, and the so-called liberals who opposed those policies. I identified with the latter. From my first arrival at Rhodes I was treated as a subversive by certain senior members of the academic staff, a fact brought home to me by students, complete strangers to me, who came to inform me that I was being maligned in the lectures by at least one

senior academic, being labeled as 'a communist and atheist' intent upon converting students to my supposed views. This was not pleasant, and I did my best to ignore it.

There were several other members of the academic staff – liberals in the broad sense, who made plain their opposition to government policy – and in Senate and the Board of the Faculty of Arts we were lumped together as members of what they called 'the Afro-Asian bloc'. We tended to laugh at this label, and to joke about it on the occasions when it was mentioned. but we resented being labeled at all. Politics, then a sub-department of Philosophy, was only given representation on the Board of the Faculty of Social Science years after my arrival at Rhodes, (I forget the exact year), and there was little doubt that the prime reason for this un-academic stance was political.

What is more, I later became aware that reports were being regularly transmitted to the Vice-Chancellor alleging various actions on my part designed to subvert the university. These reports were entirely false, and rather upsetting, for I could do nothing but grin and bear it, my informant being no less a person than the Vice-Principal at the time, Professor Rob Antonissen. But matters had drawn to a head prior to this, with the decision of Senate and Council to award an honorary degree to the then State President, C. R. Swart. Many of us were aghast at the very idea, especially as Swart had played no small part in the implementation of apartheid in education, including tertiary education. The response among academic staff in general was one of apathy and even fear when it came to voicing opposition.

This kind of toadying was anathema to the so-called Afro-Asian bloc, and three of us drew up a petition of protest and collected signatures from among the academic staff. We managed to get only 26 signatures in all, only two of whom were members of the Senate, these being Professor Ewer, Head of Zoology, and I, who was on Senate as acting head of Philosophy while Professor Oosthuizen was abroad on sabbatical leave. Professor Ewer also happened to be on leave, and so did not attend the Senate meeting at which I was treated as a kind of coconut-shy being attacked from all sides. It was not an enjoyable experience, for no-one spoke up on my behalf. When the Council met, they sent letters of condemnation to each of the signatories.

No thought appeared to be given to the fact that they were honoring a person who had been a senior member of the Cabinet, and who not only rejected everything that the university professed to stand for, but had been instrumental in subverting the educational system in South Africa in general. Several years later a senior member of Senate went so far as to blame me for the failure of the Rhodes branch in Port Elizabeth, citing the petition as the main cause of this, and making it clear that he was not alone in this belief.

One of the consequences of the Swart degree was the resignation of the Chancellor of Rhodes University, Sir Basil Schonland, who was utterly shocked by the whole affair. Out of consideration to the then Vice-Chancellor,

Dr. Thomas Alty, he left it to him to decide whether or not to make it public. Dr.Alty chose not to make it public, and Rhodes has sat with this skeleton in its cupboard ever since. Although the affair was made public recently by Brian Austen in his autobiography of Schonland, few people have read it, so it has remained generally unknown.

I might also mention that I had discussed with Professor Oosthuizen prior to his proceeding on sabbatical, a proposal to change Politics from a two to a three year major, and to this he readily agreed. Upon presenting this proposal to the Board of the Faculty of Arts, I was asked if Professor Oosthuizen had agreed to the changes. Upon my confirming that he had, I was asked if I had this in writing. As I did not, the proposal was turned down. You can imagine how I felt about this. The change was for this reason delayed by a year.

Then there was the Basil Moore case, in which Basil Moore was denied an academic position for political reasons, and somewhat later and less well known was my own case, which resulted in my having to wait ten years after the first recommendation by Senate before being appointed to the chair of Political Studies. These cases were largely due to the practice of Council, on which Government appointees were prominent, to interfere with matters academic, and to reverse academic and, possibly, other decisions made by Senate. None of this reflects very well upon Rhodes University, and I do not propose to dwell upon the subject.

That said Rhodes was in many ways a very much more lively place than it is now. There were regular evening meetings in the General Lecture Theatre, often addressed by members of the academic staff and by visiting academics, nearly all of which were well attended by students and staff alike. There was an active debating society, an amateur dramatic society, an annual Arts and Science Week, and an annual 'Kaif night', as it was called, which, when I first arrived, took the form of a staged musical composed and written by junior members of the academic staff. And they really were excellent. In this way a strong cultural life was very much a feature of Rhodes. And I think we are much the poorer for it as a result of its demise. So while Rhodes had its political down-side it had a cultural vibrancy which it now most decidedly lacks.

My own experience was radically affected when in 1963 I was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. The main reason for this was that, together with three other members of the then Liberal Party, one of whom was the Rhodes historian Dr. Clem Goodfellow, we collected information on police brutality in Umtata at the request of Defence and Aid., which resulted in our spending a week detained in Umtata gaol. I was advised not to use the Senior Common Room during morning and afternoon tea, and was restricted from being in the company of more than one other person at any time. Only my lectures and tutorials were exempt from this restriction. In addition I was under the constant surveillance of the Security Police, who used frequently to park in the street outside my place of residence for hours on end.

In 1964, three Rhodes academics were detained under the Terrorism Act and were flown to Cape Town, where they were interrogated, and, after three weeks two of them, of whom I was one, were released, and the third somewhat later. No charges were laid against any of us, and, far as I know, the University simply ignored the matter.

In 1964 Norman Bromberger of the Economics Department, was also banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, and the following year Eric Harber became the third victim. As far as I can remember, the University carried on as if nothing had happened. Unlike the other three English-speaking universities, protests were relatively rare at Rhodes, although the students certainly protested more frequently than did the staff. This was, of course, partly due to Rhodes being far from the large cities and hence relatively isolated, but it was also an indication that Rhodes was not as politically liberal as Wits, Cape Town or Natal. I have not forgotten however that it was due to the efforts of Dr. Hyslop, the Vice-Chancellor, that Norman Bromberger and I had our banning orders lifted. Eric Harber had already left for the United Kingdom.

On the credit side too, it should not be forgotten that under Derek Henderson, Rhodes began quietly and without any fuss to place black students in the residences. Technically this was against the law, and was thus a bold and very significant step in the right direction. Rhodes was the only university at this time to take such a step.

A new threat to the universities came in the form of the admission of students from schools administered under Bantu Education. This development brought about fundamental changes in the universities, as they were now expected to perform a function for which they were neither suited nor designed, for many students had not been educated up to the standards required for university entrance. Instead of the government creating 'bridging colleges', university academics were expected to do the job of bridging, which meant that their attention was to a significant extent diverted from the purposes for which they had originally been appointed. One of the consequences was a general lowering of standards of pass marks, despite the often spirited denials by university authorities. While it is arguable that the standards of first class passes were largely maintained, this was far from the case at the lower end of the results spectrum. Many students who could only be described as semi-literate were awarded degrees. This development, added to the fact that the regulations governing curricula had over the years been steadily relaxed, may be said to be part of the 'dumbing down' process which also became a phenomenon in both the United States and the United Kingdom. When I first came to the Eastern Cape, both Rhodes and Fort Hare required students to pass both their final year major subjects together, and the regulations governing degrees generally relaxed, as for example in the introduction of 'write-offs'. There were no supplementary examinations except where a person needed only one subject to complete the degree.

The consequences of these developments are evident in the media, where spelling and grammar often leave a great deal to be desired, and where malapropisms have become commonplace. One continues to receive semi-literate letters from government departments and the private sector alike. This is now true of graduates from every kind of background, first language speakers as well as second language speakers. It is interesting to note that in the 1950s the overwhelming majority of students were literate and it was not possible to distinguish between Fort Hare and Rhodes students by their standard of written English or their literacy, let alone their academic prowess. This statement is based upon examination scripts, for both institutions wrote the same papers when Fort Hare was a constituent college of Rhodes University. Bantu Education was largely responsible for the damage done, damage which for many reasons now seems to be spread across the student population, and which will take many years to repair.

In the last decade or two, the status of academics has been in decline, and salaries relative to those of executives in government departments have decreased over the years as well as relative to those of the senior members of university bureaucracies. That Professor Caroline White of the University of Natal was dismissed for *insubordination*, normally a *military offence*, is a case in point. She was supposedly insubordinate to a bureaucrat for taking a stand upon an academic matter. There has been increasing interference mainly by the state bureaucracies into academic departments with consequent demands upon academic staff, burdening them with ever more and new responsibilities, while diminishing their powers and their authority. An example of a Head of Department being bypassed at Rhodes is illustrated in the case of an academic brought before a disciplinary committee, with the Head of Department being simply informed and then sidelined from the disciplinary process. It is imperative that every attempt to place bureaucrats in authority over academics ought to be resisted. For academics know best about academic matters.

In a lecture delivered to NUSAS many years ago, Sir Eric Ashby, then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, maintained that universities founded in the 19th Century in Britain, were intended to be democratic in structure, but the first appointees, who formed the first Senates, saw to it that future appointments were to posts subordinate to their own. In South Africa, as far as I know, Universities were founded on the Scottish model, and democratic practices insofar as they exist have had to be hard fought for. When I first came to Rhodes, for example, only Heads of Departments and sub-departments were members of faculty boards, and it took a long and tough fight before the boards were reformed.

Of all the institutions apart from those which are patently political, universities can be considered to be foremost among those which ought to be democratic from top to bottom. The history of universities in Europe begins with the identification of informal ‘communities of scholars’, which were

communities of equals, for all were there for the same purpose, that of learning. Universities are still to this day communities of scholars, and the most rational way in which to organise such communities is to adopt democratic principles and practices.

The only university in modern times that I know of which broadly follows these principles is the University of Oxford, which has a federal structure of different colleges which are run by the academic fellows who comprise them. Each college has a head elected by the fellows, who is *primus inter pares*. The college administrators are subordinate to the academics, by whom they are employed. The heads of the colleges form the Hebdomadal council which legislates for the university as a whole. But any decision which it makes can be challenged by college members, who, if they can get a certain number of signatures, can call for a vote on the matter in which all academics can participate, so that it is possible for the decision to be overturned. It is quite common for people who extol the virtues of democracy to fight tooth and nail to prevent its introduction in almost all cases where it is not practised and where it is suggested as a reform.

I would argue that South African universities are in a sense inverted institutions in that academics are subordinate to the administrators, with the result that they cannot in principle have the kind of authority and independence which they would have were the relationship to be reversed.

Universities are now faced with the change from *education* to *training* with all that, that means. It is a change which is gradually making nonsense of the very idea of academic freedom which is as a consequence becoming irrelevant. Gradually the traditional academic subjects are being whittled away and the emphasis is now upon career-oriented subjects. While Rhodes has fought valiantly against this trend of scrapping many of the traditional Arts subjects, it has nevertheless been forced to amalgamate Classics and the language departments, apart from English, into one department under one head. Divinity has been scrapped altogether with music the latest to come under threat, but given the policies of the Department of Education under successive Ministers, it is a war of attrition, and it will not be very long before the universities will have completed the transformation to training centres or, if you like, technikons. The problem is that funds are simply not available in any quantity for subjects which are not career-oriented.

It might be mentioned at this point that the change from education to training at university level is not a necessity, for in countries such as the United Kingdom many firms require employees with a good degree and are not concerned with the subject studied, for they are interested in persons with developed analytical and critical skills. They have in-house training to prepare the employee for whatever tasks they require to be done.

At this point I ought to say something about the distinction I have made between ‘education’ and ‘training’. The notion of education was developed by

the 'classical' Greeks who thought of education as involving the full development of the individual, which is to say to developing people to the maximum of their capacities, a point stressed in modern times by Idealist philosophers in particular. Knowledge was assumed to be an intrinsic good. The aim then was the development of the individual, with the adage 'Know thyself' as a *sine qua non* of the educational process. Education was intended to produce fully developed, well-integrated, balanced and complete people.

This is in stark contrast with the aims of education in South Africa today where education is thought of in either means/ends terms, which is to say, instrumentally, or alternatively in functional terms. In both cases individuals are treated as means only and not as ends in themselves, worthy of respect. People are trained to fill roles in order to achieve certain economic and social ends, and the system of education is designed to fulfill this function. In this way individuals are like cogs in machines. The possibility that such a system will produce Philistines seems not even to have been entertained by the powers that be.

Universities are consequently under increasing pressure both to provide persons suitably trained to enter industry and commerce and, given an economic system in which profits are the be-all and end-all of existence, it is not surprising that universities have become much more 'business oriented', as in fact the new terminology reveals, gradually extending the process of commercialisation of tertiary education. Depending as they do ever more upon commerce and industry for funds, the universities are becoming 'business oriented' institutions. Students are now often referred to as 'customers', and the universities have administrative departments dedicated to fund-raising and the 'marketing' of the university. 'Marketing' is a term now *de rigueur* within our universities, and the influence of 'big business' has become ever more evident. The world within which universities exist has changed greatly over the past decades, with new and extremely ominous threats presenting themselves.

We seem now to be facing, or soon about to have to face, the kind of dilemma the University of Warwick confronted in the late 1960s, of which one outcome was the publication of *Warwick University Limited*, a critical book edited by the eminent historian, the late E.P. Thompson. For in the late 1960s, business interests began to threaten the independence of Warwick University. Since then there has been added, mainly during the Thatcher years, ever more demands and restrictions upon academics which are given force by the ways in which universities are funded.

Summing up the Warwick study E.P. Thompson wrote:

> It is a question of adjusting the proper area of an institution's self-determination and control by its own members in relation to that proper area in which society's demands and needs can be indicated. But once we have reached this point, the argument becomes infinitely more complex, because there is not, of course, in Britain *one* 'public' {this is even more true in South Africa}, but many different demands, needs and values. Hence, to

> respond to social demands does not mean to respond instantaneously to one particular indicator of demands – government policy or the policies of senior industrialists – but to take part, at many different levels in society, in the argument between differing indices of social priority. A university must leave itself the freedom actively to seek out social needs which have not, as yet, percolated to the level of government or which may not coincide with the needs of industrialists; and if links are to be forged there is also the need (as one Warwick student argued) for links to be made between 'the subversives in the University and the subversives in society. What is at issue here is not just the government of one university, but the whole way in which a society selects its priorities and orders itself.

Compounding this change from education to training, this subordination of education to economics, is the trend to globalisation, which is driven by the huge multi-national or global oligopolies which now dominate the economies of the developed world, and which not only dominate but threaten, the economies of the underdeveloped Third World. In the First World their influence upon universities is greatly to be feared, for the financial support which they render to the universities is not without strings attached, strings which undermine not only academic freedom but the moral integrity of these institutions, a development first noted in Warwick University Limited.

In a recent article (*Mail and Guardian*, February 27 to March 4, 2004) George Monbiot points out that increasingly, in the United States, the President has sought to suppress academic studies in which results conflict with business interests, and that often conflicts of interests were not disclosed by researchers who were supported by funds from big business. Monbiot points out that in 2002 *The Guardian* revealed that British and American scientists are putting their names to papers they have not written, papers which were 'ghosted' by employees of drug companies. He went on to state that 'There is more corruption in our university faculties than there is in the transport industry', and while not providing evidence for this extraordinary allegation, the fact is that there certainly *is* corruption in the universities. While this might not as yet be true of South African universities, it is obviously an ominous development, against which precautions need to be taken.

Former Rhodian, Margaret Legum, in her recent book *It doesn't have to be like this: A New Economy for South Africa and the World*, writes (p.109), 'In 1996 Sheldon Krimsky examined 789 articles published by 1105 researchers in 14 leading life science and biomedical journals. In 34 percent of the articles one or more of the authors had an identifiable financial interest connected to the research. Researchers in the mid-1990s found that more than 3,000 researchers had financial ties to corporations. Some 20 percent admitted that they had delayed publication of adverse results to allow patents to be obtained. The authors conclude that "the behavior of universities and scientists is sad, shocking and frightening... They are seduced by industry funding, and frightened that if we don't go along with these gag orders, the money will go to less rigorous institutions"'.

The magnitude of the threat is quite intimidating, and I think it is safe to say that the further subordination of universities to economic demands will steadily continue until present globalisation policies are replaced by policies which maximise opportunities for local development with local authorities able to act independently of the demands of global economic institutions. But it will require more than that, it will require a return to the granting of maximum respect to individuals, and with it education policies which treat human beings as ends in themselves and not as means only.

I should like to focus for a few minutes on what have been, for me, some of the problematic aspects which are to be found in the disciplines of philosophy and the social sciences. The first one is the propensity of academics to be unduly critical of the works of writers from other traditions and writers whom they consider to be revolutionaries or who go against what might be termed 'mainstream beliefs'. Machiavelli immediately springs to mind, for he was labeled 'the murderous Machiavelli' because of *The Prince*, which was read out of context and not along with his other complementary works which reveal his moral views. And to this day Machiavelli is cast in this shadow. Then there is Rousseau, who has been labeled as anti-democratic, whereas he was at pains to work out the most democratic of theories. You might not agree with him, but that is another matter. He is still regarded as having espoused a kind of 'doctrine of the inner-light', whereas writers such as Amartya Sen and W.G. Runciman, Brian Barry, and old Rhodian Robin Farquharson, have shown Rousseau to have been a really astute thinker by analysing him in the light of the theory of games.

The conservative philosopher Hegel was frequently dismissed as too jargon-ridden and metaphysical to be taken seriously whereas, while his work is indeed very difficult to interpret, there are nevertheless deeps insights of great value to be found in his writings. Yet I must confess that I was trained in a tradition in which he was regarded *persona non grata*, and it was many years before I both read and taught him.

And Marx, whose theory of revolution is deeply disturbing to many, and whose economic theory is equally disturbing to capitalist economists, has had foisted upon him a version of the labour theory of value which he was at pains to reject. And yet the most celebrated of writers on Marx, such Jerry Cohen, take it for granted that Marx espoused this theory which was in fact anathema to him. It is very important that academics be prepared to take alternative traditions seriously.

A piece of advice which it might be useful to pass on, which comes from the late J.L. Austen, the Oxford philosopher, is to read through one's writings in order to discover one's verbal habits and expressions, of which one is often largely unconscious, for they may well have significant implications of which one is unaware.

In conclusion I shall quote Professor Harold Perkins from an article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 March, 1970 which is as relevant today as it was then:

> Universities are at once detached from and embedded in the life of society. As centres of inquiry and criticism they must stand apart from the rest of society, detach themselves from too much dependence on it, so as to be free to follow uncomfortable and unpalatable truths wherever they may lead...

While agreeing wholeheartedly with Professor Perkins, the problem lies in the funding of universities – and it is imperative that no strings be attached to their funds.

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Academics and the Policy-making Process under Apartheid and in Contemporary South Africa

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In a career that began as a student in 1952 and ended as a professor of Economics in 1994, my various spells at Rhodes spanned a period of 43 years under Apartheid. I have lived and worked in Grahamstown for varying periods of time during each of those decades – as a student in the 1950s when I acquired the emotional equipment for life as an academic; as a young lecturer in the 1960s (full, enriching and collegial years in a small Department where the emphasis was on teaching and we taught our butts off); as Reader in the 1970s (an obscure elevated title that is equivalent to today's Associate Professor); as Professor from 1984, and Head of Department from 1988 to 1994, a period when administrators grew in influence compared to academics, SAPSE took over, and the lives of academics were made miserable by bureaucratic chores and demands for increased efficiency in the face of financial stringency.

Such are my credentials for the present task – to try to encapsulate what I believe Rhodes' critical tradition in the social sciences to be, as I experienced it personally, how it related to the wider society during the Apartheid years, and how it should continue to do so.

Academics are believed to live in ivory towers – which the dictionary defines as ' state of seclusion from the ordinary world and protected from the harsh realities of life' It is true that social scientists in some sense inhabit a world of abstraction, fascinated by the prevailing theories of the time. I confess that I am passionate about the ideas, the beautiful symmetry, of economic theory, and perhaps this smacks of the ivory tower. It is also true that in the Apartheid years most people in the university, including myself, who dabbled in theory were not part of the harsh reality, in that in their ordinary lives they were not the direct victims of that reality. They were not victims of the system. They did not suffer directly from its ill effects. For some, ideas and theories may have been a way of avoiding having to confront the harsh realities.

But this is not the whole story. Social scientists at Rhodes were not copping out.

In the first place it was very hard in Grahamstown to escape the harsh reality. Rhodes, located as it is in the heart of the Eastern Cape, was surrounded by the effects of South Africa's racial policies – rural poverty, restrictions on the geographical mobility of people and belated attempts to create job opportu-

nities in remote areas without infrastructure – the so-called border industries project. One saw the harsh reality on a daily basis – in the High Street, the townships, if one tried to escape to the bright lights of East London, or on the way to the Hogsback, if one preferred a rural retreat.

Academics responded to the political milieu and their social environs in different ways – perhaps depending on their temperaments and aptitudes. Some became political activists, of whom some are bearing their witness in this colloquium. I was not one of those.

This does not mean that I was completely out of touch with what was going on, or out of touch with people who were politically active: by no means. This, I think, would have been very difficult at Rhodes. Perhaps I lacked the courage, but certainly the temperament and aptitude to pursue the activist path. Mine was what may be called the 'academic response' to the harsh realities that surrounded us, and I want to argue that it is essentially the academic response that has shaped the critical tradition at Rhodes.

The critical tradition is born of what William Makgoba in his address at his installation as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Natal last year termed 'a complex and dynamic interplay of societal, political, historical and economic processes – pressures which had an impact both on knowledge for understanding and knowledge for use' (p.4). Academics at Rhodes were contributing in a particular way to the alleviation of the harsh realities of life by trying to understand them, to make others understand them, and, in some cases, to influence the policy-making process. This is the way in which they contributed to the wider society.

Not surprisingly, given the harsh realities of the Eastern Cape, economists at Rhodes were concerned with poverty in South Africa, especially rural poverty. The tradition goes back a long way, to W.M. MacMillan who first took up a lectureship in a newly created dual Department of History and Economics in 1911. He was the first to teach formal courses in economics and also the first to undertake studies of the so-called poverty datum line in South Africa. This was the beginning of a great tradition of social science research at Rhodes, carried on, inter alia, by Monica Wilson in Pondoland.

None did more to carry on Macmillan's pioneering research in the area of poverty than Desmond Hobart Houghton, who was in charge of Economics from 1932 to 1966, and to whom I owe a great deal. He had a compelling lecturing style. As an undergraduate I, like many other students over the years, listened enraptured, often finding it difficult to take notes and forced to go off and read and work things out for myself. Weekly Honours tutorials were held at his home at the top of High Street and concluded with refreshments and conversation with him and Betty, his wife. These were the early days of development economics, which became his special interest. He had a house at the Hogsback to which he retreated at the weekends to garden and work, cheek by jowl with the harsh reality of rural poverty in Keiskammahoek. His academic response

was a study of rural poverty in Keiskammahoek. The tradition has lived on at Rhodes in the late 1980s and 1990s in the work of Chris de Wet in Anthropology and Murray Leibbrandt in Economics, to name only two.

The academic response is not purely intellectual. It entails a set of values, concerns and beliefs, what I have been referring to as emotional equipment. In the 1950s, Keynesianism was still dominant and one's emotional ethos was profoundly affected by works such as the 1944 report of William Beveridge on Full Employment in a Free Society, one of the foundations of the British welfare state, read under the tutelage of Robbie Threlfell (who died tragically in 1956 at an early age). Equally influential was Desmond Hobart Houghton's deep commitment and passionate concern about rural poverty that conveyed itself to his students. We did not only take away with us the then recent exciting theory contained in Arthur Lewis' great study 'Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour': we acquired emotional equipment along with the formal theoretical analysis. This emotional equipment was crucial. Without it, one cannot decide what problems to focus on, let alone have the motivation to tackle them. It is an essential ingredient of the critical tradition.

Rural poverty is inextricably linked to the issue of migrant labour – another harsh reality that elicited an academic response from Rhodes. Rhodes has a notable reputation in Anthropology – I think of Philip Mayer and my very dear friend, David Hammond-Tooke, who died earlier this year. The social aspects of migrant labour prompted Philip Mayer's *Townsmen or Tribesmen* – a great book in my view. It not only made a contribution to the wider society, it was about the wider society, and inspired a branch of the Rhodes critical tradition all its own. It certainly inspired my own work on migrant labour in 1971 and 1972, which aimed to put the contribution of economists and anthropologists on migrant labour within the same theoretical framework. While writing the paper I would keenly await morning tea in the Senior Common Room to pounce on Philip to discuss some point in his book relevant to my efforts. That is my ideal of what a university is all about.

Migrant labour, for me, however, was a side interest. Events directed me to make my academic response in a relatively uncharted area involving its own kind of harsh reality – the State's industrial decentralisation policy, which had been introduced in 1960, the year of Sharpville and Langa, – which essentially involved attempts to develop centres near the 'reserves' through industrialisation. The real purpose of the policy, however, was obviously not philanthropic but to bring about racial separation on a regional basis.

Rather than merely question the morality of the politics of territorial separation, under the influence of T.W. Hutchison I took the view that there was little point in evaluating border industries policy except in terms of the government's own criteria. I basically set out to assess whether territorial separation of the races on the scale on which government apparently desired it was economically feasible. My prior intuitive belief was that it was not, but my aim was to

show it as objectively as I could. My implicit and naïve assumption was that, provided I did this, I would have an influence on policy, and that I would contribute to the abandonment of the aim of territorial separation and hence to a more realistic approach to the racial problem in South Africa. This was not political activism. It was not very heroic, and it did not meet with the approval of some, but it did involve a persistent and strenuous effort to undermine one of the major aspects of Apartheid policy.

I underestimated how irrational such policies are, of course, and I soon realised that there are very decided limits to the influence of rational analysis on policy. Logically watertight argument can be influential, I think, only once experience is beginning to show the difficulties in the way of implementing a policy. Indeed only in 1973, thirteen years after the work was begun, when I delivered a paper on the subject at the Economic Society of South Africa, did I feel that I had made any impression on people. Then only did I feel that I had fairly thoroughly disposed of the idea that industrial development could provide any answer to South Africa's political problems and had made it clear that the answers could not lie in the territorial separation of the races.

This same urge to direct my emotional equipment at influencing policy has underpinned my work in other areas too, such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), obstacles to the growth of manufacturing, the motor industry, international trade and industrial policy.

In the absence of Apartheid, what is the future of the academic response? To what end does one direct one's emotional equipment? Where is there an outlet for all the energy spent by so many people in the period before 1994 in fighting Apartheid in one way or another?

In my view, that energy should be directed at an *academic* response. One thing that struck me in the 1980s, compared to the 1960s and 1970s, was the growing prevalence of commissioned work done on a consultancy basis: that is, research that brings in extra income to academics. Today this is a plague. The consultancy business, I read in the press, now absorbs a quarter of government expenditure on procurement. It has been said that consultancy represents a second tier of bureaucracy. In as far as academics are part of this, they are in danger of simply becoming bureaucrats. I have myself in recent years done work for the Department of Trade and Industry and for NUMSA, and even had the unfortunate experience of attempting to influence policy administration from within as the Chairman of the Board on Tariffs and Trade.

Low academic salaries are a major contributory factor to the consultancy plague, of course, but consultancy comes at an individual cost to the academic and a cost to the academic enterprise in general. I see promising young people linked with research consortia and doing massive amounts of consulting, which prevents them from doing the difficult reading at an early stage that is essential for a long-term academic career. I do not believe that fundamental academic work can be done on this basis. It is one thing to get a research grant to cover

expenses for a research topic chosen by oneself for its intrinsic scientific value and practical importance. It is another to undertake some badly conceived consultancy project in accordance with terms of reference written by an official in local, provincial or central government for some half-baked steering committee. You don't have the freedom to design the research properly, to decide how you are going to do it, or even to decide where or what to publish. My own personal experience in recent years in doing work for government departments and trade unions has taught me that it is very difficult to do one's best work on a commissioned project. Nothing good is ever done in a hurry. The independence one has as an academic in a university is essential.

Independence is particularly important if one's emotional equipment drives one to try to change prevailing government policy. This cannot be done on a consultancy basis. Government departments are not conducive to fundamental thinking about policies. Many do not have the capacity to formulate policies, especially given the very ambitious programme the government has set itself. If they did, they would not need to outsource. They are not really even in a position to tell consultants what they want done. Even if departments appoint so-called advisers to conduct so-called policy reviews, government officials, and, at times, even the relevant minister give input into the process, managing the adviser's provisional findings and conclusions. Advisers do not produce an independent report that is then considered by top officials and the minister. The minister has often made up his mind in advance and the role of the adviser is simply to give some sort of legitimacy to this position. It is only the academic that has the freedom to analyse and present findings that are cogent, rational and independent, and to try to influence policy in the national interest. Genteel poverty is the price one has to pay if one's emotional equipment drives one in this direction. This may be asking too much, but the critical tradition will be the poorer without the academic response.

So much for the *academic* response. What of the response itself? In post-apartheid South Africa, to what is one responding? Does the current political and social milieu produce an emotional ethos sufficiently powerful to provoke the academic response, especially in the policy arena?

On the face of it, no. We see precious little of a real debate on many important issues related to government policy today. On some issues there has been virtually no public discussion. In some ways it is more difficult to criticise government policies now than it was in the 1960s, when the whole world was against Apartheid and one was simply elaborating the case against it.

This lack of a public debate and the lack of proper analysis of the effects of policy prior to implementation at the government level simply make the responsibility of the academic all the greater. The role of the social scientist is no different from what it was under Apartheid – to analyse, to understand and to make others understand the wider society in which we live. It is also not enough to leave it to government to formulate and implement policies on social and

economic issues. The academic has a role to play in this regard, no matter what government is in power.

For instance, those of us who are returning to Grahamstown for this colloquium cannot fail to notice that the harsh realities of daily life for many still stare us in the face. Ten years into democracy social and economic conditions in the Eastern Cape remain largely unchanged. There remains much analytical and critical work to be done on rural poverty and development in the tradition of scholars at Rhodes both past and present. My sense is that this issue is being neglected in South Africa as a whole. President Mbeki has mentioned rural development as one part of government strategy but nothing appears to have been done. The whole question of the proper balance between rural and urban development in South Africa needs to be addressed – the problem of rural areas and the number of people in them will not go away without such research. A former student of mine at Rhodes, Gill Hart, now at Berkeley, has written a major work on industrial development in Ladysmith and Newcastle. The old issue of the development of former homelands is still alive and well. What the country needs is more such academic response in the Rhodes social science critical tradition – a tradition that has contributed in its unique way to the wider society.

Much, if not all, of the research that established that critical tradition in the social sciences was inspired by a desire to deal with practical problems in South Africa. William Makgoba, in his installation address to which I referred earlier, spent time defining an African university. An African university has responsibilities and these responsibilities, he said, 'are moral, intellectual and inspirational and they are served by adapting our scholarship to the social structure and cultural environment of Africa'... 'An African university must not only pursue knowledge for its own sake', he added, 'but also for the... amelioration of conditions of life and work of the ordinary man and woman' (p.7). Social scientists at Rhodes have indeed been African scholars.

Makgoba then issued a challenge: 'Can we say that as a community of scholars we are effectively helping to address the primary issues of our time?... How is our scholarship contributing effectively to the fight against hunger, the weakened rand [He might well now say "the strengthened rand" – T.B.]. disease, crime, poverty and racial division – all of which threaten to overwhelm the fruits of our hard-won democracy?' (p.8). Here lies the challenge for present and future generations of Rhodes academics – to prove themselves African scholars by contributing to the wider society through their academic response, thereby earning their own place in the Rhodes critical tradition.

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Reflections on the Relationship between Rhodes University and the Wider Society, 1977-1981

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Introduction

Grahamstown was the scene of an iconic moment in South Africa's political history: the detention of Steve Biko on 18 August,1977. This was one crucial event in an escalating pattern of violence that has been described as 'a low intensity civil war'. The paper refers to two crucial processes during this 'war' between 1977-1981, the deaths in detention and forced removals that took place within a 300km radius of Grahamstown. It uses these two processes as pegs in a reflection on the relation between Rhodes and the wider South African society during the period I was employed in the Sociology Department. My central argument is that our engagement with these social processes of the time was flawed and inappropriate to the nature of what was happening around us.

South Africa as a terrorist state

South Africa at this time was a 'terrorist state'. By 'terrorism' I mean a strategy of political violence that involves systematic acts of destruction aimed at altering or maintaining power relations through spreading extreme fear. The terrorist state maintains its authority by spreading terror or extreme fear through systematic violence. The term 'terrorist state' appears to involve a contradiction in terms. 'Terrorism' is usually defined as illegitimate violence and the source of legitimacy is conventionally defined as the state. However apartheid state strategy was characterised by an increasing violence which was sanctioned by law. The violence was either inscribed in the law or was unrestrained by the law. It was directed against anti-apartheid activists both within the without South Africa's borders. In all cases the state's aim was 'destabilisation' – the disorganisation and atomisation of individuals, organisations and social relations. While very different forms of violence were used they all involved the spread of 'extreme fear or terror'. That fear was directed from within the authority structure of the apartheid state, and defines the South African state as a 'regime of terror' in Walzer's terms.[1]

Fear and violence are the two poles around which the terrorist state turns. The violence has the following characteristics:

1. It is largely covert; it is planned in secret arenas which are not open to public scrutiny.
2. It is systematic – it is planned rather than spontaneous.
3. The pattern of violence has a particular relation to the law. It is either unrestrained by the law, operating outside of the courts and legal processes, or it is embedded in the legal system as in the case of executions and detentions.
4. The violence is apparantly random, indiscriminate, arbitrary and capricious – all are potential victims.
5. The violence violates established norms, values and social patterns.
6. It is frequently perpetrated by anonymous actors.

The power base of the terrorist state is the armed forces in the shape of the army and the police. However the informer is the fulcrum around which the terrorist state turns. As Hannah Arendt writes, 'The effectiveness of terror depends almost entirely on the degree of social atomization. ... This atomization – an outrageously pale, academic word for the horror it implies – is maintained and intensified through the ubiquity of the informer, who can be literally omnipresent because he is no longer merely a professional agent in the pay of the police but potentially every person one comes into contact with' (Arendt, 1970:55).

The acts of political violence in apartheid South Africa took many different forms ranging from death – through legal executions (the most famous during this period being the execution of Solomon Mahlangu in 1979), torture and assasination – to neutralisation through detention and banning, to the destruction of property through bombings and arson, to demoralisation through harrassment and intimidation. What united these different forms of political violence is the notion of destabilisation, the disorganisation and atomisation of anti-apartheid organisations and individuals.

Many of these forms of political violence took place on our doorstep in Grahamstown. One example is detention without trial. According to the Commisioner of Prisons for the year l July 1977-30 June 1978, a total of 278 people were detained in terms of the Terrorism Act and 190 in terms of the Internal Security Act. (SAIRR, 1980:142) Many of these detainees were held in Grahamstown. Some of them were subjected to forms of torture which included teeth removed with pliers, sleep deprivation, electric shocks to the genitals and so on.

There were also a number of deaths in detention during the period I am reflecting on. From March 1976 to November 1977, nineteen persons were known to have died while in detention in terms of security legislation (SAIRR, 1978:150). The number includes George Botha detained in Port Elizabeth in 1977. Police claimed he committed suicide by jumping over the stairwell and falling to the ground floor of the Sanlam building where the security police

offices were (SAIRR, 1978:154). This building was also where Lungile Tabalaza died on July 10 1977 allegedly by jumping from the fifth floor of the building. (SAIRR, 1979:117) Suicide was also claimed by the SAP to be the cause of death of Bayempin Mzizi found hanging from a cell window bar in the Brighton Beach police cells on 13 August. The best known case was that of Steve Biko, detained on 18 August in Grahamstown who died on 12 September (SAIRR:1978:159).

Several cases of deaths were heard in the Grahamstown Supreme Court during these years. For example in October 1979 there was the case of Mr Mapetla Mohapi, who was found hanging in his Kei Road police cell.

Other dramatic forms of political repression which took place during these years include the 19 October 1977 banning of 18 black consciousness organisations and the detention of some 47 black political leaders on 19 October 1977 (SAIRR, 1978:169).

At the same time as these local manifestations of South Africa becoming a terrorist state, there was a policy of forced removals which may be described as a form of genocide, if genocide is used to mean the large scale, forcible removal and confinement of populations to spaces where they lack access to the means of survival.

Forced removals

Between 1960 and 1982 some three and a half million people were relocated in the name of apartheid.[2] As the Surplus People Project Report stated, 'The GG trucks, the rows of latrines, the crude temporary huts staked out in the veld, the numbers painted on the buildings of threatened communities, the ruins of destroyed homesteads and communities, these have been and are central features of South Africa under apartheid' (SPP,1983:1).

The SPP Report points out that the removals were forced in two senses: structural in that coercion was built into the laws and institutions restricting black freedom of movement and access to land, and direct, often involving police and guns, bulldozers, demolished houses and arrests. 'The massive scale of the removals and the enormous suffering they have imposed on individuals and families and communities have not been accidental or incidental to the development of the apartheid state since the 1950s' (SPP,1983:2).

Both the relocation policy and deaths in detention were not policy aberrations, on the contrary they were integral to maintaining white minority rule. Removals meant Connie Mulder, then Minister of Plural Relations, could say in 1978, 'There will be no more black South Africans' (SPP,1983:2). Clearly the relocation was 'part of a policy aimed not simply at dispossessing people of their land or houses but of their South African citizenship and claim to full political rights' (SPP,1983:18).

Conditions in resettlement camps in the Ciskei (the destination for most of the removals in the Eastern Cape) were particularly bad with people lacking

access to employment, little economic activity, inadequate water, proper sanitation, and even food.

Near Grahamstown (about 40 km away) was the infamous Glenmore resettlement camp. By 1979 there were 3000 people in Glenmore, removed from Colchester, Alexandra, Coega, Grahamstown itself and Klipfontein (SAIRR,1980: 435). A survey found that only 40 of the 3000 residents were in full-time employment, each earning about R80 a month. Another 160 people shared jobs on a half-time basis at R40 a month and about 200 pensioners were receiving R25 per month (SAIRR, 1980:436). According to the SPP report, 'most lived dangerously close to starvation' (SPP,1983:282). 'Conditions suffered in the initial weeks of 1979 at Glenmore were nothing short of critical. Complaints of unemployment, hunger and cold were rife. The rations provided by the government were pitifully inadequate' (SPP,1983: 293). Some of the Klipfontein people had brought their cattle but these quickly succumbed to the ticks and the tulp, a poisonous iris in the area. Within a few months here were 11 deaths at Glenmore, 9 of them children (SPP,1983: 293).

Also near Grahamstown was Khammaskraal, a temporary relocation area established in 1980 with a population in that year of about 1000 people living under appalling conditions. The first people to arrive there were given tents and rations; the only water supply came from a few water trucks. The rations consisted of samp, beans, mealie meal, soup and powdered milk. The supply was expected to last for three days, and that was the first and last ration provided. The SPP researchers found that 'most people had an extremely poor diet of maize, break, tea and sugar. 'Almost half the households interviewed said they ate meat less than once a month and the vast majority ate jam less than once a month'. Two journalists who visited the camp in October 1980 reported serious cases of starvation. 'One old man had eaten nothing for two days. He did not know when he was going to eat again' (SPP,1983: 318). The level of general health in the area is indicated by the fact that in 1980 the mines, through the Employment Bureau of Africa, were employing about 2000 people from Peddie, but in November of that year, 17 people were turned down because they were underweight (SPP,1983: 317).

Early in 1977 it was reported that large numbers of children at the Thornhill resettlement camp were dying from gastro-enteritis and diarrhoea, and that 'adult deaths were occurring as a result of malnutrition and its consequent diseases'. It was reported that more than 300 children had died by January 1977 since October 1976 in the various (Ciskei) resettlement camps, including Thornhill. 'Doctors said that babies were dying at the rate of 5 a day at Thornhill'(SAIRR, 1978:35). How did we – the staff at Rhodes – respond to these processes?

Response by Rhodes

Writing of some 150 years ago, Mostert refers to 'the frontier's tiny community of beleaguered radicals' (Mostert, 1992:828). Contemporary 'radicals', if that is the right word, did engage with these processes in a number of ways including research, protest and support. The Glenmore Action Group did crucial work, as did the Surplus People Project from which I have quoted so extensively.

The first meeting of the Surplus People Project was held in February 1980 in the Katberg and at least 12 members of the Rhodes staff were involved in or contributed to this massive project which involved a total of 1671 household interviews carried out in the 19 relocation areas selected for study. This was good, rigorous research. We used our sociological skills and commitment to document a process that was crucial to maintaining the white minority regime. But I would argue – in retrospect – that our response was flawed in at least two ways. Firstly we spoke on behalf of this oppressed group, rather than enabling them to develop their own collective voice and speak for themselves. Secondly we did not try to deepen their understanding of their experience. Most of the ex-farm workers removed to Khammaskraal for instance believed that they were the victims of unfeeling white farm owners. We did not engage with them in any reframing of this experience in terms of the wider process of mechanisation of agriculture which was taking place in the Eastern Cape at the time. In other worlds we failed to share knowledge in ways that would translate private troubles into social issues, what C. Wright Mills defined as the essence of 'the sociological imagination'.

Rhodes at the time was not a homogeneous political community. For instance Guy Berger has noted the divergent response to Glenmore of two groups, 'The first, the Glenmore Action Group, constituted largely of liberal academics at Rhodes University, did valuable work in ensuring maximum publicity for the removal and were instrumental in organising food aid from the World Vision organisation. The group remained entirely within a liberal, idealist paradigm seeing the removals as the working out of bigoted social ideology' (Berger, 50 cited by SPP, 1983: 292). 'The second group consisted of about 40 Rhodes University students who staged a symbolic protest by erecting a mock squatter camp in the university quadrangle. They provided a colourful sight surrounded by corrugated iron structures, tents and sleeping bags. The aim of the squat was to focus attention on relocation and highlight the inadequacy of the South African education system in dealing with such problems. The one night squat ended in an open air meeting attended by about 400 students. A counter-demonstration at the time was put on by five law students who, in boaters and striped blazers, played bowls on the lawn and reclined in deckchairs, sipping tea brought by an obsequious African in white clothing. One student later said he was trying to show how good colonialism was' (Berger, 54. Cited by SPP,1983: 293).

Much rigorous research was produced by Rhodes academics at this time. The impressive scholarship of Rhodes historians such as Rodney Davenport, Jeff Peires and Marion Lacey meant that while black South Africans were deprived of citizenship and political rights, they were not deprived of their history.

Kathy Satchwell – on the staff of the Cory Library earning R30 a month at the time – initiated a system of support for political detainees which included reading material, videos and food parcels to which several Rhodes staff contributed time and resources. We also engaged in symbolic gestures of support like being part of the crowd of 15,000 attending Biko's funeral in King Williams Town.

People like Nancy Charton helped to establish the Grahamstown Advice Office which not only assisted black victims of apartheid legislation but gave white people the opportunity to learn a little of what it meant to be black at that time.

It was a time when Rhodes was extremely small and white in its student population. For example in 1977 there were 2 568 white students, 15 coloured, 8 Indian, 54 chinese and 9 African students with a total of 2 654 students (SAIRR, 1978: 522). This racial character was not Rhodes's choice. During 1976 the principals of Rhodes, UCT and Wits had made representations to the Minister of national education requesting that they be permitted to admit students of all race groups to their universities on academic merit alone.

However, my argument is that while there was important scholarship, protest and support, there was much that was not done. For example, on 15 September 1977 about 1,250 students at the University of Fort Hare were arrested when they held an open-air memorial service for Steve Biko. There was no expression of solidarity with them from Rhodes. According to the SAIRR Survey of 1977, after Biko's death in detention a letter calling for changes to the Terrorism Act to permit regular and frequent visits to a detainee by a lawyer, a private doctor or other representative of his family, under police supervision if necessary, was issued by the chairman of the Johannesburg Bar Council. The statement was supported in a letter signed by seven members of the Faculty of Law at the University of Stellenbosch. Sixteen staff members of the Faculty of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand also sent a letter to the Minister of Police asking for reform to allow visits to detainees by dotors and legal representatives. There is no mention of any action by the Rhodes Law staff (SAIRR, 1978:167). There were state actions against colleagues like Terence Beard, banned under the Suppression of Communism Act while he was the chair of the Liberal Party in Grahamstown, and Guy Berger, an early participant in the SPP who was detained under the Terrorism Act, actions which should have provoked mass protests, expressions of outrage and acts of civil disobedience.

Conclusion

In retrospect our collective response to these events and to the scale of violence perpetrated all around us, through the policy of forced removals and state terrorism,was flawed and inadequate. We did go beyond the academy and engage with public issues but failed to create what Arjun Appadurai has termed 'new architecture' or producing and sharing knowledge with 'the poor, the vulnerable, the dispossed and the marginalised' (Appadurai, 2002:272).

We had a model of a social scientist doing this at the time I was at Rhodes. In his remarkable book, *The Eye of the Needle* published in 1972, Rick Turner presented a vision of a future South Africa based on participatory democracy, and stressed the capacity of people working through collective organisations to change the world. Both Turner's assasination on 8 January 1978 and Biko's murder speak to the power of their ideas.

Thirty years later those ideas are still being articulated by the new social movements that are emerging in South Africa and linking to the emerging global justice movement to confront the process of corporate globalisation which is deepening social inequality and environmental degradation throughout the world. These movements demand our time, our thoughts and our voices.

Notes

1. Walzer distinguishes between a 'siege of terror' which is oriented toward overthrowing a system of authority such as a state. Its purpose is to destroy the authority system by creating extreme fear through systematic violence. In the 'regime of terror', systems of terror coincide and coact with systems of authority and are directed by those who control the institutions of power.
2. The Surplus People Project Report points out that this figure is incomplete as it does not include the bulk of the people affected by influx control in the urban areas. 'The magnitude of influx control measures is indicated by the fact that from the beginning of 1979 to the middle of 1981 the total number of arrests under the pass laws in the 11 major urban areas of the country was 289,237 (*SAIRR Survey*, 1981, 234 -235. Cited by SPP, 1983:5).

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On Becoming an African-Asian English Academic at Rhodes University

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Brief History of the Department of English

I arrived at Rhodes University English Department with not much more than a passion for literature. During the last fourteen years I have been able to observe the discipline in operation. My perspective has broadened and deepened, taking in the trajectory from Stanley Kidd and the colonial Cambridge practices, and from what might be termed the 'humanist enterprise of English studies',[1] to the white liberalism of Guy Butler in the middle of the twentieth century, then to the present post-apartheid era of humanities cutbacks and increasing commodification of knowledge.

Metropolitan developments and their influence on the colony or how English Studies in South Africa was historically constituted

When the first lesson in English was taught at Rhodes by Stanley Kidd in 1904, English as a discipline was still in its infancy. The first School of English, born out of Philology, was established at Oxford University in 1894 (there were English departments at London University and in the USA), and the first Chair in English Language and Literature at Oxford University was appointed as late as 1903. At Cambridge University, which was to provide most of the original staff at Rhodes, this first appointment was made in 1912. The teaching of English at Rhodes then, as early as 1904, was quite avant-garde, and the main concern of a pioneer like Kidd was the decline in the standard of English spoken in South Africa as compared to England. Kidd, speaking at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in 1909, focuses on this divide between metropole and colony:

> It must be realised that while the Home English language is a foreign language to more than half the Europeans in the country, it is, even to the English colonial-born, a semi-foreign language, and therefore in the same way and to a greater extent English literature is a foreign literature in South Africa.[2]

Even though Kidd's concerns were primarily with the education of the 'English colonial-born', his words have somewhat wider significance today. Is English literature indeed a 'foreign literature in South Africa'? If it is, why was Kidd teaching it in 1904, and more to the point, what are we in the Department of English doing one hundred years on?

The early pedagogy of the Department was strongly influenced by two English scholars, I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis, who were largely responsible for defining the discipline in its early days. Richards invented 'practical criticism' – briefly explained as the psychologising of literary criticism, and which concentrated almost solely on the 'words on the page'. He advocated a focus on the states of mind associated with literature, rather than a focus on literature as an object. 'Richards's tactic is to bring literature into the realm of commentary as human science so that it can be established as an effective material institution to "educate" the minds, bodies, and souls of it students'.[3] Leavis's 'campaign [was] to establish literary criticism as a socially significant discipline'.[4]

Leavis viewed the arts as a vital antidote to the deteriorating human condition. He believed that in a society debased by the mass production of culture, the literary elite held the responsibility of upholding 'the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends, and without which distinction of spirit is thwarted and incoherent'.[5]

Together, Richards and Leavis not only mapped out the discipline, but they also mapped out the canon of literary texts to be taught at English schools and universities, and by extension, at colonial schools and universities. This canon became the bedrock of critical authority. Thus in England, by the middle of the last century, an educated elite held the huge responsibility of preserving the language of certain literary texts and were capable of identifying the texts containing cultural value. Similarly, in South Africa, a small minority of white colonisers determined, mainly through replication of the English system, the course of English studies for the entire country and its diverse population.

At Rhodes, specifically, the tradition of Richards and Leavis arrived in 1939 in the form of Alan Warner who had trained in the methods and philosophy of the Cambridge 'critical revolution', and who was a disciple of Leavis. Small group pedagogy and literary criticism as a practical examination technique were introduced, and so was the limited canon of texts which excluded South African literature and many others.

Guy Butler and White Liberalism

In the 1950s 'practical criticism' was still the chief mode of teaching English in South Africa. In addition, no significant attempts had been made to adapt the syllabi to local conditions. Guy Butler of Rhodes University, a growing voice in English literary circles, celebrated the European heritage. At the same time he also saw the importance of 'the adaptation of ideas and tradition to a new environment'.[6] He argued for the importance of South African literature, saying that the youth needed to develop imaginative roots in South Africa. He also advocated fostering a national literature, but he did not challenge prevailing literary valuations. In fact, he granted English literature a superior place in the hierarchy of artistic achievement. According to Doherty, 'Butler's opinion at this time represents one of the least controversial arguments for the

inclusion of South African literature in the university syllabus: as a remedial response to the backwardness of South African students'.[7]

It is significant to recognise that Butler was preoccupied with the role of the English minority in South Africa. He saw this role in terms of the Nietzschean opposition between Apollo and Dionysus: 'Our role, as I see it, is to play Apollo to Africa's Dionysus'.[8] Butler supported cultural self-consciousness on the part of the English speaking minority in South Africa. For example, he strongly recommended an English South African poetry which used a distinct South African English. He feared for the fate of English in South Africa and he praised those who had adapted the language and tradition of liberal impartiality to South African society. In relation this point he declared that 'as a Christian and a Westerner, I believe [this] to be a most wonderful thing: it is proof that a great tradition has struck root in a new soil'.[9]

So, for Butler '[A]fricanisation then comes to mean the successful introduction of English, along with a few anglicised South African words, into an environment where the purity of the English language is potentially threatened'.[10]

At this point in the Rhodes English Department, the canon was still intact and 'practical criticism' was still thriving. There was no evidence of serious concern about recognising and including South African literature for the sake of relevance or merit. Neither were there considerations about cultural difference and effects of cultural imperialism on the majority of the population. If there was any consideration of 'other' cultures, it took the form of concern about the threat of Afrikaner nationalism, which seemed to always lurk in the background. African nationalism did not feature.

If there were advocates of a South African component to syllabi at this time, theystruggled to reconcile this with their acknowledgement of the superior humanising values of the great English texts.[11] After the declaration of Republic in 1961, there seems to be a slight shift, indicated by the establishment of the English Academy in the same year. The main brief of the Academy was to uphold standards of written and spoken English and the promotion of South African literature.

But in 1965, the earlier sentiments about the English minority were reiterated by Butler who was now the leader of the English Academy. At the second conference of the English Academy held at Rhodes University in 1969, and entitled 'South African Writing in English and its Place in School and University', the political imperative underlying the study of South African English literature was articulated. Butler made it clear that his primary concern was with the definition and survival of the English minority in South Africa:

> The predicament of many English-speaking South Africans is acute. They feel a lack of purpose of [sic] direction; they want to feel they belong; and they are afraid of belonging: they don't know what they belong to.[12]

It is only in the 1970s that new voices emerged. These voices concerned themselves with apartheid, and a critique of 'Butlerism', mainly for its neglect of black writers and black literature. It is also in the 1970s that the first bibliography of South African literature in English was published in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. Ursula Laredo's classification created a great South African tradition along Leavisite principles and by the end of the decade South African literature had found its way into the syllabi of South African English departments. At Rhodes, as one alumnus recalls, in 1975 Butler taught an English III paper on white South African fiction which included works by Thomas Pringle, Pauline Smith and Sydney Clouts.

The emergency of the 1980s

In the highly politically charged 1980s what developments occurred in the Rhodes English Department? A member of the department at the time, Nick Visser, observed that 'practical criticism' was giving way to a 'sociology of literature generally and Marxist literary criticism in particular'.[13] As far as the Department was concerned this appears to be wishful thinking on Visser's part. From informal enquiries I have made, I have ascertained that Visser was the most radical member of staff in the 1980s, one of the few really committed to the project of recovery of the culturally oppressed or marginalised. His passionate support of a historical, diagnostic approach to literature was no doubt a sore point for the die-hard supporters of 'practical criticism'.

Another 'radical' member of staff, it seems, was Don Maclennan (current Professor Emeritus), who in the late 1970s introduced a course which was to be known as *English in Africa*. Together with Guy Butler's successor, Malvern van Wyk Smith, Maclennan introduced works by Achebe, Soyinka and Ngugi into the department syllabus. In about 1983 *English in Africa* became a separate, one-year course. This course, open to students who were in second year or above, covered the growing body of postcolonial (in terms of chronology) African literature written in English. The introduction of *English in Africa*, no doubt revolutionary in the Department, allowed for the canon-based core course to continue largely untampered with, whilst at the same time acceding to the demands of so-called leftist radicals.

As the violent decade drew to a close we find that national political imperatives were being felt in the Department. Big names on the South African literary scene, such as Nadine Gordimer and Athol Fugard, were already in the syllabus. The issue of our immediate socio-political context could no longer be ignored, it seems. Under the headship of Van Wyk Smith, an 'Options' system for English III was devised. This allowed the dissenting members of staff to pursue their own areas of interest, be it traditional, canonical or new, emerging material. But it was to take a decade before a *Postcolonial Literature* paper was to appear as part of the English II syllabus. Now I'm proud to say that I teach Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in this course, and we have also, at third year level,

a *New Literatures* paper, and at Honours level, a *South African Literature* paper. A few years ago, when still a Masters student, I was invited to teach postcolonial theory as part of the Honours *Literary Theory* paper. This is an interesting paper because it begins with Aristotle and Plato and ends with Gayatri Spivak!

When I arrived in 1990, I received a sound literary education, a solid grounding in the canon, with a smattering of South African literature in the form of Fugard's plays and Gordimer's *The Late Bourgeois World.* The pedagogy was eclectic, with some members still focussing on a close reading of the, usually canonical, text, and others attempting to contextualise the texts in an increasingly volatile South Africa.

My Experiences

I arrived at Rhodes in February 1990, a singularly joyous time in the history of our nation. Coupled with the euphoria of Orientation Week, was the extreme elation I felt at the release of Nelson Mandela. The country and the university were entering a new phase.

During my undergraduate years I discovered that Rhodes University was a conservative and peaceful campus. Political demonstrations were, more often than not, well-coordinated affairs, with controlled singing and toyi-toying. This struck me as a contrast to what was or had been going on elsewhere at other campuses (my brothers had attended UDW and UWC respectively).

At this point the leftist student bodies were divided along racial lines: NUSAS and SANSCO. But shortly after my arrival they merged at national level to form SASCO. Our 'enemy' at the time was MSO (Moderate Students' Organisation) and RAG was the epitome of the white, bourgeois ethos. As a member and then the Chairperson of the Rhodes University Student Organisation (RUSCO), I was personally involved in the struggle to dissociate student community work from the 'decadence' of RAG.

Such were my forays into political activism.

As a postgraduate in the Journalism Department and then in the English Department, I was able to engage with the politics of race and gender on a theoretical level. I became aware of the quagmire known as the 'politics of identity', of discourse and language, and the role of academia in the waves of change around us.

During my M.A. research I became more aware of what was perceived as one of the biggest dangers facing the discipline: the contamination and dilution posed by multi-disciplinary approaches to literature. In 1998 I embarked on a research project not wholly in line with mainstream Departmental interests. This was a study of English transcriptions of Xhosa oral folktales in the Eastern Cape during the colonial era. As my interest in postcolonial studies increased, I became more aware that I was straddling disciplinary boundaries, and I took my cue from Leon de Kock, author of *Civilising Barbarians,* who termed such

work 'literary-cultural analysis'.[14] For me, there is no way to separate the personal and the social, the political and the aesthetic within English Studies. Thus, an approach which is informed by other humanities disciplines, but which retains as its central focus the literary text, seems to make the most sense in our context. In terms of pedagogy, the skills and knowledge specific to the analysis of a literary text need not be jettisoned because of the added perspectives of other disciplines. This view applies both to research and teaching.

At present I am busy with my Ph.D research which explores postcolonial feminist literary aesthetics with a view to elucidating how literature can contributes to the creation of new subjectivities within diasporic communities. The interconnectedness and constructedness of categories such as race, gender, ethnicity and class are scrutinised by an analysis of the literature which aesthetically depicts these categories. But herein lies a catch. As an academic who is questioning these categories, is it necessary for me to engage with them at this level? But am I perpetuating them or decontstructing them? Can I ignore what is 'real' in the literature, and by extension, real in the world? And, finally I have to ask, how much are my research interests driven by my own subject position as a South African female academic of Asian descent?

Since my appointment as a full time lecturer in 2002, I have become increasingly aware of the many challenges faced by university lecturers, in general, and at Rhodes specifically. As a lecturer at the Department of English, Rhodes University, 2004, these are some of the challenges I face:

- The diversity of the student body due to inequalities or lack of standardisation in the secondary education system;
- The pending decision to 'Africanise' the syllabus or preserve the canon – this is the same debate which arose in the 1970s and gave rise to certain factions;
- Being postcolonial (researching literature of the South Asian diaspora) yet being passionate about Classical literature (Homer's *Odyssey*), Shakespeare and Modernist texts such James Joyce's *Ulysses* – I see the connections between these literatures and I do not see them as mutually exclusive;
- The positive rearticulation of difference, in particular pedagogical differences, generic differences and disciplinary differences, in order generate collegiality and serve the higher purpose – which is to gain and spread knowledge;
- Introducing students to the discourse of English literary studies and fostering a degree of metacognition as they become members of the 'community of practice'[15] i.e., alerting them to their subject positions in relation to the texts they study, the institution, their social lives and their national global identities;
- The ever-present threat of cut-backs in the humanities, and the awareness that the knowledge that we generate is somehow perceived as second-rate to that of the Science and Commerce faculties which 'subsidise' us;

– Student apathy (say no more).

Critical Comment and Conclusion

The university has, I believe, maintained its air of conservatism (and by that I mean its air of peacefulness, serenity, and orderliness) whilst forging ahead in some areas. The increased student diversity in terms of 'race' is immediately apparent to me when I walk around campus. Yet, in the English Department, we still do not attract many 'black' students. There is no obvious solution to this problem. For example, it would be wrong to assume that the reason for low numbers of 'black' students is that they opt for career-oriented subjects, because it is quite apparent that *most* students today are at university in order to become employable.

The English Department has grown in the same way as the wider institution, since my arrival in 1990. The core is intact whilst on the periphery there have been changes. The *English in Africa* course, so revolutionary in the 1970s and 1980s, has been defunct for a few years due mainly to lack of student interest and staffing constraints. And the current staff still debates about what percentage of the syllabus should be devoted to African literature, and to what extent the canon should be sacrificed. As the demographics of the staff change slowly, I wonder if the issues for debate will change too.

I believe that it is crucial for the Department (and the discipline in South Africa) to consider the vast shifts in local, national and transnational cultural identity formation which have occurred since the millenium. As the brief history of the Department reveals, we have remained conservative, maintaining colonial metropolitan practices until a neo-colonial political expediency necessitated a shift. But since the changes in pedagogy and and syllabus which took place in the 1980s, we appear, at first glance, to be treading water.

We cannot stave off direct engagement with: the challenges of growing diversity in the student body; the evolving nature of the institution and its role in society; and the need for an alternative pedagogy in English studies which marries aesthetic, political and sociological concerns. At the same time we cannot fail to recognise those peripheral changes, for example, the Honours *Literary Theory* paper mentioned before, as indicative of a marriage between the traditional and the new. After all, a healthy tree needs its roots as well as its branches in order to survive.

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I would like here to acknowledge the assistance of former lecturer and colleague, and friend, David Bunyan.

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'Just a Little Thing like the Colour of Their Skin Ruined Everything': Facing Race at Rhodes Ten Years After

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> Personal interpretations of past time – the stories that people tell themselves in order to explain how they get to the place they currently inhabit – are often in deep and ambiguous conflict with the official interpretive devices of a culture.[1]

> In our second year of study at Rhodes we were told that the ——— Department needs a certain number of 'black females' and so many white females and males. We were told that black women had preference because there are fewer black women in the ——— career. A girl who was believed to be black was found to be coloured. Her physical appearance was black but her background revealed she was not black...those women who did not belong to this 'blackness' had to reinvent themselves. They had to do whatever it took to be associated with black, like the coloured girl who claimed she was black....those who can do ——— are black women because the community needs 'black women' [in that career]. I didn't understand that system because I thought women were all viewed as women. Among those black women were two women who dressed like men and do what men do. One of them had no breasts and had dreadlocks. She didn't see herself as a woman. And I was curious to see if she would win a place – if the Department would see her as a 'woman'. Another striking issue between these black women was the issue of accent. Some had an 'African' accent while others had an 'American' accent. This accent issue determined [what you would specialise in]. So there was also a class division among those black women.
>
> What interested me is that there were also a number of good 'white female' students whose number in [the second year class] was limited but whom I thought were also 'perfect women'. Just a little thing like the colour of their skin ruined everything; you become less than perfect. After the completion of their degree, will those two women who are more like men, do what men do instead of what they are expected to do? Maybe it is fine, as long as they are women.[2]

Introduction

Opposition to apartheid gave rise to many differing ideological positions on how appropriately to understand race and racism. One of the pivotal points of debate between what we might term 'radical' and 'liberal' opponents of apartheid concerned the contrast between non-racialism and multiracialism. The race debate also formed a central schism between competing ideological forces within the liberation movement itself – central to the Congress tradition of the ANC was the notion of 'non-racialism' which was contrasted both with variants of Africanism and black consciousness. Again, disputes about the

precise nature of the relationship between race and class were very central to the ideological ferment of the time.

Non-racialism as the answer to the ruling National Party's racial dispensation was, then, the clarion call of those who aligned themselves with the Congress tradition. The nub of the idea of non-racialism was best summed up in an aphorism which I heard for the first time in a speech given by Harry Gwala at Rhodes shortly after his release from prison: 'There are only two races, the human race and the animal race', Gwala told a packed Great Hall. That formulation of race remains as radical and uncommon a proposition today as it was then. As Deborah Posel has commented, 'after decades of apartheid reasoning, the idea that South African society comprises four distinct races – "whites", "Coloureds", "Indians" and "Africans" – has become a habit of thought and experience, a facet of popular "common sense" still widely in evidence. So it remains a norm for the narratives we hear in public media or in conversation to designate unnamed social actors in terms of their race – as though this reduces their anonymity and renders their actions more intelligible'.[3]

Yet, as Posel points out too,[4] this should not be understood merely as an unfortunate residual effect of apartheid. Rather, new life has been breathed into these categories in the transition context as they begin to be employed for multiple purposes of redress and political manoeuvring. Racial identities have proved resilient in the post-apartheid period,[5] rainbow-nationalism notwithstanding. Indeed, non-racialism sometimes appears *less* a feature of the current context than *more*, as the unifying imperative of the official liberation movement's ideological line gives way to opportunities for South Africans to assert forms of identity whose foregrounding was regarded as impolitic in a different era.

This tension between our perpetual attempt to sanitise our minds of racial thoughts on the one hand, and the obvious continued social reality and significance of race on the other, remains a central feature of the way in which we live race at Rhodes and indeed in South Africa ten years after apartheid. Today, natural scientists mostly agree that no such thing as race exists from the point of view of physical, biological reality. Race does not exist; it is not a pertinent criterion of classification.[6] The ideology of non-racialism is vindicated as the factual truth – no mere political slogan. Yet it at the same time remains equally true to say, as Richard Dyer does, that the imagery of race continues to exert its power over every feature of our lives:

> At what cost regions and countries export their goods, whose voices are listened to at international gatherings, who bombs and who is bombed, who gets what jobs, housing, access to health care and education, what cultural activities are subsidised and sold, in what terms they are validated – these are all largely inextricable from racial imagery. The myriad minute decisions that constitute the practices of the world are at every point informed by judgements about people's capacities and worth, judgements based on what they look like, where they come from, how they speak, even what they eat, that is, racial judgements. Race is not the only factor governing these things and people of goodwill everywhere

> struggle to overcome the prejudices and barriers of race, but it is never not a factor, never not in play.[7]

This paper sets out to tell stories about race and identity among the present generation of Rhodes students. It does not purport to say that these experiences are everyone's experiences. Indeed, it is certain that they are not. There are those who will say that they find little evidence for race as a significant category of analysis of their or others' experience of life at Rhodes. The Vice-Chancellor cited just such an example in his welcoming remarks to Rhodes alumni earlier this year. He quoted a letter from a Xhosa student who had written to thank Rhodes and in particular his hall of residence for the experience of being at Rhodes. The writer stressed that he had 'met people from different backgrounds and NOT in one instance experienced abuse or discrimination of any sort'.[8]

My research with Rhodes students over the last three years has involved my close interaction during a period of six to seven weeks at a time with groups of some eighty participants in each of three research/teaching cycles. The research 'data' used in the paper consist of the stories told and written by the participants[9] to one another and to the author. Many described their participation in the research as being a very rare if not singular occasion in their experience as South Africans where race is truly 'faced'. This term is used in a dual sense, referring as it does to the willingness to confront the unmentionable and to the fact that this confrontation takes place in a public setting. As a researcher one of my primary goals was to create safe communal spaces in which private thoughts could frankly be expressed in public – a goal which participants felt was largely realised. While some may suggest that I found only what I sought, from the outset I was genuinely surprised by the anguish, bewilderment, anger, fear, confusion, prejudice, suspicion, suffering and pain that I encountered across the spectrum of skin colours. Many of the participants were as taken aback as I was both by what they found themselves articulating – often for the very first time – and by what they found in others.

> There was a time when I stopped coming because it was too emotionally taxing. But I returned. There was the time when I watched the melanin workshop and cried because someone understood. A lecture would spark debate for a week in the dining halls; debates which most times ended up involving not only Politics students. I was angry, worked past some of that anger into hope, hope for a little change from me and the white, Indian, coloured, black people and those for whom these categories are insufficient. I don't know how to put it into words. Five years from now I'll write you a letter letting you know. It fuelled debate which we knew existed but never found the realm or sanctuary to express these views. Rhodes graduates sit in lecture theatres for three years just to make money. If all of university were like this course we would be here for a different reason. I have hope for me... hope that I won't be just another Rhodes graduate.[10]

Encounters with Unreason

It appears intuitively likely that inter-racial contact improves racial/ethnic relations[11] whereas absence of such contact promotes prejudice and stereotyping. This seems to be the unstated dominant assumption at Rhodes. Students come into a mixed environment, mingle and become less prejudiced as a result. The mere fact of the existence of people of different skin colours here will produce this effect. However, what is referred to as 'contact theory' or 'the contact hypothesis' in the social science literature is not unproblematic in its assumptions. For one thing, we need to ask questions about the extent and quality of the supposed contact that occurs. For example, at Rhodes, my research subjects report, dining halls, friendship circles, dating, social meeting places, sports and lecture room seating continue to be highly segregated on a racial basis. As a result people tend to see and talk of one another as undifferentiated blocs ('the black guys in my residence'; 'the white girls in the tutorial'; 'coloured chicks', 'Indian okes') rather than interacting as individuals.

> She went to a private white school and therefore had no contact with black people. She chose to go to Rhodes to change this reality. She wanted to meet new people from different places and backgrounds. She thought it would be so wonderful to belong to a community where everybody would interact and mingle. She was naïve. She went to the dining hall and discovered that boys sat with boys, girls with girls, whites with whites, blacks with blacks and so on. Her heart dropped. This was the reason she hated high school. She eats mostly with the other white girls in her residence. Now she is obsessed about her weight.[12]

Racial propinquity, then, is not the same thing as racial integration and the latter is not a necessary or even likely outcome of situations of 'racial diversity'. This finding is echoed in many studies of race. For example, in Wits sociologist Alan Morris's work on race relations in Hillbrow, Johanesburg, he found that while overt acts of racism are infrequent, residents continue to express racist views about one another and 'most apartment blocks were occupied solely or mainly by one particular racial category'.[13] In many instances, Morris argues, 'contact did not lessen prejudice but served to reinforce it'.[14] Contact does not add up to integration, which implies something more than merely surface toleration of those regarded as being of a different racial category, and includes as Pettigrew suggests, acceptance, friendship, equity and equality.[15]

It is important to recognise, moreover, that integration of this kind is not just something which fails to occur for one reason or another. Rather, there are significant ways in which integration is actively guarded against under circumstances of 'contact' so that the post-1994 context may be viewed as having given rise to new forms of informal but nonetheless powerful racial entrepreneurship which have replaced official injunctions against integration. The policing of sexuality is one of the most cogent examples of this. Apartheid's concern with the calcification of racial boundaries was, as Posel writes, 'rooted in widespread anxieties about racial mixing'.[16] Apartheid, at least in part, was meant to offer the reassurance that 'white women were safe from the threat of

black male sexuality'.[17] Taboos against sexual integration continue to be a very significant thematic thread in the way in which race is experienced at Rhodes. Complex rules of dating allude constantly to strict injunctions against inter-racial and even inter-ethnic sexual interaction.

> It was at Rhodes that he began to be fully aware of and bothered by racism. He frequented the black-dominated clubs as often as he did the white-dominated ones. However, he would often go to the latter alone because his friends had long sworn they would never visit clubs filled with whites. On one occasion he went up to a group of white girls. They smiled at him but their body language changed. The two guys with them gave a half manly acknowledgement but then the one closest to him leaned over and whispered into his ear so that only he heard, 'fuck off'. He walked away feeling that he was simply where he did not belong. The next morning he woke up and felt a boiling anger. Since then, his consciousness of racism has heightened.[18]

> He... went to a Model C school and is used to multicultural diversity. During his first two weeks at Rhodes he became attracted to a white girl. They started having a relationship which had to be 'silent' for reasons known only to her. Then he overheard some of her friends discussing the relationship. They said she was worried about how everyone would react if she was seen with a black man. What if her parents found out? They white boys wouldn't want to talk to her. They would call her a slut and think she might have Aids. She broke up with him. What hurt the young man was that he thought people had changed and that all South Africans see each other as one. Even students who have never experienced apartheid, who have been to school with black people since the early 1990s still think stereotypically of black people. What killed him was that most of his black friends told him he should have stuck to his own skin colour, he should have known better.[19]

Of course a racialised sexual code of conduct is not universally embraced or adhered to and there are many examples of code-breaking behaviour. Nonetheless, the existence of the code is widely acknowledged.

> Her friends were sitting around talking when one closed the door and said, 'You guys, have you heard what ——— did? She kissed ———'. 'No, the black boy in our hall?'. 'Dude, that's so wrong!'. She didn't agree. He was a really nice guy and quite hot. The fact that the girl was white didn't matter to her. She had seriously believed that her friends were not prejudiced bitches.[20]

In some instances transgression of the code forbidding inter-racial sexual encounters is, surprisingly, viewed more negatively than gendered sexual transgression.

> She is a young student, just enjoying life. She has fun, doing whatever she pleases, not generally phased by other people's opinions. One evening, while out with friends she happens to kiss another girl, who happens to be black. This is done not as a sexually political or racial statement; she was just being herself (like so many girls her age she is exploring her sexuality). She never realised that others had seen or even cared. The following evening a boy, a farmer's son from Zimbabwe approaches. 'Did you kiss a black girl?' This took her completely by surprise. He was a friend. 'That's disgusting. I hope you're embarrassed. But don't worry, just apologise and we'll forgive you. The guys think you're a cool girl. Just say you're sorry'. She burst into tears and walked home.[21]

The first point I have made about the contact hypothesis, then, is that it assumes that contact breaks down racial barriers and leads to integration whereas this is often not the case. Moreover, contact situations are characterised by an active policing, on the part of key protagonists, against integration.

The second point is that the contact hypothesis overlooks the extent to which such 'contact' as does take place, occurs within a broader context of power relations and reflects them. It is not unusual for example, for whites to gain more from encounters with the racial 'other' than vice versa. For those already empowered in society, those who occupy the position of privileged norm in relation to a range of markers – white trustworthiness, intelligence, beauty, cleanliness, morality is not in question – contact with black students largely serves to allay baseless fears: that their possessions will be stolen in mixed residences, that black tutorial members will lower the standards of class discussion, that black Res mates will engage in unsanitary practices in Res bathrooms. For these students 'contact' in a context in which the overall hegemony of whiteness remains intact, is reassuring. It tells them that they need not change after all. They can go on being themselves. These students may therefore report a decline in their prejudices after entering the mixed environment of Rhodes. But I would suggest that such a result needs to be interrogated, revealing as it does, very unequal power relations.

> Coming to Rhodes he had an overall feeling of trepidation at moving into a more 'exposed' environment than he had been in the past, growing up as a white male. He had been to boarding school but it was an elite private school. Although there were plenty of black people they had always been in a minority and had never seemed a threat as it were. Now he didn't know what it would be like living somewhere where his race was a minority. He had been warned that at other universities where residences were 'pitch black' everything had to be kept totally locked up as a result of the endless stealing. Furthermore his black classmates had been from wealthy families and most of them had no problem mixing with the white majority. The prospect of Res now presented a different scenario. Whites were a minority and blacks were from all walks of life, not just a tiny rich elite. His fears and worries turned out to be totally unfounded. Life in Res turned out to be very much like life in boarding school. White boys seemed to be the only ones who really stuck together. There was no black 'popular group' which everyone tried to fit in with. Instead, he ended up having the same colour friends, and ran around the Res getting drunk and having fun as if he owned the place, just as he would have had he been in a predominantly white Res. He also found that theft was never a problem.[22]

It is precisely one of the markers of continued dominance that white students are able to negotiate these encounters with ease. Initial feelings of trepidation quickly give way to the realisation that all will be well. On the other hand, for those who occupy skins that are melanin-rich in various degrees, 'contact' or cross-racial encounters are frequently a very negative rather than a positive experience and these encounters often lead to a heightened awareness of one's marginality.

> White people don't see white privilege. Many of them believe in individuality and sometimes go as far as to profess to not having a culture. For this reason they are not controlled by the stereotypes attached to race and are allowed to be whoever they want to be. In the case of Rhodes the strong colonial influences and Rhodes's history of it being a white university campus under apartheid have more than contributed to the dominant white culture in this campus. White culture is taken as the norm on campus. It affects you from whatever background you come from. Personally we struggled with getting used to eating with a fork and knife, but we had to learn. I didn't want to stick out. Yet this pressure to conform to the norm goes far beyond how a person eats in the dinning hall. It has affected who gets what.[23]

> During apartheid black people were the worst off while whites were at the top. While the new South Africa may show some form of inversion, Indian people continue to hover around the middle, looking into the distance, awaiting that opportunity to shine. It's tough occupying a space of mediocrity. She remembers how on the day before school started she went for a haircut so she would look neat and respectable for those she felt most judged by, white people, who formed the majority of what would be her new class. On the morning of her first day she smeared on a thick layer of her mom's Oil of Olay so that they wouldn't think she smelt spicy. When the teacher summoned her to stand up to introduce herself her lips had locked. She felt paralysed. There she stood with the biggest problem on her shoulders: should she speak like a white or should she speak the way she usually does? If she spoke like a white her classmates may be able to understand her a little better but then what would her friends and family think? Was that not the ultimate betrayal to one's race, identity and self? With those sharp blue eyes piercing at her she uttered a few words, a cross between 'white' English and her English – a language she was convinced had never before been spoken. To this day she struggles finding her voice but she has learned that difference is a good thing, that the world does not speak the same language, and that not everyone sees it through blue eyes.[24]

Describing racism as a system of unreason, Fanon argues that there is 'nothing more neurotic... than contact with unreason'.[25]

> As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others... I was satisfied with an intellectual understanding of these differences. It was not really dramatic. And then... And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me.[26]

One of the things that apartheid did, as the word implies, was to separate people. It was one of apartheid's obvious and axiomatic 'achievement' that blacks and whites had limited experience of one another. It is often assumed that it was only whites who lived 'sheltered' lives during apartheid but the reality is that the whole point of apartheid was to separate everyone from everyone else. This had many obvious unfortunate effects: whites who only came into contact with blacks who as cleaners, gardeners or petrol attendants; blacks who grew up with legends about the invincibility, beauty, goodness or evil of whites. But if we take Fanon's point, apartness was also a kind of protection. It is one of the ironic features of apartheid's demise that this form of 'protection' has fallen away.

> In terms of race, I found that I was very sheltered. By living in a coloured area, I had never really come into contact with real racism. The way that I did things was never 'made strange' the way that it is now that I spend most of my time at a white-dominated university. As a result, I have become more aware and sensitive to people's remarks and attitudes towards my behaviour. This sensitivity has allowed me to see if not racism, then at the very least, prejudice as I do not conform to people's stereotypes.[27]

Apartheid and colonialism left South African society scattered with powerful institutions whose history and residual character is colonial and 'white' in very deeply embedded ways. The historically white universities are among these. There is little documentation or acknowledgement of the extent to which black students entering this institutional milieu in all its elements – human, architectural, pedagogic, social – frequently find the experience deeply painful, dislocating, disruptive, unsettling, angering, confusing and difficult. For a significant sub-section their time at Rhodes is their first extended 'encounter' with the white other. The psychologically testing nature of this experience is seldom fully acknowledged by those for whom Rhodes and its ways are very familiar, even when they are physically present here for the first time.

For some black students, this sense of foreignness is experienced as merely a strangeness, a newness which can be quite interesting and exciting.

> I remember being fascinated by being in the same lecture theatre as two white students. It was my first interaction with another race, and it felt strange as well as being lectured to by a white lecturer for the first time.[28]

For others, the experience is far more difficult to cope with as is evident from the following story:

> He grew up in the countryside with his grandparents where there were no white people. His grandparents would share their past experiences with him. His mind and heart were filled with anger when it came to other races especially the white race. He showed not even the slightest sign of liking people from a different race. It came the time for him to leave his grandparents and attend Rhodes University. For him, when he got there it was not a comfortable atmosphere because it turned out to be a place full of different races. To make matters worse he had to share almost everything with people from different races, including books, places to sleep, places for entertainment, places to eat, etc. He would spend much of his time alone in his room. He physically distanced himself and this affected his educational performance as most of his lecturers belonged to other race groups. One thing that always confused him was the fact that even some students from his own racial group associated with the race that he hated with passion. It was especially bad when some of his friends would chat with white people. In times like this he would distance himself from his own best friends. He never told them about all the stories he had been told back home and they would not understand why he was acting like this. To him, people were not supposed to eat, sleep and talk together if they were from different racial groups.[29]

Many parents naturally set out deliberately to shield their children from harmful interactions and situations. Fear and suspicion meant that there was a mutual disinclination to perforate racial barriers. So Africans, coloureds and Indians emerge as no less 'sheltered' from the 'other' as whites. Such inter-

action as did take place pre-1994 often occurred in very constricted and stereotypical settings. For this reason, those occasions or contexts in which 'encounters' with the 'other' arise, emerge as significant memory experiences in people's lives. Such encounters occurred sporadically, incidentally and atypically before 1994 but after that date become much more widespread.

> Her parents raised her in the best way they could. She presumes they thought it best to shelter her, 'protect' her from her own kind. She was always the token black at school, always spoken English to by her parents although they spoke Xhosa to each other, always grew up in the white suburbs. She was oblivious to this 'apartheid'. What was it? Why was it? And who was it affecting? What were townships? Who stayed there? Why were people so different where her grandmother stayed: people walked in and out of her 'home' and everyone lived on top of each other.[30]

> He grew up living in the backyard of an Indian family for whom his mom cooked and cleaned. The Indian family couldn't pronounce his mom's name so they gave her another name, 'Regina'. They had the same problem with his name so they called him 'Nelson'. He never saw his father because he was jailed for taking part in the anti-apartheid struggles. He once asked the Indian boy of the family why they treated his mom differently and the following day his mom asked why he had asked such a question because she was about to lose her job. The next weekend his mom told him he had to leave Johannesburg and go to live with his grandparents in Ciskei because the Indians didn't want him in their house any more because he thinks he is so smart. He had to leave his beloved place of birth to go to a place he had never seen before because some people didn't like his questioning of inequality between human beings. Now he is in university. He doesn't like Indians, especially when he hears them saying they are 'black'. He thinks that Indians are not trustworthy because during apartheid they behaved like white people. They even called black people 'kaffirs'. Now that the black government is in power, they say they are 'black'. He is trying to put everything behind him and concentrate on his studies but he finds it hard to deal with what happened to him and his family because of the Indians. He is in residence and when an Indian guy comes close to him or tries to talk to him, he ignores him.[31]

Many of the young black adults at Rhodes, born to parents who experienced the full force of apartheid and who tried to shield their children from its worst effects, found themselves, from 1994, being thrust into the new opportunities available – Model C schools, historically 'white' universities. Many of the participants in this study had their first significant 'encounters' at Model C schools where many local race dramas no doubt played themselves out.

> I encountered myself as 'the black girl' when I attended school in what was then known as a Model C school. There was a total of 3 black girls in the entire school. Here I became a representative of the entire black population. I would often be asked questions starting with 'Why do you people...?' As a black girl I have no individuality, my race is at the centre of everything I am. It determines everything I have experienced and everything I expect to experience. This is something white people fail to understand. That one's race can be a highly determining factor in one's life. This is because white people do not view themselves as 'raced' individuals. They see themselves as independent, diverse individuals. Being human is the most powerful position that a person can be in. It means that a person is entitled to basic human rights that include freedom and autonomy and most importantly, choice. White people see themselves as being just human and they don't see

> their colour as being a meaningful factor in their socialisation. The privilege of whiteness is to be the norm, natural, just human.[32]

> I went to a Model C school where I encountered my first black child in my school in Standard One and I now recall how shocked I was. I am not ashamed about it because I believe it is a natural reaction to be shocked by something you do not see every day, never mind having never seen it before. Race is real to me. I have a different colour skin to that boy in my class in standard one. I will always be a different colour skin to him.[33]

A culture of racism leads to the ubiquitous tendency to reduce black people to their blackness so that to encounter one black person is to encounter all. While whites are 'just' human, to be black is frequently to be regarded as somehow 'representative'. While whites, as Dyer points out, are in the position of power of being able to speak for the commonality of humanity[34] precisely because they are not viewed as raced at all, to be black is to speak for blackness. The implication is that to be black is to be 'other' than 'just' human. An aspect of this is to treat black subjectivity as synonymous with victimhood so that what Moosa et al. refer to as 'the dialectical nature of black peoples' experience has been insufficiently acknowledged, and their role in responding to the dilemmas confronting them has been largely overlooked'.[35] The homogenising way in which black experience is treated is encapsulated in terms like 'the oppressed' or 'the formerly disadvantaged'. White people are so much in the habit of reducing black people to their blackness that it comes as a great surprise to learn that black people don't automatically see themselves in this way. Black participants, including many from neighbouring states, reported seeing themselves as black for the first time, or at least coming to a new awareness of their black identity only through experiences that placed them in prolonged contact with whites, for example at school, university or work.

For those who did not attend Model C schools it is at Rhodes where they first come to recognise themselves 'as black'. The shift is one from encountering 'the other' in a limited range of highly unequal settings to encounters as neighbours, fellow pupils or students, playmates, potential lovers, opponents and friends.

> When she came to Rhodes she was overwhelmed by the amount of white people she saw. She couldn't stand them. After all, white people are so different. It was so bad that she wanted to leave the university, because it was and still is too white. Today she is proud of who she is. She loves being black. She still does not like white people. That is probably something that will never change.[36]

Identity is clearly not only something we construct ourselves but is also constructed in the eyes of others. Whatever you may see yourself as being, you cannot control how others see and construct you and this impacts on your identity – identity is a social construction not merely a self-construction. One of the significant ways in which our subjectivity is socially constructed then, is through encounters with those who are experienced as 'other' or different. These encounters are encounters of unequal power through which we negotiate

our identity. In performing these negotiations there are a variety of possibilities available to us. We might respond to the encounter by attempting to remould ourselves in ways that will seem more acceptable in the eyes of the other; we may reject what we see reflected in that gaze and choose an oppositional stance; or we may find ourselves in complex intervals between the two. This idea is elaborated in the work of Somali psychologist Bulhan in which he outlines three major identification patterns among the black intelligentsia. He terms these 'capitulation' to the dominant culture and ideology, 'revitalisation' which involves a repudiation of the dominant culture accompanied by a defensive romanticism of the indigenous culture, and 'radicalisation' in which individuals come to be able to engage with the dominant culture on more equal terms.[37]

> She always assumed that being what she was, was a temporary transition period, that being black would not be her identity forever. Every night before she fell asleep, she prayed for what was of most importance to her then... That nightmares would stay at bay, that no-one would kill her parents, and the most pressing – that the next morning she would wake up with soft blonde hair that moved in the wind, and eyes of a bright colour like those of the people she encountered every day. At an age where one would think young kids worry about having nice toys and stable best friends and the coolest crayons and of course the most practical lunch, she wondered why her lunch smelled only of heavy suppers of the night before, wondered why her hair didn't return to its old 'position' when she awoke form nap time, assumed that her bum and breasts were bigger because she didn't do enough sport. She though all this would change with time, because what she saw every day, who she encountered all day every day, was the norm. White people are the standard, everything else was a deviation. But then, white people didn't register as white people – they were just people, human beings.[38]

Encounters can accentuate feelings of inferiority, an attempt to adapt or accommodate oneself to the expectations of the dominant gaze, or can lead to the construction of an oppositional identity. Bulhan (1977) theorised such encounters through the notion of 'inbetweenity' which he used to describe the black intelligentsia – those who attain a distinctive status and privilege through the acquisition of western education.[39] For Bulhan such encounters lead to a dual consciousness influenced on the one hand, by western culture and on the other by formative traditional African culture.

> However, the more fully and deeply Africans have internalised western culture, the more inevitably they are drawn to seek their destiny in western countries. Yet in transporting themselves to the source of the western education they have hitherto absorbed at a distance, they are likely to encounter racism in many forms. This may be a profoundly disturbing experience... [which] may in turn lead to an intense search for cultural roots and issues of identity may become compelling'.[40]

For Fanon as with many of the black participants in this study, the only solution is self-assertion: 'I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get away from an inborn complex, to asset myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the other hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known'.[41] This

solution is not without its painful contradictions in the context of white racial hegemony as suggested to me in the account by a young woman who spoke, on the one hand, of being 'black and proud' but on the other, of feeling the need to shower twice a day and hand-wash her underwear.

> The story starts 20 years ago, when my mother had to walk 10-15 kilometres to get from the township to the hospital in town to deliver me, because of the bus raids at that time. It was decided that my name would be ——, a name meaning '——'. This name, although not seemingly so, is related to my race, as my mother believed her daughter would go and fight against the white domination that for so long held them captive. Born to a single mother, who was involved in politics, I was moved to my grandparents' place, as is the case with most black people's situation, and I grew up there all of my life. Born into a black, working class, traditional yet deeply religious family, my identity was starting to shape. My immediate family had a great influence on shaping my identity... The race card is probably my most intimate because I am constantly struggling with whether or not I am a racist. For the longest time I wasn't one but more recently, at least since I came to Rhodes, I have just had this distinct change of heart. I don't like colour discrimination very much, because very generally it implies, in my eyes, a gain for the lighter skinned and a loss for the darkie. I was never told I was black at home. I learnt I was black and in the process also learnt what it entailed to be black...
>
> I say things like 'I'm black and proud' meaning that on some level I do believe black people have an essence to them that white people don't have. Growing up black is not always easy but neither is growing up any other race, right? Well, I don't know but I do know my own pains of growing up black. I live it every day. In the way I do certain things, like I have to shower every morning regardless of a night shower and I do not put my underwear into the washing machine. I hand-wash it every day.[42]

This young woman's choice of anecdote resonates startlingly with Fanon who refers to 'catchphrases strewn over the surface of things: nigger underwear smells of nigger; nigger teeth are white; nigger feet are big'.[43] Fanon goes on to write of 'Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my colour. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my colour. Either why, I am locked into the infernal circle'.[44]

Myriad minute adjustments and compromises are made on a daily basis by those whose skin colour delineates them as marginal, not the privileged diverse 'norm'.

> Growing up in the post-apartheid era I have had to conform to make myself more acceptable, leaving my roots behind. I suffer from a dominant social discourse about coloured identity which says that coloured people are alcoholics, unemployed and teenagers who fall pregnant very easily. I was raised in a good home which was family oriented as many coloured families are, but I also grew up in a coloured area thus I have a thick coloured accent. I admit that when speaking to white people I hide this accent as this will allow them perhaps not to think of me as coloured but as an educated female. Although I am often mistaken for being Indian, my colouredness comes out when I speak. I try to adapt to be more acceptable.[45]

Racialised Modes of Reasoning

Formally racists policies and overtly racist patterns of behaviour and speech have largely disappeared from everyday interaction between people of different skin colours at Rhodes. However, I would argue that what Deborah Posel has termed 'apartheid's modes of racial reasoning'[46] remain widely normalised in the modalities of thought and social practices of everyday life. Posel identifies several principal features of these modes of racial reasoning. Many of these emerge as recurrent themes in the stories told by my research subjects.

Race and Racial Difference as Self-Evident 'Facts' of Experience

Apartheid's starting premise was that South Africa consists of a number of races which differ from one another in a variety of ways. The effect of apartheid was to create was Posel has termed 'different worlds of experience[47] fissured along racial fault lines. In this sense apartheid became its own best justification as the experience of apartness normalised and naturalised social differences. It remains very common for South Africans, including young university students, to regard race and in particular, the existence of four main 'race groups' – white, coloured, Indian and African – as a self-evident, common-sensical, 'utterly uncontroversial fact of life'.[48]

> She felt that even though many don't view colour as an issue on a conscious level, deep down everyone has a problem somewhere along the line with race. She experienced this openly at Rhodes. At night it is always the same thing: black students at CJs, white students at the Rat and Pop Art used to be frequented by the Indians and coloureds. Everyone, on some level, would rather be with their own colour.[49]

> He never thought he was a racist until he lived and studied with people of different racial groups at Rhodes University. He found it extremely difficult to adjust to his new environment since he had never encountered such a situation before. He hails from a place inhabited by 99 percent Indians because it was a group area during the apartheid years. The older generation who were victims of apartheid taught him never to trust a white person, never to become friends with a white person. This is how his view of race evolved. Growing up in the new South Africa he finds it extremely difficult to interact with members of other racial groups.[50]

> When I first arrived at university a worrying factor for me was how I would share bathrooms with fellow black students. Contrary to my expectations I found them to be the cleanest of all other race groups. While I profess my deep-seated love for black people, I am aware of how to a certain degree I respond to black people in a negative way. For example, a fellow Indian friend remarked how her Res neighbour, a black girl, asked her to tie her hair up into a ponytail. And she, my friend, was extremely hesitant to do so. Feeling compelled, she did it, but afterwards washed her hands in Jik. I couldn't help but wonder if I would have felt the same. Shame on me. Unless I am able to grow out of this constricting mould of prejudice I am a disgrace to society. But how am I to do so?[51]

Each of these comments takes the existence of apartheid's racial menu as self-evident: there are 'other races' and one has expectations of various kinds

about how these people behave, whether or not they are clean, noisy, similar or different to one's own racial type. Even when experience proves those expectations to be invalid, the mode of reasoning is not replaced by a dissolution of racial categories but rather, by new generalisations – blacks are in fact 'the cleanest of all'.

The privileging of whiteness

Racialised reasoning is not simply about the assumed existence of various races but also, importantly includes a hierarchical component in which whiteness, both as a biological and a social condition is privileged. Whiteness is at the apex of an hierarchical racial order.[52] Students and staff experience the privileging of whiteness both socially and physically at Rhodes in a variety of ways.

> In Res he quickly learnt that the common room is for the 'darkies' and the bar is for the 'white dudes'. The moment a white student walked into the common room to find a congregation of darkies watching television the white student would say he was 'just checking what was on' and leave immediately. At lectures it is not any different. He always noticed in his —— lecture which was taken by a black lecturer how little attention she received from the white students. Its either complete chaos or they walk out. It still amazes him today how white students always complain about black lecturers when there's nothing to complain about. He was present when one black female lecturer said, 'one of the challenges in my profession is the utter disrespect I receive from students who do not listen to me. I cannot teach them anything worthwhile because I am black'.[53]

> This is a story about a young black girl who came from the townships, from what one might call a disadvantaged school. When she first came to Rhodes she was told that she had to do ELAP which stands for English Language for Academic Purposes. The reason was because her English was not good enough to enable her to make it at varsity. Now they were going to put her into this course so that she may learn how to speak and read English properly. She started this course not knowing what it involved. As the months went by she realised that people were treating her differently because of this course. Some people even called it English for Lazy African People. The reason for this was that the class only consisted of black South Africans. The thing that made her feel bad was that she was taken out of some 1200 first-year students to do this course without even being interviewed to see what her English skills were like. The white people who asked her about what course she was doing made fun of her, saying she was just here doing nothing and that she would only start her real studies the next year. Many treated her badly because of this course. She found out that there were many other second-language English speakers at Rhodes who were not forced to do this course. Even the lecturer treated the ELAP students as if they were stupid. At the end of the year she did so well that she was given the award for the best student in ———. She was so happy because she proved to the white people that she was every bit as good as them.[54]

> Dominance on campus is most felt though by the black female. The white girls with their petite figures contribute to the prevailing hegemonic notion of white beauty. When a black girl arrives at Rhodes, she is not beautiful in her own right but in relation to the white image of beauty. They aspire to this image of white beauty because they want to be viewed as beautiful by men. Black women straighten their hair, they starve themselves to get rid of their African assets (i.e. bums and thighs). By virtue of being black they are already starting from a disadvantage.[55]

She wanted to play ——— at Rhodes. She went to practices every week. After going for two weeks she noticed a similar pattern happening over and over again. Of course, she was black. At the ——— practices, whites would be given a chance to play. No-one would appoint her to play. She couldn't understand why she was never picked. She decided to stop going as it was a waste of time. Only whites get to play ——— at Rhodes.[56]

In orientation week we were invited to the SRC'S parties at the union. Like good little first years we went along but quickly grew tired of the rock music and beer guzzling. My friend and I thought it would be best if we were to have a quiet night in at Res. Just before walking out of the union area a black guy approached us and told us to go to Masakhane. My friend and I later discovered that Masakhane was the dingy little 'black spot' under the union where black people congregated and danced to their music. Not knowing it then the space at the union versus that at Masakhane was a clear sign of white culture's dominance over black. If we had not met that black guy we would not have known that Masakhane exists. The SRC made sure that it advertised the Union, but there was no mention of the alternative – Masakhane. White dominance at Rhodes is apparent from what gets advertised (i.e. rugby world cup) to what doesn't (All Africa games).[57]

In my first year at Rhodes University we wrote an essay in the ——— Department. One black woman in the class received a mark of 80 percent from the tutor but the lecturer reduced it to 60 percent, saying there were too many grammar mistakes and spelling errors. However, she had taken a first draft of the essay to a lecturer in the English Department to check for mistakes before submitting. To our surprise, the tutor, who was a white lady, said she had marked the essay according to the departmental criteria and that it had all the essential requirements to get 80 percent. She said that it was the lecturer's habit to question the marks of black students. In my mind that was implying that black students are not worth a mark of 80 per cent or more.[58]

It was the year 2003 when he started his university studies at Rhodes. It marked the worst year of his life because he encountered racism for the very first time in his life. At university he expected different lecturers in terms of race, standard of education and many other things that could make one different from another. What shocked him was that students responded differently to lecturers because of their race. For example, when a black lecturer in his ——— class was instructing students prior to the final examination, a white student stood up and asked, 'where do you get that instruction from? Do other lecturers in the Department know what you are talking about?' This gave him the impression that white students undermine black lecturers at this university while white lecturers do not get that kind of response from students. This black lecturer was tested all the time. He was asked questions that were targeted at testing his character and thinking skills. It was enough to make him conclude that white students were racist.[59]

Some white participants recognised that their race would continue to determine their privilege.

Like my father, I am a white middle class male and in this patriarchal society, success should not be too hard. I probably will not suffer the consequences of affirmative action as I will not have to be hired by a company which is forced to implement a programme of black empowerment. Similarly, the film industry is dominated by males, especially in the area of directing, to which I will be headed. Because I live in a society in which white middle class males are still largely in a position of dominance, I tend to see my success, and even my own subjectivity, as universally natural.[60]

This recognition is rare, however. It is far more common for white people to be entirely unaware of the privileged hegemonic position they occupy and to, in fact, feel disadvantaged by the post-1994 political context. These sentiments echo nationwide survey data which indicate that whites are only half as likely as other South Africans to accept the view that whites continue to benefit from apartheid.[61]

> In the modern world as a white male I am expected to re-invent myself but this is particularly difficult for me. As many jobs once exclusively my domain because of my race are no longer there for me.[62]

> In the historical context of South Africa today my parents see the greatest threat to me as affirmative action. Although opposing the nasty sides of apartheid and denying complicity in the continual oppression of black people, the system still held white peoples' middle classness in place. It was safe.[63]

> She questions whether or not she has a bright future because she is white. Is there a point to paying for an education if she may not be able to use it? Will she have unwillingly to move overseas? She hates that because she is white, she loses her privileges and opportunities. Apartheid was not her fault. She realises that whether you are liberal or not, you are white and should be scared of your past because you are now paying the consequences for it and it lives on in your consciousness. She wants to be African – a white African.[64]

The privileging of whiteness is particularly difficult for white people to recognise precisely because white people seldom think of themselves as raced. 'Race' is thought to have something to do with black people. In response, theorising and acknowledging white as race has become a popular academic industry. Echoing Richard Dyer, Bennett and Friedman[65] point out that it is precisely part of the privilege of being white that white people see themselves as diverse individuals and as self-evidently irreducible to their race. It therefore comes as a surprise when white people find themselves seen in the eyes of black people 'as white' – seeing the race of the 'other' is permitted white people only.

Many of the white participants in this research process started out from the position that apartheid was not of their making and had little to do with them; a position of confusion about why they as young white South Africans could somehow be regarded as complicit. Moreover, they asked why apartheid was such an issue for black students when they had not, after all, really known its full burden. In short, they felt that black students with access to all the privileges of a Rhodes education should 'get over it'.

In response, one participant wrote this:

> It is easy to say that I'm not racist and that I am not affected by race. The reality of it is how do I feel about that white man who used to drive around in a Hippo shooting teargas in my community? The same man would come at odd hours of the night to arrest my family and often they would be thrown into detention for months. During this time we would sit as siblings without word from those in detention. Today, I sit next to the siblings of those who were the iron fist in my community and they want me to believe that I was not directly affected by the policies of the apartheid regime. They are quick to remind me that was all in the past but it is this past that haunts me to this day. One afternoon I witnessed the IFP

> attack the community of Mofolo, one of the townships that make up Soweto. In that raid a friend of mine was raped and then stabbed several times until she breathed no more. She was only 18. Her 16-year old sister was also raped and stabbed to death. Her mother who was 42 years old was also raped and killed. Her grandmother who was 60 was also raped and stabbed to death. These are experiences some of us will carry to our graves yet some people want us to forget and act like it never happened. I'm sorry that the siblings of those who policed my community do not understand where I've come from but when you do not understand, don't pretend as if you do. You evoke my emotions of the past and these cannot be controlled.[66]

Some of the most powerful moments in the research arose as white participants came to the dual realisation firstly, that they had never before seen themselves as raced but had very definitely seen black students as raced and secondly, even more startlingly, that this was not how they were perceived – that they too were subject to a gaze. The white participants were surprised to learn that they were not regarded by the black participants as unique and diverse individuals but rather, 'as whites', whatever their particular history of liberal views, interracial dating and friendships, might be. One such significant moment of realisation for all the white people present in one group, including myself, was when a young black woman whom no-one had hitherto really noticed sitting in the front of the room, stood up during a discussion on race and waved her arm across the room, saying, 'it's you whites, that's the problem', her breaking voice filled with loathing and anger. For many Rhodes students as with most young South Africans this is an unusual experience because relations between black and white remain in so many instances superficially friendly, masking underlying suspicions, even hatreds.

One black woman spoke of staying up until the early hours of the morning to finish the eighty dense pages of prescribed reading material on the subject of whiteness. She reported the following day in a group discussion her intense shock at learning that white people seldom think about their race. For their part, the white participants ruefully acknowledged that they did not and that this was in itself central to their race experience. During a discussion of this issue, one participant responded by noting how she experienced her blackness as 'a cloud' which was constantly over her. This powerfully evocative image was taken up again and again in the weeks that followed by other participants who used it to portray the way in which race is always with you – if you are black.

> By virtue of being black you know that you have a 'cloud' of stereotypes that is always with you when you are living. This has contributed to the lowering of success of most black students, even at university... I feel uncomfortable even in tutorials because of having internalised an ideology that black people are stupid and they do not think as a white person. Although there is talk of a rainbow nation there will always be a great divide between black and white.[67]

The image of race as cloud brought to my mind Blake's poem 'The Little Black Boy' (1789) which is discussed also by Susan Gubar[68] in her exploration of the subordination of blackness to whiteness which lies at the centre of racist

ideology. In Blake's poem the 'Little Black Boy' is black, 'as if bereaved of light' (l.4) but his 'soul is white!' (l.2). 'And these black bodies and this sunburnt face/Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove' (l.l 15-16). In this image, blackness is synonymous with absence of light and, by implication, of value, goodness, merit. Far from operating merely at the symbolic level this form of interpretation has a real existence in the ways that white people think about black people – which was a surprising insight for many of the white participants who saw themselves at the outset as liberal, having neutral or insignificant views about race, having many black friends and acquaintances. During the research process one white man asked his white friend about a coloured girlfriend the friend had had at school. The way that he framed the question was to ask 'how bad was she'. He reflected on this formulation later:

> The more black she was the worse it was, reflecting my belief that white equals beautiful while black equals ugliness. I saw my whiteness as having more value than Peter's[69] coloured girlfriend because she had a darker skin (which only, after all, refers to the amount of pigment in the skin). It indicates that I somehow felt like a higher grade of humanity. I realised that I unconsciously feel that I am a better or higher quality human than those who have a darker skin than me. This is because I have always been advantaged by my whiteness. For example when collecting a passport or ID book I still feel as though because I am white I can skip the queue. I have learned a grading system for human identity. The more black, feminine, homosexual or poor you are, the lower your grade will be.[70]

The process here was one of the research subject closely interrogating his own question and its hidden assumptions so that he became aware of the ways in which his racial views were operating. This would not have been possible if the investigation were by way of superficial survey questionnaire-style research. It seems to me that many white people hold views which they fail to interrogate in this way, and which they believe are adequately hidden from their black counterparts by a veneer of middle class politeness. It is precisely this veneer of polite superficiality which the black participants in my study found maddening. To regard cordial relations then, the absence of overt conflict or physical confrontation, as a mark of racial harmony is clearly a mistake. Black students experience the absence of a willingness to engage passionately and sincerely with questions of prejudice, stereotypes and racism as deeply disrespectful and a measure of continuing white arrogance. In my research this attitude which one person described as 'the wide blue-eyed smile that never reaches the eyes', emerged as far more offensive to the black participants than stereotypical remarks or attitudes that are openly expressed.

Race is socio-cultural as well as biological

Posel argues that the apartheid state invested all facets of existence with racial significance.[71] Within this system everything and anything can be read as a sign of race, from how loudly or softly one talks, to which sport one enjoys, to how

frequently one has sex. The taken-for-granted notion that separate races of various kinds exist is accompanied, then, by the further assumption that the body is not the only site of differentiation. Different races are also widely assumed to evince clusters of social behaviour. This ranges from ideas about the inherent intellectual abilities of these putative different races, to demeanour, to taste in clothing, music, sport and food. These are not simply the (mis)conceptions of people who regard themselves as being of one race about people they regard as being of another race. This form of racial reasoning operates just as powerfully as an internal mechanism of patrolling the boundaries between one supposed race and another. Among black students there is a widely acknowledged close policing of one another for signs of deficient blackness which speaks to the ways in which race is viewed as more than a set of physical characteristics but is routinely thought to embody also social practices incorporating modes of dress, hairstyles, speech, mannerism, choice of music and so on.

> Personally I feel uncomfortable in tutorials because of ideologies that people have about blacks. Black people are considered stupid and they do not think like white people. A lot of black students question why I do Philosophy. They say that black people are not meant for Philosophy and that we cannot think beyond what is there.[72]

> In post-apartheid the emancipation of black people required black pride and unfortunately created degrees of blackness. People were more and more being criticised for being 'coconuts' and hairstyles were being scrutinised creating what Erasmus calls a fictitious binary between people who are black and people who are not black enough. I shaved my hair off in Grade 11. My hair was straight and processed and worked on. I felt what used to be my source of pride as a young girl, my source of beauty was now a reflection of weakness and consent to white supremacy and dominance.[73]

> She went to a 'white' school, played with white children, spoke to them in their white language. Yet she is black. She loves Robbie Williams, that song by Goo Goo Dolls, she used to have an Alanis Morrisette CD and would buy it again if she had the cash. Her favourite actor is Mel Gibson, her favourite filmmaker Quentin Tarantino and her favourite TV show, Friends. Yet she is black. Her skin is brown like the earth, her hair black as night, her lips full and thick, her nose wide and flat. She is black. African. Negro. Native. But to some, not black enough.[74]

The idea of race as an integrated and related set of biological features and social practices is closely related to a further mode of racial reasoning which is to essentialise race.

Race as Essential rather than Accidental or Contingent

> I am black. I believe that to be black is to have certain characteristics like I listen to kwaito music and speak the Venda language. Growing up I knew that I was not white and that there were things I could not do. I have this belief that white people are superior and because of their whiteness they always dominate all human beings.[75]

The underlying assumption of apartheid racial reasoning was that race adhered to persons as a cluster of essential elements rather than being mutable, fluid or

socially contingent.[76] Posel has suggested that aspects of the post-1994 political context have given new vigour to racial essentialism as racial identities have become newly politicised as the site of redress[77] and self-assertion. Racial differences, moreover, are often considered primary: the determinants of other differences across a range of forms of interaction and experience.[78]

> She came to Rhodes from a township school were there were only black students. When she got here she met a lot of other races. She particularly made friends with this white girl. They became very good friends but she experienced some problems. Black students from her Res did not want to be around her because they said they did not want a friend who is friends with the whites. And other white people did not want to be friends with her because of her colour. She was in the middle. She loved her new white friends and she was learning a lot from her about the white culture which she knew nothing about. But she did not want to lose her black friends because they represented a part of her that would always be there. She kept on trying to have them both. At the end a solution came when her white friend went away to study somewhere else.[79]

> Black people have different interests from white people. So they are not involved in a lot of the activities that take place at Rhodes. This is why they feel like Rhodes does not cater for their needs. Another thing is that there are so many divisions within the black people. Black South African girls do not hang around with Zimbabweans. They suffer from Xenophobia maybe because the number of Zimbabweans at Rhodes has increased making them feel like the minority in their own land.
>
> There are also divisions among black South Africans. Like the Xhosas do not mix with the Zulus. It is these differences that contribute to the great division within the black family.[80]

> I found that there was a particular stereotype of a coloured person that was appealed to, by all races. Everyone has their own idea of how 'the other' should and does behave. When questioned it was always a case of how other people were like that, not me, as I was 'one of them'. This led to me feeling as if I was invisible – I was not really coloured as coloured people were 'dodgy' in certain ways. I, therefore, was not coloured as they would not associate with dodgy people.[81]

> She went to university. She loved the freedom and enjoyed meeting new people. She met a guy called ———. They started going out. She liked him – a lot, but always felt something strange. She liked it when he spoke English. One day she went into his room and he was on the phone talking to his dad, speaking Xhosa. She felt odd and almost didn't recognise him.[82]

> Her friend at University is black. She comes from England and she doesn't seem to be black. She doesn't know any of the culture and can't speak any African languages. She thinks this is strange and never really considered her friend as an actual 'black'.[83]

Essentialised conceptions of race as a cluster of necessary biological and social characteristics are most clearly evident in the widespread labelling of a large section of Rhodes students as 'coconuts' (black on the outside, white on the inside) by other black students who regard themselves as more authentically black. This is a particularly harsh irony for those whose vilified accents of speech arise out of having been brought up in exile in highly politicised anti-apartheid families. bell hooks[84] draws a distinction between 'the easier and safer option of embracing the idea of a black essence and the more challenging

recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experiences of exile and struggle. Identity politics may be a necessary rejoinder to the tyranny of homogenised and universal paradigms but to be progressive this game must be played in a manner that embraces diversity and change rather than promoting the stifling essentialisms that narrow the discursive space opened up by the struggles for black and women's liberation'.[85]

> She grew up in Swaziland, Lusaka and London where race and colour were not an issue to her. Her parents were involved with the ANC. She remembers going to rallies chanting 'viva ANC', 'viva Mandela'. Now ten years into our new democracy she wishes that she was still totally race/colour-blind. She feels restricted and judged sometimes for being black. She tries to keep that bit of innocence with her and make friends with the human being and not the colour. But it is hard when black people call her a coconut and white people assume things about her because she is black. She is very aware that people still judge her on the colour of her skin, where she went to school and black people judge her because she never experienced apartheid South Africa at its worst. Deep down though, she is proudly black as it has been instilled in her that black is beautiful and not inferior.[86]

In the same way as apartheid relied on essentialised conceptions of race, positive affirmations of blackness for the purpose of combating an overweening hegemony of whiteness face the difficulty of falling into the trap of homogenising 'the black experience'. Yet, without claiming a common black identity how can white hegemony be challenged? Amina Mama refers to the risk of the creation of a new discursive regime, 'namely a set of prescriptions for how to be black and a set of sanctions and epithets for those daring to differ'.[87]

> She is a black female. Her mother is a domestic worker and used to work for a woman who is now her guardian. She is a person who is sometimes referred to as a coconut because she went to a private school. Her mother felt it was better for her to learn to speak English fluently and this has been a contributing factor to the racial encounters to follow for the rest of her life. As a result of only being able to speak English she finds it easier to relate to and be friends with white people. For her, encounters with her own race are more difficult as she has been socialised with whites. At family get-togethers she always feels lost as she cannot talk to her family members in their African tongue and they cannot speak English. People often mistake her for a foreigner. Her parents felt that she would be better accepted if she spoke English. Now there has been black empowerment and people are proud to be black and make their culture known. But she does not know much about her culture to be able to fit in. Her dilemma is that she is neither white nor black although people say that she is more white than black.[88]

> She's never had any black friends. Not really close ones in any case. Her father taught her English before her home language. Soon she couldn't remember how to construct grammatically correct Zulu sentences. Making friends is still today much easier with white people than with black people. With her white friends she is free to talk and be herself. The black kids never know what to do with her. Most just get angry and call her a 'coconut' and a 'model C' product. There are always the jeers and snide comments whenever she goes anywhere with her white friends. She feels comfortable and a part of them – except when talk turns to boys. She feels confused – she doesn't know if she is expected to like black boys or white boys.[89]

> She was born in Hammersmith, London, 19 years ago. Three years ago they decided to move back home – to South Africa. Since she has been 'home' she has encountered numerous difficulties, principally because she is black. She is an anomaly. She doesn't understand why black people reject her existence simply because she doesn't speak a local language. Further, she doesn't understand why she is 'allowed' to mingle with the whites just because she has an English accent. She has definitely noticed she is the only black person her white counterparts associate with. She cannot feel comfortable in her own skin. She is judged by everyone. She does not fit the status quo. She hates this feeling. She hates the division that pretends not to be there. She hates the assumptions her white friends make about blacks, and she especially hates that they don't even know when they do it. She hates that her black counterparts make assumptions about her just because she has white friends. Once a guy approached her at CJs and said 'I thought you were white because I always see you with white people'. She had no idea that coming to South Africa would make her feel so self-conscious. She can honestly say that she never encountered such complex racial hang-ups when she lived in London and attended a large inner city comprehensive school. She thinks it absolutely ridiculous when foolish people describe her as a 'coconut' as though there is one single model on which black people should live their lives. She does have white godparents and lives in a 'white' suburb. By the same token she listens to R 'n B and dances like a dream. So is she white or black?[90]

> People thought that she thought she was better than them because she spoke English. They assumed that this was a choice she had made and not that it was the only language she could speak in. White people thought that she was American, black people thought she took no pride in her 'blackness'.[91]

There is a tension between, on the one hand, the politically important claim that there is an overriding common black experience (of an oppressive socio-political context), and on the other the politically equally important recognition that there are different types of black response to a shared context. The challenge of black identity at Rhodes is not only about coping with white racism or the hidden ways in which white hegemony plays itself out. It is also about a struggle for the meaning of blackness.

Conclusion

If apartheid's racial categories were previously the locus of racial privileges and discrimination, these very same racial designations are now the site of redress – for, how else can the damage be undone and equitable treatment be established? Yet, what are the consequences of these reiterations? Can we continue to construct our social realities in racial terms – in particular drawing on apartheid's very own catalogue of race – in ways that transcend the ideological burdens of the past? What are the grammars of categorisation post-1994? To what extent, and in what ways, might they be at odds with the project of non-racialism?[92]

> My biggest scare is that not enough people have been part of this process. It should be made compulsory for the whole university. It is only in this way that we can break the ice and allow people to express themselves. We cannot hide our differences especially as leaders of the next generation. There is a whole lot of sensitivity and tension that people don't want to address. People are scared to air their opinions about race because they might

> be viewed as racists. No-one knows how the other culture thinks and we fake this ideology of togetherness. While here we have discussed race... outside we don't. We talk about money girls/boys and social status. We want to become part of the Rhodes hegemony because its cool and no-one wants to become the outsider.[93]

Posel writes of the 'lingering power of racial reasoning in the everyday lives of South African citizens'; of the ways in which 'disturbing proportions of respondents make lifestyle choices and judgements about others that reiterate and entrench existing norms of racial separateness'.[94] Furthermore, what is clear from the survey data she cites[95] is that 'the purchase of ideas of racial difference and distance remains strong and spans the population at large, rather than being concentrated among the direct beneficiaries of apartheid'.[96] Gibson and Macdonald's work based on a large, nationally representative survey of ordinary South Africans conducted from late 2000 to early 2001 found that 'South Africa is obviously not a single unified country; racial differences persist on virtually all dimensions of political and social life'.[97] It might be expected (or hoped) that if anywhere in the society, in the liberal, youthful, intellectual, relatively secluded space of the university, race might be of diminishing significance in peoples' lives. Yet, the stories here told show that while we might formally, legally, discard race, it continues to have an often unacknowledged and unseen power to determine perceptions, experiences and relationships.

There are those who may argue, as some analysts of the national political context do[98] that these findings are of little significance for the overall health of our political and institutional life. To put the point plainly, we don't need to love one another to live together.[99] As long as we have an adequate institutional and legal framework and are able to operate within reasonable bounds of tolerance and respect, our social project can progress. The alternative view is put by Lombard: 'Low levels of social trust and understanding, based largely on stereotypical views of others, infringe drastically on people's capacity to build workable relationships, which in turn are critical for rebuilding those structural social institutions that form the basis of a democratic society'.[100]

When we are unwilling to engage in a serious process of confronting race and racism this seems to be based on the idea of letting sleeping dogs lie; the fear that things will somehow be made worse if we 'go on about it'. My research leads me to the opposite conclusion. Even if the dog of racism is indeed asleep at Rhodes – and I doubt it is – we should be prepared to give it a vigorous shake in order respectfully to continue to engage with, learn from and understand more fully our past and its continuing implications for the present. The various processes of research in which I have been engaged with Rhodes students over the past three years have sought consciously to take participants beyond the usual analgesic approach and to allow for pain and prejudice to be aired within safe boundaries of respectfulness and mediation. An almost universal gratitude was expressed by participants of all skin colours for an opportunity to engage in

a conceptually sophisticated and emotionally sincere way with the complexities of race at Rhodes and, by implication, in South Africa. I am concerned about conceptions of loyalty and excellence which smack of public relations-style glossing over of problems, conflicts and inequalities. In a higher learning context which prides itself on a critical tradition and strength in the humanities I believe that the benchmark of excellence is a serious and sustained engagement with race and racism, alongside other social inequalities.

Notes

1. Steedman, 1986.
2. Exam 2003. I should point out here that the Department concerned would contest this reading of its affirmative action policy. However it emerged as an almost universally unpopular (and much misunderstood) policy in my research.
3. Posel, 2001: 56.
4. Ibid.
5. Ansell, 2004:4.
6. Guillaumin, 1999: 361.
7. Dyer, 1997:1.
8. Great Field Marquee, Rhodes University, 2 July 2004 – emphasis in the original.
9. The stories have been slightly edited for length, grammar and sense but every effort has been made to retain the intended meaning in each case. The 2004 stories arose from a brief in which the students were told to 'write down a race story or stories' – they were encouraged to write about themselves in the third-person, a technique that is thought to facilitate 'pure' description as opposed to justification or explanation. Not all chose to write about Rhodes but many did. Given the purpose of the paper I have included here mostly stories in which life at Rhodes features directly. The paper has been taken back to participants for checking.
10. Course evaluation, 2004.
11. See for example, Dixon and Rosenbaum, 2004; Morris, 1999.
12. Race stories, April 2004.
13. Morris, 1999: 667.
14. Morris, 1999: 683.
15. Pettigrew, 1975: 140 cited in Morris, 1999:675.
16. Posel, 2001:73.
17. Ibid.
18. Race stories, April 2004.
19. Race stories, April 2004.
20. Race stories, April 2004.
21. Race stories, April 2004.
22. Race stories, April 2004.
23. Essay, May 2004.

24. Race stories, April 2004.
25. 1992: 225.
26. Fanon, 1992: 221.
27. Exam, November 2003.
28. Exam, 2003.
29. Race stories, April 2004.
30. Race stories, April 2004.
31. Race stories, April 2004.
32. Exam 2003.
33. Interviews, 2003.
34. 1997:2.
35. 1997:2.
36. Race stories, April 2004.
37. Cited in Moosa et al, 1997:4.
38. Race stories, April 2004.
39. Cited in Moosa, 1997:3.
40. Moosa et al., 1997:3.
41. 1992:223 – emphasis in the original.
42. Exam, 2003.
43. 1992: 224.
44. 1992: 224.
45. Exam, 2003.
46. Posel, 2001: 70.
47. Posel, 2001: 74.
48. Posel, 2001: 70.
49. Race stories, April 2004.
50. Race stories, April 2004.
51. Race stories, 2004.
52. Posel, 2001: 71.
53. Race stories, 2004.
54. Race stories, 2004.
55. Essay, May 2004.
56. Race stories, April 2004.
57. Essay, May 2004.
58. Race stories, April 2004.
59. Race stories, April 2004.
60. Exam, November 2003.
61. Gibson and Macdonald, 2001: 13.
62. Exam, 2003.
63. Exam 2003.

64. Race stories, April 2004.
65. Bennett and Friedman, 1997:53.
66. Evaluation, 2004.
67. Exam stories, 2003.
68. 1997: 12.
69. All names have been changed.
70. Exam stories, 2003.
71. Posel, 2001:72.
72. Essay, May 2004.
73. Exam, November 2003.
74. Race stories, April 2004.
75. Exam stories, 2003.
76. Posel, 2001:72.
77. Posel, 201:77-78.
78. Posel, 2001: 73.
79. Race stories, April 2004.
80. Essay, May 2004.
81. Exam, November 2003.
82. Race stories, April 2004.
83. Race stories, April 2004.
84. 1991: 28-9.
85. Mama, 1995:156.
86. Race stories, April 2004.
87. Mama, 1995: 156.
88. Race stories, April 2004.
89. Race stories, April 2004.
90. Race stories, April 2004.
91. Race stories, April 2004.
92. Posel, 2001: 56-7.
93. Course evaluation, 2004.
94. Posel, 2001: 55.
95. Gibson and Macdonald, 2001.
96. Posel, 2001: 56.
97. 2001: 2.
98. See for example Chapman, A.R., Stellenbosch, 2002: 'Approaches to Studying Reconciliation', Paper presented at the Conference on Empirical Approaches to Studying Truth Commissions, Cited in Lombard, 2004:46.
99. Lombard, 2004:40.
100. 2004:40.

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Identity and Race at Rhodes University

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Introduction

This presentation is a reflection on the relationship between two issues, my identity on the one hand, and how I perceive my role at this institution on the other. It is a relationship underlined by racial prescriptions that I feel are unjustifiably imposed on me. These prescriptions seek to define my location within this environment and hence define the scope of my operations within the institution. This inevitably necessitates asking the following question to enable me to make sense of how effectively I can interact with my environment. Am I a black academic in a white university or I am an academic in a South African University that is in the midst of a changing society from an exclusive to an inclusive setting? In engaging this question I want to come to terms with this tension that seeks to control and define me, as I believe that failure to do so will inhibit me as an individual and a member of society with a valuable contribution to make.

On Being Black

Beyond the fact that I am classified as a black person physically, which is something that I have internalised simply because of the society and world I was born in, there is no other sense in which I feel that I am 'black'.

This is important to grasp right at the beginning because it enables me to fully put myself in charge, by defining myself rather than letting others subject me to their own definitions.

In a behavioural sense, I refuse to be classified as being black and I want to make an example to indicate how this is problematic in our society. In this country, in a political sense especially since 1994, with the eradication of statutory apartheid, to what end is it to talk about black politics?

Within the milieu of a society undergoing transition from apartheid to a democratic society, in which the underlying understanding is to eschew race, how valid is it to hang on to a black perspective? Most of the time, politicians in this country have argued that there is what is called a black viewpoint, which must be articulated and supported by black people in order to change this society. Now the fact of the matter is that black people cannot be lumped together as having a black viewpoint – politics is about choice and it is limited reasoning and indeed nonsensical to argue for a black viewpoint or concretisation of views.

Clearly, black people have different political viewpoints that are spread across the board present in many political parties with different persuasions, from the right wing DA, to the so-called ultra left of Cosatu, SACP, to militant black nationalists such as the PAC, Azapo to the broad church centrist ANC. And this applies to any other community in South Africa.

A conflation of physical and behavioural attributes has been very dangerously exposed by the fallacy of apartheid, and it is wrong to believe that because black people were formerly oppressed; the way to overcome this would be around their blackness. Why should a black perspective work when a white perspective of things failed?

A Black Academic?

There have been acerbic criticisms of black academics in post-apartheid South Africa, in terms of criticising them for not doing enough to influence societal discourse around critical social, political, and economic issues. The contention is that black academics are sitting back and letting what is called the black project suffer in terms of not challenging white perspectives that are against change.

In the same manner as pointed to above, this kind of postulation of the debate around critical issues in contemporary South Africa is riddled with serious misconceptions.

The assumption that black academics have a unilinear way of thinking is to seriously undermine their integrity in terms of carrying out what is their essential duty or occupation, which is to engage with ideas. By assuming that they have to be always in defence of something robs them of their most potent weapon – which is to critically engage with ideas. The resistance to change in South Africa does not require somebody to be black to critically engage it. This is not the burden of black academics, and there is no reason to believe that black academics have more innate power than anybody else to successfully challenge wrongdoing.

And indeed why should it be taken or granted that what has been happening in this country is in the interest of black academics at all? They, like politicians, have varied views of what is happening in South Africa – supportive, critical, indifferent, non-committal, and so on – and they should have the right to be so. To onerously burden black academics by urging that they have to support this or that viewpoint and prescribing for them how they should react to issues is wrong.

The other side of this issue is the extreme end of the spectrum, which is preoccupied with claiming that black academics are not independent in expressing their views. This is usually brought up when they articulate views that others may not like and when these views coincide with what the government might be doing.

In this manner, once again, black academics are demeaned in that they are assumed to have no power of original thought and they just are nothing but lackeys of politicians.

It is amazing how many black political commentators in this country have to qualify their writing by stressing time and again that they are independent. And it is not exactly clear: what black academics should be independent from? Why is it taken for granted that we are somehow bereft of developing our own ideas? To consistently demand us to be defensive in these manner, saps our energy, which can be better utilised elsewhere.

A White University?

In this institution and environment how should I define myself beyond the imposed view that I a black in a white institution? Rhodes is no different from other South African universities that have the legacy of being a 'white institution' – as designated under apartheid terminology. This is a fact, but to what end should this continued conceptualisation of the institution help me to effectively operate in it in these times of change where there are tensions around making society and institutions more inclusive?

In continuing to define myself as a black employee of a white institution I believe that I am incapacitating myself to come to real terms with what I have to do or be in terms of participating in a changing institution.

Thus, for me to make sense of my role in this institution I have to redefine it so that I do not misinterpret its true nature and what I can do to contribute to it changing. Rhodes is a formerly white university in a state of flux and transition into a truly South African university. By conceptualising this institution in this manner I will be much more able to understand my place in it.

Fossilising it in white terms misses the point, because the danger is that one can go to the extreme and seek to change it into a black institutionwhich once again raises the question: of what use will a black institution be when racially defined and conceptualised white institutions are under pressure to change and have failed to be representative of South African society?

The transition of this university into a truly South African and representative institution should go beyond simplistic definitions that are narrow and can in fact indicate regression.

For example, changing the name of this institution, or replacing its predominantly white administrators with black professionals, cannot in and of itself be of significance. A black senior administration that would implement ideas that call for the creation of an elitist institution that is divorced from societal imperatives, that panders to profit at the expense of excellence and scholarship, would for me mean no change at all.

What am I and what Institution am I in?

The question then is to articulate what I am and how I perceive this institution in which I am. If I am not black and this is not a white institution then what am I and how do I define this institution?

I am first and foremost and academic – and my colour and all that it portends for anybody is a non-issue for me. I am in this environment that is concerned with the generation of knowledge for the betterment of society. In this role, I do not seek to be for or against any position, idea or point of view on the basis of its colour designation. The test of what I believe in as knowledge is predicated on whether that knowledge is based on inquiry, debate and critical thought for it to make sense.

My position in society, which has been designated for me on the basis of colour should not impede or arrest me from articulating positions that are based primarily on my own assumptions. For anything that I engaged in, the test is to engage ideas from the perspective of them being untested to being fact through evidence. In this manner I am unshackling myself from those who would want me to take their side no matter what, on the basis that we share the same physical characteristics. In the same manner, I retain the right to criticise or endorse any ideas without fear of being labeled dependent, just because I do not criticise to the liking of others.

This institution needs change and my contribution will be effective if I adopt a critical distance from prescriptions and avoid dwelling on its past legacy. It needs to change from a previously white-dominated exclusivist institution to a truly representative South African institution.

And in making this contribution I should not be hampered by my physical traits to adopt certain viewpoints in adding to the debate on what it should be. Because I am defined as black in a white institution does not mean that the solution of that white exclusivist problem can be found in blackness. The synthesis of the new institution, which will arise from this one, will have to be unshackled from colour designations of whatever form.

Conclusion

I am an academic in a South African institution undergoing change just as society is – my colour should not be used as an index to trap me to articulate any views because my role as an academic is opposed to any prescribed notions of what I am and should be. I should thus have the independence to critically engage with knowledge, to critique that which I am perceived to be from (black world) and that which is perceived to embody wrong (white world). It is only when I am accorded this space to define myself and interpret the environment in which I am in without any strictures that I believe I can make sense of my location in my true environment and be able to make an effective contribution.

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One Student at Rhodes in the Early Apartheid Years: A Memoir

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I

I came to Rhodes in 1958, unsure whether to major in History and English or Sociology and Psychology. James Irving persuaded me to sign up for a Bachelor of Social Science degree. Sociology changed the way I saw the world – or perhaps it confirmed it – and I became convinced that a major in the field would not prevent my continuing an interest in history.

After the first year, James Irving insisted that we read the sociological classics. I remain eternally grateful to him for developing in me a taste for Durkheim and Weber – and for the freedom he granted all his students to explore on their own. I remember *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* blew me away, although my friends in philosophy always kept me sceptical about the status of Durkheim's conception of 'society'. Weber's methodological individualism and his clear-eyed conception of power sustained me. Ironically, we never read Marx. A careful reading of Marx came much later for me. I do remember one day in the Rhodes Library, however, while looking for something else, coming across a thin copy of the *Communist Manifesto* (long since banned, of course) on the shelf. I sat on the floor right then and there, and read it from cover to cover. I remember thinking, 'Is this all there is to it?', before slipping it back into its place for someone else to find. I suppose if that was my reaction, Professor Irving had done his job well.

It was not until the Honours year that Irving had us read George Herbert Mead's, *Mind, Self and Society*. Of all the classical writers, Mead influenced me the most. I still remember lying on the wall outside Beit House and arguing with Mary Fysh about whether or not Mead was a social determinist. I argued that he was positing only social conditioning. Mary was right to read him as a determinist, of course, as she often was about such things. But Mead's social determinism is so open to individual difference, relative freedom and historical emergence, that it became a lode-star enabling me to cling to what Eddie Webster jokingly calls my 'voluntarism'.

Mead's point is that our selves are indeed socially formed in interaction with others but that such formations are so complex and various as to enable the emergence of a degree of freedom (within social limitations, of course) that

makes social change and innovation possible. While 'a person is inevitably a person by other people', we are also able to take some responsibility for who we are within the constraints of the social situation in which we find ourselves. Although socially determined, we do thus make our own selves to some extent. If Mead is correct, however, we are also responsible for the selves of others whom we have known and with whom we have lived. We are not merely *morally* responsible for our friends' *behaviour*, then. We are also *personally* responsible, as it were, for who they *are* and who they *become*. I expect friends from my Rhodes years to take some responsibility for who I am. Only they can say if there was reciprocity.

Another major impact on my thinking was the lectures of Philip Mayer. At the time, Mayer was working on (or had just completed) *Townsmen or Tribesmen*. In class he simply lectured about his findings. Many students were deeply frustrated because his lectures seemed to lack direction and failed to cover the reading. I was entranced. Most important for me was Mayer's insistence that culture, indeed all symbols and ideas, never float free from (formal or informal) social networks. Ideas and beliefs have a history; the same ideas may be differently appropriated and interpreted by different groups; meanings are never fixed unless they are set within (Mayer said 'encapsulated in') dense networks of social interaction that sustain and reinforce them. Loosely-knit networks make possible greater cultural variation in which individuals are more open to rational argument (or other alternatives). Close-knit networks, however, render cultural traditions quite impervious to outside effects.

During our Honours year, Mary Fysh and I did field-work for Mayer in Duncan Village. I get a footnote mention in his introduction to Pauw's *Second Generation*. More important, however, in my own work I have always insisted on trying to uncover informal social networks. Even in *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* where I had to rely on newspaper articles and pamphlet literature, I always tried to root my discussion of ideas in the social networks that carried them. That remains a strength of that work which in other aspects now seems to me rather dated. Social networks are even more important in *Going for Gold* where my understanding of 'resistance to proletarianisation' relies as heavily on Mayer as it does on Marx. If there is any aspect of my work which truly manifests the sociological imagination, it bears the stamp of Mayer's influence.

II

I did do a course in Philosophy with Daantjie Oosthuizen during my second year at Rhodes. Daantjie had a delightfully open teaching style, presenting his students with problems and then inviting them to participate with him in solving them. I knew that he was brilliant. His inaugural lecture filled me with awe. I recall a couple of occasions when I went to him with an idea and he would say, 'Well, but what about so-and-so?', raising an issue that seemed totally

irrelevant. Several weeks later, wrestling with the idea, I'd come to realise that his was the central issue. It took me weeks to come to where he was within a few seconds! During my first year at Oxford, Daantjie was on sabbatical there. I remember a morning of intense conversation in his smoke-filled digs there. At one point he told me I was fortunate not to be a philosopher because I could take some things for granted and move on to moral examination of the social world. There was comfort in that because my philosophical friends were always challenging assumptions which is what they had learned from Daantjie.

Indeed, it was through my friends who were his students that Oosthuizen had his most profound influence on me. I came to Rhodes out of a turbulent adolescence in which my personal turmoil, mostly about sexual desire, was sustained and to some extent provoked by a deepening religious faith and a caring family. At high school, I had been involved in the Student Christian Association and several interdenominational evangelical groups. The outcome was a quite conventional and highly individual personal spirituality that remains important for me but was transformed while I was at Rhodes. In Jan Smuts (which was then the first-year residence) I gravitated quite naturally to a group of first years with church connections and became involved in the SCA at Rhodes as well. Ian Macdonald, a theological student (we called them 'toks'), was my best friend. In the second year, I moved to Piet Retief house because of its proximity to (and a shared dining room with) Livingstone, the 'tok' residence. Thus began for me an important personal, political and intellectual pilgrimage that vastly expanded my religious and political horizons.

The students at Piet Retief were a motley bunch. In addition to several groups of party-going, heavy-drinking sporting types, there was some overflow of 'toks' from Livingstone house that first year. I remember Cliff Allwood and Danie van Zyl (whatever happened to Danie, by the way? He had been a magistrate up near Aliwal North, I think). I recall being told that the 'van' in Ravan Press came from Danie) but most important to me was Basil Moore. The Methodist 'toks' came to Rhodes having already experienced several years of ministry out in the wider world (Basil had been in Alberton, as I recall, and in Stilfontein working with gold miners), so they were older than we were, and had seen more of life. Basil was (and, I presume, still is) highly intelligent and deeply passionate about everything he did, whether it be intellectual, political, religious or personal. (I remember that he and Cliff Allwood and I formed a little prayer group that met some mornings for a while – it was an electrifying experience.) Bas went on to found the University Christian Movement from which black theology in South Africa arose.

At Rhodes, Bas Moore and Ian Mac and James Moulder all majored in Philosophy under Daantjie Oosthuizen. In his inimitable way, Daantjie engaged them in debate, not only about moral issues but also about fundamentals of epistemology and about whether ontological questions were worth asking. This was the high-point of analytical philosophy in the Anglo-

American tradition and I remember being challenged by Ian about the fundamentals of sociology even as he himself challenged his theological professors. He had me reading Ryle and Austin and Ayr. The very idea of society was a 'category mistake' as were most of the age-old problems of theology and metaphysics, he insisted. Philip Mayer's concept of networks held me firm, however, even as I came to doubt any notion of a larger social and cultural 'superorganic'. Someone, it would not have been Ian, got me reading Nietszche in my Honours year. James Irving was delighted. Those were heady years, indeed!

I remember after writing my honours exams, James Irving cornered me. 'I have been arguing for the past five hours with someone who wasn't even there', he said with a smile. He'd been reading an examination paper in which I'd argued an avowedly Christian position, deliberately challenging his agnosticism. He had enjoyed it! His is a model that I continue to cherish and try myself to apply as a teacher. (The Rhodes scholarship selection committee was a lot less happy with my taking a critical political position, by the way.)

I suppose one of the reasons I was able to adapt my faith to politics more easily than some of the 'toks' themselves, is that I was Anglican. Peter Hinchliff had just come to Rhodes and with his help a group of students and I rejuvenated the Anglican Club. That in no way diminished my personal commitment to the SCA network and the 'tok' Livingstone Fellowship, but it added an additional dimension of spirituality to my understanding of politics. I was fascinated by an ideal of the church as a corporate body rooted in sacramental practices conforming closely to my reading of Durkheim's conception of ritual. This was a faith perhaps somewhat more impervious to intellectual argument than that of some of my more protestant friends, struggling in Daantjie's Oosthuizen school of intellectual integrity. Hinchliff and his friends and students started a movement called 'Faith in Action' which brought an incarnational perspective on Christian practice that went beyond moral criticism and aspired to promote lived alternatives. I remember going to the township to worship, being shocked by the deference and embarrassed by my own condescension, but also uplifted by a transcendent sense of community.

I am fond of provoking my American students by saying that I was a Christian before I became a Marxist (and for similar reasons). But intense outrage about racial exploitation and oppression was an integral part of the Christianity I came to at Rhodes during those years. Although we might not have used the word, 'structural evil' as a notion was certainly entrenched in our thinking. I vividly recall getting a lift down to PE with a group of 'toks' to see the French mime, Marcel Marceau. Since his was a matinee performance, we decided to throw in an evening performance of a play, *The Blood Knot*, by the then unknown playwright, Athol Fugard. Marceau was good but Fugard was stunning. It was a very quiet ride back to Grahamstown that night. For the first time, I think, I comprehended emotionally as well as intellectually the reality of

race for persons of colour in South Africa. The revelation appalled me. For me, at any rate, it was impossible to maintain spiritual commitment to faith without passionate (and I hope compassionate) indignation at the injustices built into the society in which we lived. Don't get me wrong here. This was not heroism. We were a privileged group of white men and women (mostly men). We had no experience of the suffering and humiliation felt by people of colour in South Africa. We did make contact with Fort Hare and we tried to witness to a social faith that was deeper than mere individual piety, but we were not activists in any sense that endangered our physical comforts. Perhaps as a social network we helped establish a critical tradition – or perhaps we merely continued one. Others can say.

In my third year, the Sharpeville massacre happened. Rhodes students marched in protest carrying placards from the Drostdy Arch to the Cathedral, two at a time. More we thought would have constituted a march and marches were banned. As it was, there was a good chance we would be arrested for 'loitering', so we walked pretty briskly, I can assure you. Later I was told that if any of us had been picked up by the police the next pair to have walked would have been Daantjie Oosthuizen and Peter Hinchliff, both professors. Daantjie had his own spies who were spying on the police and the special branch. Policeman 'infiltrated' public meetings, often wearing suits and ties. They stuck out like sore thumbs. I remember a burning barricade one night outside Olive Schreiner, perhaps when the republic was declared? In 1961, Ian Macdonald was elected chair of the SRC with Basil Moore as his secretary. They made a superb team – Basil's passionate political inventiveness well tempered by Ian's steady rationality and careful consistency. We passed some surprising motions. I remember one meeting where the student body voted to support the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights but I'm not sure how seriously one should take such actions, except as an instance of Ian's political skills. The next year, with Ian gone, Basil became SRC chair. His passionate approach to social justice was roundly rejected by the student body. Years later I remember attending an Old Rhodian get-together (in Johannesburg, I believe, but perhaps it was Durban) at which Rhodes graduates sang a ribald political song mocking Basil Moore. I left in disgust. I have not been to an Old Rhodian meeting since. Ours were not the only social networks bearing political traditions at Rhodes.

III

The more general point I am trying to make stems from what I learned from Philip Mayer in a classroom in Drostdy Hall overlooking the Botanical Gardens so many years ago. Traditions, including the critical tradition at Rhodes during the apartheid years, are carried by social networks. At Rhodes, as I remember it, the networks were not student networks alone. The fact that many of the 'toks' were older than the rest of us and the involvement of our

professors made important bridges for us. Faith commitments were crucial for the core of my original group of friends (and they were many more than the few individuals I have mentioned) but they expanded beyond that. Nor were church commitments essential for keeping the tradition alive, although they remained important for me personally.

Ian Macdonald, with typical intellectual consistency and integrity, eventually dropped theology and faith altogether – as did James Moulder, I believe – but neither stopped gnawing away at questions of social justice. Basil Moore continued his ministry, his pastoral and moral sense honed by Daantjie Oosthuizen's gently searching questions, his passionate intellect increasingly haunted by an intense drive for social transformation in South Africa. He founded the UCM as the national SCA showed its conservative colours and edited the first collection of writings on black theology to appear in South Africa. He and his family were made to suffer for those commitments. I went on to Oxford to read Divinity. Students like Eddie Webster continued the critical tradition at Rhodes. He can speak to the networks that sustained him and the political and intellectual transformations that occurred as a result of the politics of his day. Years later, having completed a doctorate in Religion and Society, I applied for the chair in Sociology at Rhodes. I was turned down, apparently, because it was said I was an anti-apartheid activist in the United States. I was, of course, but that stemmed directly from what I had learned at Rhodes. I just wanted to give back.

In conclusion, let me return to George Herbert Mead. Our selves, formed and nurtured in social interactions, are not necessarily fixed by them. As we move into adulthood, we enter social networks which form and nurture us, but as we move on into other social milieu our selves change with us. The present provides a consentient set through which we perceive the past (so that what I present here is a memoir, not a history) and which provides the basis on which we envision the future. The present is never a blank slate, either, and it too is trammeled with structural limitations and peopled with significant others. Nonetheless, in very important ways we are who we are and where we are because of where we have come from. For that we may be more or less grateful.

Traditions can encapsulate us, binding us to closeness with one another, marching in lock step. Critical traditions, however, are by definition more open. We carry them with us as sheet anchors, providing ballast but not direction, keeping us into the wind but not precisely defining our course. My story is my own. Others will have their stories to tell. Speaking for myself, however, the critical tradition I learned at Rhodes, modified over the years, continues with me, for better or for worse. We wore certain racial and gender blinkers, but precisely because ours was a *critical* tradition, it enabled us to grow. That, at least, is how I see things.

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Social and Intellectual Trends at Rhodes in the Early Sixties and Seventies

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Arriving

When I arrived at Rhodes in 1962, the only graduates I had ever met were doctors, priests and teachers. I had never seen a university before. Uncertain as to what to expect, I remember nervously drifting to a table in the dining hall not yet fully inhabited. At the head of the table next to me sat a timorous young student from Durban aiming to study English and Law. His name was Tim Couzens. Directly across the table sat a rather rough looking chap with a villainous Welkom accent who seemed a bit out of sorts in this English milieu. His name was Charlie van Onselen. At the time, I was to the left of most new students. Tim Couzens was studiously middle of the road, and Charlie was on the fierce combative right. For the three of us, Rhodes was a place of impassioned argument. Debate started on that very first evening. Charlie was a year or so later to wake one morning having shed his right wing views. The three of us, from very different backgrounds, were not initially friends at all. Friendship grew as we sharpened our respective wits in our disputes at the dinner table. Forty-two years later we remain friends.

Experiencing

Rhodes in the early Sixties was an extraordinarily lively campus. There was a remarkable degree of debate among students and among students and staff. Most of the students lived in residence, and those who did not usually lived in the many private houses which had survived between the residences, or at the Rhodes ends of High Street and New Street. Being so near the residences, most digs were effectively part of the campus, differing only in not having visiting hours, gender segregation, or wardens. Students in Res viewed digs' students with a certain envious curiosity. Incidents of wondrous Lawrentian passion were pruriently assumed to happen there. Very few students had motor vehicles. One car I remember was a 1932 Ford convertible coupe with dickie seat. There was also an AJS 500 single cylinder motorbike which seemed to pass rather randomly from student to student with scant attention paid to license or insurance.

There were very few students at Rhodes at the time – about 1600. It was the custom that school leavers (but not older students) had to wear a small placard

for the first few weeks declaring name, the school attended, and the course they intended pursuing. This led to students knowing the names and study directions of most of their fellows. No doubt many of the staff found this useful with first year students as well. This practice, long since abandoned, was greatly beneficial to student interaction.

In the residences, and more particularly in the dining halls, one found oneself in close contact with students from the whole gamut of disciplines. One would thus find oneself confronted by atheist philosophy students doggedly arguing with scandalised theology students. Prim physicists would look askance at poets and painters, and left wing politics students would find themselves in fierce debate with conservative geology students. Zoology students would defend Darwin against fundamentalists. To the bewilderment of almost everyone, there were Maths students exchanging Maths jokes, and amidst all of this intellectual excitement, a coterie of students of the Beaux Arts looked down on the rest of the rest of the campus as philistines.

In this intense buzz one would hear talk of the lecturers who inspired students in other departments, and of the nature of intellectual debate in those disciplines. The names of F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot resonated in lit crit. Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard were the doyens of Anthropology where nuances of Functionalism prevailed. From philosophers, one heard of the apostasy of Ernest Gellner. The names of I Emmanuel Kant, Bentham, and James and John Stuart Mill were bandied about, and the merits and demerits of Utilitarianism were debated. Talk centred on the fallacies of Bertrand Russell, the ethics of Cairncross, and the wisdom of Hume. Politics students would discuss the universal franchise and the virtues and weaknesses of Mill, Marx and de Toqueville, while Psychology students introduced one to Freud and Jung. Although some students simply talked rugby and the next Kaif Krawl, and retired to their books as specified by syllabi, many others found themselves in the midst of intense debate for most of their waking hours, whether at the dinner table, the Kaif, or the many and well patronised student pubs. For these students, Rhodes was an incredible and intellectually explosive twenty-four hour university.

It was into this world that I, as a rather confused Free State farmer's son with a poor school record, suddenly found myself at the beginning of 1962. I was at this time vaguely looking for a religious home and was equally looking for a political home. Having found school a long, pointless, and dreary experience, I found Rhodes a mind-blowing, exhilarating explosion of debate that was totally new. Suddenly, I found that a religious home did not have to be in one of the established Christian Churches, but could extend to agnosticism or even atheism. A political home did not have to mean the family tradition of the United Party, but could be the Progressive Party, the rather daring Liberal Party, the ANC, or even the Communists. My parents who had every reason to

expect me to fail at university, were astonished at the end of my first year to find that I had got a number of firsts.

The great strength of Rhodes at the time lay in the contact among students, and to a lesser extent among the students and their teachers. The resulting networks served the students for the rest of their lives. Though I have not been an academic for many years, I remain very active intellectually. I owe this to Rhodes. I do not feel a similar debt to the private school where I slumbered for years, or the London School of Economics where I was a postgraduate student for some time. The only LSE fellow student whose name I still remember, I remember because she was my girl friend.

Looking over my bookshelves forty years after being a student at Rhodes for books acquired at that time, I find the whole gamut of books in the liberal idiom of South African social studies. It is not always easy to remember which department prompted their purchase, but these books accurately reflect the liberal/radical academic perspectives of those times.

In the Sixties, the various disciplines tended to be very separate in methods and parameters. Thus Historians with the rare exception of Economic Historians such as Ashton, rarely used statistics even when as with the industrial revolution, these were available. Neither did Historians often look at the hidden assumptions underlying their dialogue. Sociologists in turn would often discuss historical phenomena with scant historical knowledge. The same disciplinary exclusivity characterised most of the arts.

But a clear countervailing tendency could be discerned. A very definite cross-fertilisation was taking place in student thinking in related subjects in the humanities. Here, the intense contact among students of different disciplines acted as a wonderful counterbalance. Amongst the students with whom I found myself in daily debate and argument were Tim Couzens, Charles van Onselen, David Tucker, and James Buckland, and our areas of interest were respectively History, Sociology and Political Studies, Literature and Law, Psychology, Philosophy and Theology, and Social Anthropology. The boundaries of these various disciplines taught at the time as very separate entities became blurred in student discourse. This was a fertile source of new ideas. This blurring of disciplinary boundaries was sometimes a source of severe irritation to our mentors, but I am sure it informs our thinking to this day. If one understood the strange world of functionalism and institutionalisation was one so very far from Marx and the hegemony of commoditisation? If one understood and integrated these ideas, was Majeke's proposal that missionaries were agents of conquest willingly or otherwise, so absurd? Was the seemingly vast chasm between Anthropology and Marxism really so great? If one accepted these broad theses, could the writer or artist be seen to be isolated from society, as critics in other disciplines seemed to assume? If the totem pole maker was subject to functional or institutional analysis as in Anthropology and Marxism, why not the poet or

sculptor? What was the role of the historian in a world of functional or hegemonic explanation?

Student dialogue at Rhodes was probably well ahead of its time. This, I am sure, was due to the degree of student contact. The Anthropology student at Wits went home and had supper in Sandton. The Anthropology student at Rhodes found himself sitting down to supper next to a Marxist, a poet, an historian and a sociologist. In the next ten years a rapid tendency to cross-disciplinary research took place.

Evidence of the extraordinary cross-fertilisation of disciplines is to be seen in Tim Couzens's interest in South African History, and in Charles van Onselen, then studying Psychology, whose work today seamlessly straddles History and Sociology. Other circles of friends at the time included Jackie Cock, Eddie Webster, Peter Kallaway, and Allan Fletcher. The latter was poached to work in the USA by IBM in the Seventies.

It must be understood that my interpretation of these issues is that of a student of the time. The departments that I had immediate contact with were Sociology, History, Politics, English and Psychology. Rhodes was characterised by academics of a broadly liberal bent, and while I was often fiercely critical of this tendency, we should not dismiss it. The students in the Sixties were in many instances of a rather conservative orientation, and a liberal academic and political perspective did in that context constitute a necessary and critical perspective, just as it does in many traditional and repressive societies today.

Intellectual Influences

The academics who had the most influence on me were James Irving of Sociology, Winnie Maxwell of History, and Terence Beard of Politics.

Sociology

James Irving was the Professor of Sociology. He was a Glaswegian who had found his way to Cambridge on a scholarship for working class lads. At Cambridge he studied Icelandic sagas among other things. He had been active in the British Labour movement and he had lectured in China. There, he took an interest in Mandarin linguistics and culture. This linguistic exposure informed much of his teaching, as did the epistemological perspectives which flowed from it.

I remember James Irving as a tall bald man with a hole through one of his front teeth. From this tooth a startling whistle would punctuate lectures at intervals. He had a wry humour and often seemed to be reflecting on himself and human nature as something wonderfully absurd and funny. James Irving combined a delightfully nuanced wry and sympathetic observation of humanity with an acute and eclectic mind. He was active in attempts to uplift the

down-trodden of the various communities in Grahamstown and integrated those concerns into the content of his classes. I best remember him during my Honours year, when I had frequent seminars with him. He had an extraordinary talent of anticipating exactly the intellectual direction one was going in. He recommend books, leapfrogging one's mind at an extraordinary rate through the material.

Irving was a socialist and a determined one, but his best friend was fellow Scot and determined liberal Winnie Maxwell. They took sharp but sympathetic digs at each other's ideological foibles in lectures which the brighter students would pick up.

The Departmental approach under James Irving was of a broadly Fabian or British Labour party bent. We were schooled in the great early British social surveys of the poor by Townsend and Roundtree. We confronted the great work of Thomas on the integration of Polish peasants in the USA, and had, of course, to come to terms with Durkheim, Pareto and Weber. In the tradition of British socialism of the time, Marx did not feature much. James Irving was not active in the political party sense. He was, however, very active in trying to foster institutions of civil society in the black and coloured communities. This he saw as the essential foundation to social change, and the emergence of leadership structures. While the political route was more glamorous for students, Irving argued that the emergence of institutions of civil society would be a less vulnerable and more meaningful path to change.

The general sociology of the time was taught, but with an underlying stress on the epistemological implications of cultural and institutional change. Irving's interest in socio-linguistics underpinned this orientation. A solid grounding in research methods and statistics was also given. There was a strong emphasis on social surveys and the methods of social research. The demographic follies behind the apartheid ideology were often glaringly exposed by the findings of survey research. Computers were then gigantic and arcane machines, and electronic calculators not yet available. We used slide rules for the statistics. I still have my one complete with instructions, but can't remember how to use it.

The Sociology Department in the early Sixties consisted of James Irving, a senior lecturer, Hilston Watts, and a tutor, Harry Cohen. This tiny department was at the time responsible for producing a formidable number of professors and academics who took up posts in Universities throughout the world.

History

The professor of History was Winnie Maxwell. She was a formidable Scots woman who kept her faded gown pinned with a clothes peg. In that innocent age, she would wander between the desks narrating while chain smoking the cigarettes of students which she would steal as she meandered around the lecture hall. Winnie Maxwell was a social, economic and political liberal but a

very hard taskmaster with both students and staff. Apart from the mandatory section on South African history, there was heavy emphasis on British political history. In these respects, Rhodes was typical of the English language universities in South Africa. While South African history was not taught from a Voortrekker or settler perspective, the teaching was decidedly imperialist in orientation, and a missionary perspective was often stressed. Nonetheless, works such as Majeke 'The Role of the Missionary in Conflict', were mandatory reading, though they were treated highly critically. When I went to lecture at Wits in the early Seventies I was astonished to find that this work was not in their library at all, and had to be ordered.

Winnie Maxwell published very little, but like the Sociology Department under James Irving, her Department produced a remarkable number of esteemed academics who populated universities internationally. Her strength lay in a demand for thoroughness, in the wonderful empathy she showed for historical personae, and in the flowing narrative and romance she managed to inject into what could have been a dull chronology. This inspired an abiding interest in history amongst her students.

Politics

Terence Beard was the epitome of a liberal. He was not only a liberal by academic temperament, but was a very active member of the beleaguered Liberal Party around which all radical activity coalesced. Those who were tempted to more direct action, and those who were of a more socialist persuasion congregated on the fringes of the Liberal Party. Because he was at the very edge of what the government was prepared to tolerate, Beard was very careful not to let students draw him into party political debate in lectures and tutorials. People in similarly exposed political positions such as Clem Goodfellow and Norman Bromberger were also cautious. When I look at my bookshelves today, I suspect that every book prescribed for Terence Beard's Politics course is still there, and some I still re-read.

The Significance of the Sixties Rhodes' Experience in a National Context

1961 was a year of apartheid at its most virulent and confident. Vervoerd and Vorster were at the helm and all other political persuasions were heavily beleaguered. In white politics, the old United Party was trying its best to survive the fraught times by being all things to all (White) men, and the newly formed Progressive Party which favoured a qualified but non-racial franchise, had lost most of its MPs, leaving Helen Suzman as its sole representative. Any party to the left of the Progressives was subject to police harassment. In intellectual debate, the situation was equally fraught, with an ever more powerful

government looking with increasing menace and disfavour on any university or university department that was overtly liberal in its orientation.

The old liberal Universities had been forbidden to enroll new black students from 1959. For ideological reasons, Fort Hare and the branch at PE had just been forcibly detached from Rhodes. In 1961, there were still a number of black students who had been at Fort Hare, and who were allowed to complete their studies at Rhodes. The more politically daring students were to be seen in the company of these Fort Hare students.

Universities were in justifiable fear of their funding being cut off. Rhodes was the smallest of the liberal universities, and probably the least solvent at the time. The financial vulnerability of the University was exacerbated by the loss of its two satellite campuses. It was at this time that The South African Institute of Race Relations lost its state funding in favour of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs which was a Broederbond-controlled organisation strongly in favour of apartheid.

Most of the senior academics at Rhodes in 1961 had been to Oxford or Cambridge. Most of the junior academics had either been to the same universities or had been taught by Oxbridge academics. Though most of them were not politically active, many were broadly of liberal or Fabian opinion. By Fabian I mean that they were of Social Democratic tendency. So close was the community that students knew from conversation with other students what the political and religious tendencies of academics were. It is currently common in South African debate to find liberals viewed as conservatives, reactionaries, fascists or worse. In the Sixties liberals were viewed by the government and the SABC as Communists or worse and if active in politics, persecuted.

In their formal duties at lectures and seminars, those lecturers who were most suspect by the government and police scrupulously avoided party politics. Members of staff who were less exposed in their off campus activities were perhaps more daring during formal activities. I thus remember Guy Butler, Winnie Maxwell, and Professor Wilde of Psychology as being more openly condemnatory of the idiotic aspects of apartheid ideology and National Party historiography than colleagues who were far more daring in their off campus activities, and hounded by police.

Staff and the more daring students were unsure of the limits of resistance, and unsure of the consequences. It was equally unclear how long apartheid would last. Some thought such an absurd and unjust phenomenon could not last long, and gambled on its quick demise. Some staff and students and other South Africans who made this assumption, were to spend many years in custody or exile as a result. It was a time when the limits of state tolerance were being uncertainly challenged, and one in which the competence of the emerging South African police state under the truculent B.J. Vorster was being nervously tested for patience and tolerance. For nervousness and uncertainty the closest parallel to the Sixties was probably the era of the Eighties. The difference was,

however, that the Government under Verwoerd and Vorster seemed supremely confident, while the government of P.W. Botha was fumbling uncertainly into an unknown future. A number of times as a student I arrived at a lecture to find that the professor, lecturer, tutor or a fellow student had been arrested, banned, or had fled the country the night before. The parameters of resistance were narrow and constrained, though doubtless tested by too few.

Rhodes in the Early Seventies

After three intellectually barren years at LSE, and a harrowing year at the Broederbond-controlled and inspired UDW (then housed at Salisbury Island), I returned to Rhodes as a Sociology lecturer in 1970. At this time, students and academics who had been studying abroad during the student revolts in Paris, London, and America in the era of opposition to the Vietnam war began drifting back to teaching posts at the liberal universities. These students returned with an infusion of New Left thinking. The works of Marcuse, Ralf Milliband, Perry Anderson, Robin Blackburn, Barrington Moore, and others began to have a strong influence in Sociology, Politics, and Psychology, and a few years later in History at Rhodes.

I found the return as stimulating as had been my arrival and experience in my student days. In the third year class there were about ten students. Amongst them were Rudi van Kemenade, a very pompous student of Philosophy, Doug Hindson studying Economics, and Tony Emmet and Jill Strellitz studying Psychology. After a week or two in which they cautiously summed me up, it was no longer necessary to lecture this group. One had only to posit a few theoretical propositions, and a furious debate would break loose. The lectures always overran their allotted time, to the intense annoyance of those needing the lecture room for the next lecture. The debate usually then adjourned to the student cafeteria, and often continued into the night at my cottage or in one of the pubs thronged by students. This was the most exhilarating class of students by a wide margin that I have ever encountered at any university, and three of them still visit me on the farm where I now live.

In the mid Seventies, Poulantzas and Althusser started to excite the more innovative students. These students seemed to me to be uninterested in being drawn into debate the terms of which were essentially humanist, open, and liberal. The obscure language of this work transliterated from the French, was an ideological marker, worn with exclusiveness and pride. This language precluded debate. Student discourse often took place amongst the converted in student digs. The most striking parallels it seemed to me were the Scholastics of the early Middle Ages, and the Grand Theory of Talcott Parsons in the late Fifties. It was entirely alien to my nature, and to the vibrant open society I had known Rhodes to have been, and I hated it. I left Rhodes and returned to my family farm. Fortunately, the phenomenon of an exclusionist orthodoxy was

short-lived, and Rhodes soon reverted to a climate of open and vigorous discourse.

For me, the legacy of Rhodes has been a social and academic richness that continues to inform my intellectual endeavours to this day.

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Rebels with a Cause of Their Own: A Personal Reflection on my Student Years at Rhodes University, 1961-1965

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I arrived at Rhodes University in February 1961 to register for a BA degree. I had developed a deep interest in the study of history, partly because I had recently returned from a year hitch-hiking and working as a waiter, then rapidly promoted to barman at Battersea Park Funfair in London, and later a farm-hand in Europe. I had been deeply impressed by the visible depth of Europe's history as seen through its ancient monuments. I had continued home via North and East Africa. These travels had aroused my curiosity in the process of decolonisation that had begun in Africa, reaching a climax in 1960 when twelve states were to become independent. The 'winds of change', Harold Macmillan dramatically announced in Cape Town in 1960, had reached the southern tip of Africa.

Macmillan's speech made the future seem like a simple act of decolonisation – you pull down the Union Jack and you return 'home'. But this was not to be – and that is what made the journey I was about to embark on so much more difficult, more painful, and, in the end, more challenging. Indeed, for me, it was the start of a long voyage, 'full of adventures, full of things to learn'.

Because of the existence of a relatively large and cohesive settler population in Southern Africa, events were to prove a lot more complex, violent and bloody than Macmillan's gentle metaphor of a 'wind' evoked. Instead of a steady march to national liberation in Southern Africa, 1960 was the start of what the veteran scholar/activist John Saul has described as a 'thirty-year war', a ruthless counter-revolution that began in South Africa with the banning of the key political institutions of the national liberation movement, and only ended in 1990 when Mandela was released.

But this moment of freedom in 1990 had been preceded by large scale sacrifices as the movements of national liberation in South Africa, Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa, and South West Africa embraced armed struggle and the settler communities of South and Southern Africa dug in their heels in defence of 'white civilisation'.

Growing up in the Eastern Cape and the Transkei in particular, and being a descendant of the first British settlers of 1820, meant that bloody conflict between coloniser and colonised was not unfamiliar to me. 'Kaffir wars',

'Frontier Wars', 'wars of colonial dispossession'; the words changed but the contested nature of our presence in Africa was part of my memory of growing up in 'settler country'. This was brought home to me sharply in my second year at Rhodes when a white family in my home village in the Transkei was brutally hacked to death by Poqo, the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Terror spread throughout the village as the small white community armed itself in anticipation of another 'kaffir war'!

This is the context – and my memory of it – in my early years at Rhodes. The University was the logical place to be for someone from my social background. My parents were school teachers drawing modest salaries from the Cape Education Department and there were four children in the family. I was going to have to find my own way through university on bursaries and scholarships. I had matriculated from Selborne College in East London and, besides, Cecil John Rhodes conjured up the exploits of my 'heroic' ancestors.

Today a 'gap year' is quite common; at that time it was considered unwise and I was warned that I would be bitten by wanderlust and not want to study. Quite the opposite was the case. I took to Rhodes like a duck to water. For the first time in my life I had a room of my own and time on my hands to read. I was fascinated by the insights that I gained from an outstanding generation of lecturers led by the indomitable Winnie Maxwell. Opinionated and demanding, she inspired me to read widely, encouraging me to go on to do an honours degree in history. I was especially taken by the origins of the welfare state and the social regulation of the market through the formation of the British Labour Party (out of the 'bowels' of the trade union movement, as Atlee rather graphically put it), and its social democratic programme. Sadly, with the exception of David Hammond-Tooke in social anthropology, not many of my lecturers had time for research and seldom published. But they took teaching seriously, a characteristic that made a life-long impression on me.

Two points about the study of history at Rhodes in the early sixties need to be made:

Firstly, it was entirely about the thoughts and activities of Europeans, and the English in particular. Africans, we were told, did not have a history because they had no written language and, as a result, there were no documents to examine. 'QED', as Winnie was fond of saying.

Secondly, the approach to history was voluntarist. It was about great (white) men shaping national and world events. Marxism, I was taught, was determinist and teleological and did not allow for individual choice.

Then something happened in my honours year which was to change my intellectual life. The honours course consisted of five papers, a paper on seventeenth century England, two papers on the Age of Anne (1702-1710), a paper on Europe between the two world wars, and a long essay which I wrote on changing patterns of land ownership in early eighteenth century England.

While reading on England I came across a book by the Marxist historian Christopher Hill, recently appointed Master of Balliol College, Oxford. Instead of the endless tales of kings and queens randomly beheaded, Hill argued that the English civil war could best be understood as a transition from feudalism to capitalism. The scales fell from my eyes; here for the first time was a pattern that made sense of what previously seemed to be haphazard events. It was close to midnight when my fellow student Pete Kallaway arrived in my room. He found me in a slightly euphoric state insisting that I had found the key to history. I wrote furiously through the night and eagerly presented my 'intellectual discovery' the next morning to the class.

But the response was a put-down. 'Laddy', Winnie Maxwell said, 'history is not a railroad and you should beware of simple answers to complex and individual events. This is not a sociology class and we are not socialists!'.

Well, that set me thinking; what exactly is sociology and what is socialism? I wrote to Christopher Hill and told him that I had enjoyed reading his book and would like to study at Balliol. Not surprisingly, Hill never replied, but I did eventually go to Balliol – not to study history but politics, philosophy and economics – PPE.

To explain why I took this turn we need to step outside the classroom and the cerebral world of books to the more basic instincts that drive a twenty-year-old male... And it was of course these instincts that proved more decisive in shaping the journey that I had embarked on. Let me illustrate.

It was the practice at Rhodes at that time that men and women were strictly segregated into different residences. Furthermore, the lives of women students were under tight surveillance by female wardens who insisted that all residents check in not later than 11:00 p.m. – a practice that seems to have been widespread at universities in the English-speaking world at that time. After all these wardens were in *loco parentis*!!

It so happened that I had developed a relationship with a female student in John Kotze House that led us to test the limits of the rule that she should be in residence by the curfew. Over time we began arriving late. The wardens, mindful of their duties, had invented a disciplinary regime called 'gating'. Essentially these innovative wardens had introduced a precursor to what was to become 'house arrest'. If a student were a mere one minute late they would be confined to their bedrooms for one night; two minutes, two nights; and so on.

I was outraged. I decided to challenge what I considered an unjust rule. It was clear to me that I would have a lot of support in such a campaign, so I decided to run for the Students Representative Council (SRC) on this ticket. Not surprisingly I was elected to the SRC at the end of my third year in 1963.

In those days members of the SRC took themselves very seriously. We used to wear suits to our fortnightly meetings and followed the formal rules of debate. I soon found myself deeply involved in what today we would call student politics. However we did not have the kind of access to University

management that SRCs won in certain progressive universities in the seventies; we were not represented on Senate nor were seen as a part of University governance.

Sharp ideological differences had emerged a few years earlier amongst students over the process of decolonisation unfolding around us. On the one hand, there was a small group of liberal minded students – largely in the Department of Philosophy, many of whom were theology students influenced by Dantjie Oosthuizen as well as Clem Goodfellow in history and Terence Beard in politics – who were sympathetic to the claims of the African majority. On the other hand, there was a large majority of students who wanted nothing to do with politics and were, when pushed, sympathetic to a mild form of white domination.

Pressure was also building up at a national level where the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was increasingly coming under the influence of people close to the liberation movement. This was to culminate in a speech in 1964, by the President of NUSAS, Jonty Driver, in which he called for NUSAS to become the student wing of the liberation movement. As you can imagine this confirmed the worst fears of students at Rhodes who were still smarting under an earlier attempt by a liberal-dominated SRC under the leadership of Basil Moore to pass a resolution condemning colonialism. This led to a conservative backlash and the mobilisation of the silent majority who flooded the Great Hall in large numbers to defend their heritage. Evoking the first setbacks of independence in postcolonial Africa they shouted rhetorically and aggressively, 'What about the Congo?!'.

I was very much aware of the conservative views of the majority of students at Rhodes when I joined the SRC. It shaped my approach to student politics and made me aware of the limits of any liberal political project at Rhodes at that time.

Inevitably, however, my exposure to the more radically minded student leaders such as Adrian Leftwich at the University of Cape Town (UCT), broadened my political consciousness. Apartheid's social engineering was being implemented under the direction of Hendrik Verwoerd, and the Transkei, along with all the other 'homelands', was being prepared for 'independence'. John Vorster, as Minister of Justice, had ruthlessly crushed all opposition. Business had been brought on side as the South African economy grew at an unprecedented rate. And Rhodesia was booming having recently declared Unilateral Independence. Arguably white domination was at its historic height in South and Southern Africa in 1965.

It was against this background that a small group of young, white, English-speaking intellectuals established the African Resistance Movement (ARM), an early attempt at the sabotage of public installations designed to 'bring the government to its senses'. One of their sympathisers was in my residence, Cory House, and, in a roundabout way, sounded me out as a potential

recruit. I responded by observing that if such a strategy were to be embarked upon it would simply solidify white resistance to change. It was a sensible response that turned out to be very fortunate for me but very tragic for those who were persuaded on this strategy. One of their members, John Harris, a young schoolteacher, planted a bomb in 1964 in the Johannesburg railway station killing a civilian and badly maiming a young girl. He was found guilty of murder and hanged. The other members of the ARM were soon rounded up and given jail sentences. The whole episode made a profound impact on me, as it did to many others of my generation, serving as a sober warning of the consequences of badly conceived political strategies.

In 1964, as a 'moderate candidate', an overwhelming majority elected me President of the SRC. But my commitment to 'moderation' was soon to be put to the test by the relentless logic of the apartheid bureaucracy. If it was the unreasonable residence rules that drew me into the SRC, it was rugby that drew me into anti-apartheid politics.

In general rugby players at the time – and indeed today – did not have much interest in politics and were certainly not known for their liberal views. But at the start of the 1965 season the Bantu Administration Department (or BAD as we used to call it) banned black people from watching rugby on the Rhodes Great Field as it was a 'white area'. As a member of the team I made it quite clear that this was unacceptable and that we should protest against it. After all, I told my team-mates, blacks were our keenest supporters.

I proposed to the student body, with strong support in the student newspaper, the *Rhodeo*, edited by my friend Roger Omond, that we undertake a one-day sit-in from sunrise to sunset on the steps of the Library as a mark of protest at this unacceptable violation of the rights of black people. Of course we were influenced at the time by the civil rights movement in the Southern States of the USA and their non-violent desegregation struggles in particular. Not surprisingly we sang 'We Shall Overcome'.

Of course the government did not change its mind until many years later but it was, for me and for the over one hundred students who participated, our first public anti-apartheid act. Although the protest could be dismissed as a futile moral gesture, it was part of a process of politicisation. It also brought into the open the sharp divide that was emerging among us at the time: between the 'non-politicals' and those of us who participated in the sit-in, such as Johann Maree, Jacklyn Cock, Roger Omond, Charles von Onselen, Tim Couzens, John Sprack and David Webster, who were now seen as rebels.[1] Indeed, I remember being confronted by a fellow rugby player after the sit-in who said to me that he was disgusted by the behaviour of the protestors. He asked me if it was true that we had sung 'communist' songs such as 'We Shall Overcome'. When I replied that we had sung this song, he said he was very disappointed in me, as he had voted for me as SRC president since he thought I was a moderate but now he realised that I too was a communist.

Yes we had become rebels, but we were rebels with a cause of our own. We were protesting on behalf *of* black supporters to watch *our* rugby, not for non-racial rugby teams or the right of all players to participate in the same league. In fact, it never occurred to us to consult with our black supporters or to form any sort of an alliance with them. Yes we were rebels – but it was *our* cause, not theirs.

We went on our separate journeys but the directions changed somewhat. For me it was no longer primarily the past that caught my imagination, but the present. Above all, I wanted to understand how society worked and how to change it. So I decided to study further in the social sciences. I applied for the Eastern Cape Rhodes scholarship. I was short-listed but quite early on in the interview a question was put to me by a member of the selection committee that sunk me. I was asked how I felt about racial integration in schools in the light of recent experiences in the United States where white girls were being raped by 'negroes' and where it was leading to 'a nation of half-breeds'.

I was offended by the question and, in spite of a subtle attempt by the chair, a liberal-minded classicist by the name of Ronald Currey, to steer me away from responding, I plunged in and replied, 'I think racial integration of our schools is inevitable, desirable and, if I get this scholarship, I would like to return and teach at an integrated school in South Africa or Southern Africa'. (A racially integrated school, Waterford, had been recently established in Swaziland after the government had forced the well known black school, St. Peters in Rosettenville, to close as it was in a white area).

My questioner responded by declaring that I was a traitor to the white race. I was given no protection from the chair, or any apology for this gratuitous insult. The incident more or less terminated the interview. Unbeknown to me I had been clashing swords for some years with my questioner, a notorious racist by the name of H.F. Sampson, in the columns of the *Eastern Province Herald*, where he was a regular correspondent under the pseudonym of 'The Reader, Grahamstown'.[2]

I was disappointed with this setback but not surprised. Mid-way during my honours year Winnie had warned me, in her inimical Scottish accent, 'Laddy, you are spending too much time on the three R's – Rugby, sRc, and Rosie', the cause of my earlier clash with the warden of John Kotze House. I had been neglecting my academic work and had now to pay the price. It was a hard lesson to learn made more difficult by the fact that Sampson had abused his position as a member of the selection committee by pursuing a private racist agenda. The fact that he got away with this sort of behaviour underlined, for me, that the racial injustice that provided the foundations of the University was of little concern to the Rhodes establishment at that time. This, too, was a hard lesson to learn!!!

My options were narrowing. I now doubted the feasibility of a liberal project in South Africa. I had recently read an unpublished article by Michael O'Dowd,

a director at Anglo-American. In this article, O'Dowd, drawing on modernisation theory and W.W. Rostow's book sub-titled a 'Non-communist manifesto', argued that industrialising societies go through stages where there is sharp inequality but they 'mature', reforms are introduced and a modern welfare state emerges. He suggested that South Africa was going through these stages and that in the eighties major reforms would begin and that by the end of the century we would have evolved into a welfare state.

Ironically, O'Dowd was using the same flawed teleological methodology of orthodox Marxism where history is seen as economically determined – but it was an appealing idea at a time when apartheid seemed invincible. I decided to apply for an internship as a trainee management executive at Unilever in Durban. The professor of Education, a Broederbonder by the name of Koos Gerber, had vowed to block any appointment I was offered at a government school in South Africa. In this context O'Dowd's argument seemed an attractive alternative; a career in management in a large multinational company would be a way of contributing to change while offering an exciting new adventure.

So, for the first time in my life, I boarded an aeroplane in Port Elizabeth for an interview in Durban. I was wined and dined at the Edward Hotel on the beachfront and was offered the job immediately. O'Dowd proved to be half right; the economy was to be the crucial opening for change, but not because of any change of heart by management. Change would have to be forced onto management through the power of the black working class; this was apartheid's Achilles heel. How I was to reach this conclusion and the journey that I took to find it must be left to another occasion. I certainly would not have reached it were it not for my intellectual and political partner, my wife Luli Callinicos.

By the time I eventually arrived at Balliol a year after the student revolution of 1968, the world had changed and so had I. Immediately I threw myself into reading any banned book on South Africa I could lay my hands on. It was catch-up time for me as I discovered the de-Stalinised Marxism of the New Left with its idealistic commitment to participatory democracy. In particular Marx's notion of alienation caught my imagination and, after writing my final examinations, I took a temporary job in the Morris car plant outside Oxford, determined to experience at first hand alienation on the assembly line. This proved a learning experience for me, as it was here that I came across shop stewards for the first time and their extraordinary ability to disrupt production at the slightest grievance. Is this not, I thought to myself, the key to the non-violent transformation of South Africa? Does the power of the black majority not lie in the workplace?

This is, of course, another story, the story of how we came to broaden our rebellion beyond our 'own cause' to the cause of all South Africans for a common, non-racial and egalitarian society. Instead of speaking on behalf of black people, I was given the opportunity, when I returned from England, of

building in Durban in the seventies side-by-side with black workers organisations of their own in which they could exercise their collective power in a strategic way. While for some white intellectuals it may have been, as my colleague Sakhela Buhlungu has so evocatively written, a case of rebels *without* a cause of their *own*, for me it was *my* cause too as my commitment was now to a class project that went beyond the narrow confines of race.

My personal journey was proving to be long and full of adventure. Rhodes had helped prepare me for the long intellectual and political journey my fellow rebels and I had embarked upon. We took different directions, encountered different challenges; but with the seven I mentioned who participated in the sit-in on the library steps in 1965 I would claim a common trajectory as critical intellectuals.

Johann Maree was to play a central role in the seventies in reviving the independent trade union movement in Cape Town, and is a key contributor to a critical economic sociology in South Africa; Jacklyn Cock wrote a classic book on domestic servants in the Eastern Cape and has become an internationally renowned feminist; Charles von Onselen wrote a number of classic books on the lives of black working people and is a leading international scholar in social history; Tim Couzens pioneered the study of African literature in South African universities in the seventies and is a leading literary scholar. Roger Omond worked closely with Donald Woods at the *Daily Dispatch* and was forced into exile after Steve Biko was killed. He wrote a number of important anti-apartheid publications before he died of lung cancer in 1997.

The two participants who were not South Africans – John Sprack from Southern Rhodesia and David Webster from Northern Rhodesia – became the most politically committed. Sprack became active in the British trade union movement and a leading activist in the anti-apartheid movement in London. David Webster was a central scholar/activist in the revival of an internal democratic opposition to apartheid in the eighties and was tragically assassinated on 1 May, 1989. David showed a quality seldom found in academic life, the courage to speak truth to power and act on these beliefs in a context when put at risk.

I have not mentioned all of those who participated in this protest, nor those who were not present, such as Peter Kallaway (who went on to write a number of important books on education under apartheid) as he had already left Rhodes.

What had begun as a 'cause of our own' had widened to a much broader project that went beyond its beginnings. A small group of intellectuals had emerged who were, in a modest way, to go on to influence, through their scholarly research and their actions, the way we understand South African society, and how it could be changed. Our contributions do not fit comfortably into orthodox accounts of white opposition to apartheid, but they can help build a critical tradition in our universities and, above all, at Rhodes.

The need to draw on this critical past has become urgent now that universities are being drawn more clearly into the marketplace as well as into national developmental goals. It is also important to interrogate this past; whites under apartheid were not, any more than blacks, a homogenous, undifferentiated group. There were differences of class, ethnicity, region, and above all, ideology, between whites just as there were these differences among other racial groups. To over-generalise about whites – or any other 'racial group' – is called racial prejudice and is a product of colonialism. Indeed the dubious pseudo-scientific concept of 'race' is itself a social construct of colonialism.

Clearly the journey has not ended. It is a long journey, 'full of adventures, full of things to learn'. We must not hurry; there are many surprises still to come. The Greek poet Kavafy, in his poem 'Ithaca', a metaphor for life's rite of passage, captures best my feelings about Rhodes in its centenary year:

When you set out for Ithaca
Ask that the journey be long
Full of adventures, full
Of things to learn…
That there may be many summer mornings when
With what joy, what delight, you will enter
Harbours you have not seen before.
You will stop at Phoenician trading ports
Acquire beautiful merchandise, mother of pearl
And coral, and amber and ebony, and sensuous
Perfumes of all kinds – as many sensuous
Perfumes as you can.
Visit many Egyptian cities, to gather
Stories of knowledge from the learned.
Have Ithaca always in your mind
Your destination is to arrive there, but
Do not hurry your journey in the least.
Better that it may last for many years,
That you cast your anchor at that island
When you are old, rich with all you have gained on the way,
Not expecting that Ithaca will give you wealth
Ithaca gave you a splendid journey
Without her you would not have set out
She has nothing more to offer
And if you find her poor, Ithaca
Has not deceived you.
You have acquired such
Wisdom, so much experience,
That you will have

Already realised what
Those Ithacas mean.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Glenda Webster for drawing my attention to the fact that David Webster did not participate in the sit-in. However I have included him in the list as he told me on a number of occasions in later years how much the event influenced him as a student at that time.
2. H.F. Sampson was a professor of law at Rhodes who had been called to the bar in London and South Africa. He was a St. Andrews', Grahamstown, Rhodes Scholar in 1910. He published a year after I was interviewed a deeply racist book entitled *The Principle of Apartheid,* Voortrekkerpers: Johannesburg, 1966.

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Skeletons in the Rhodes Cupboard: What Should Be Done about Them?

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In January this year, I wrote to the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes, Dr David Woods, explaining that I had obtained the documents in my Department of Justice security file – number 3016 – after *THISDAY* newspaper published a list of the files and dubbed the names on the list as 'the enemies of the apartheid state'.

Much of my file was about my time at Rhodes University – 1967 to 1970 – and my involvement in the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the SRC. It was an absurd file, not often accurate and had me involved in such revolutionary activities as attending a memorial service for Martin Luther King. I wrote an article for *THISDAY* on the file, which is attached.

What I did not write in the article, but which alarmed me, was an item marked 'GEHEIM' (Secret). Item 49, dated 19 November 1970, stated: 'His name appears on a list sent by the authorities of "Rhodes University" of students who have yet undertaken military training'. Not only was the information factually incorrect – I had actually spent nine months in the South African Navy in 1966 – but it confirmed in writing what many of us suspected at the time – that the Rhodes University authorities, or at least senior people in the university administration, actively collaborated with the apartheid regime and the Security Police, who in the Eastern Cape and Grahamstown were a particularly nasty and vicious bunch, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and various applications for amnesty have confirmed.

In my letter, I told David Woods that now that this collaboration had been confirmed, it was high time for the university to come clean about the levels of co-operation with the Security Police in the apartheid era. In my own case, this information was used to justify a banning order against me, which for some unexplained reason was not executed and subsequently withdrawn. Other students in my time at Rhodes University were detained and deported, presumably on much the same kind of information.

I also said that today Rhodes University was very much part of an open and democratic South Africa. 'It portrays the image of always having been anti-apartheid, yet its administration, or elements of it, were collaborating with the Security Police, at the very least telling them about who they thought had not done military service'.

I also suggested that as the university celebrated its centenary consideration should be given to the appointment of a local truth and reconciliation committee into this shameful collaboration with the Security Police would be appropriate. 'Indeed, we need liberation from this dark period of the university's history', I wrote in the letter.

David Woods was cautious but correct in his reply: 'I am not in a position to speak on behalf of, or take responsibility for the Rhodes University authorities or individuals from the 1970s. I can only apologise for what was a totally unacceptable form of conduct. On the positive side, there is no doubt that the Rhodes University of 2004 is very different from 8 years ago, let alone from the 1970s'.

I fully accept his position as the Vice-Chancellor in 2004 but what should be done about 'totally unacceptable' forms of conduct by the university authorities in the dark days of apartheid? Paintbrush them out and pretend they didn't happen? Or confront and deal with those actions, even if some of the key perpetrators ended up with honorary degrees?

In my own experience, the first indication of the university's vacillation on apartheid came in the days before the 1967 NUSAS congress at Rhodes University. Despite months of planning, the Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor J.V.L. Rennie bowed down at the last moment to government and Security Police pressure to announce that no black (then 'non-white') students would be allowed to stay in the university residences. Although the accommodation of black students was always an issue at NUSAS congresses, this was the first time a 'liberal' university had taken such a stand. And it was to have long-term and far-reaching consequences. The black students demanded that the congress be adjourned but most of the white delegates decided that they would continue under protest. The black students felt this demonstrated a lack of commitment in the fight against apartheid and the compromise position of 'liberals', particularly white liberals.

One of those black delegates was Steve Biko. He and his colleagues effectively resolved then that a separate black student body was needed and by the following year they had decided to establish the South African Students Organisation (SASO).

The second demonstration of the university's compromise with government structures was the appointment, conduct and report of the Munnik 'commission' by the university council to investigate a student civil disobedience campaign against antiquated and unpopular residence rules. It used information supplied by the Security Police, published a secret report which whitewashed the administration, and blamed NUSAS for the student revolt. The report was clearly defamatory of student leaders, but the Rhodes establishment defended it and embraced it. It wasn't 'a commission' despite the fact that Judge George Munnik was appointed to be chairman; it was a committee appointed by the council. It duly developed a wonderful conspiracy theory –

'the voice was the voice of the SRC but the hand was the hand of NUSAS' – despite the fact that 1000 out of 1200 students in residence at the time, well over 80 percent, participated in the civil disobedience campaign.

I shall return to the Munnik 'commission' later.

In the wake of the controversy after a selected release of the Munnik report, the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, Dr J.M. Hyslop, admitted to the *Sunday Times* that the Security Police obtained information about students from university files. 'But this information is usually of routine nature which they could get from other sources anyway'.

The *Sunday Times* continued: 'Dr Hyslop said he was aware that the Security Police sometimes requested information from the administration about certain students, but he told me they never approached him personally. "We are obliged to give the Security Police information about students if they ask, as indeed we are obliged to give the ordinary police information. But to say the university administration 'works hand-in-glove with the Security Police' is going too far. I personally do not like the idea of telephone tapping"'.

His reference to telephone tapping arose out of a disclosure in the *Sunday Times* the previous week that the secret Munnik 'commission' report had access to information about phone calls to and from the Rhodes University SRC offices. The 'commission' unsurprisingly did not disclose how the information was obtained, but in support of its accusation that NUSAS was to blame for the disturbances quoted in its report details of a 'nine-minute phone call at 9.07 am from the farm at Howick' (where the NUSAS executive was meeting) to the Rhodes SRC office'. It also said that I had made a phone call after 2 p.m. to ask about agenda for the student body meeting that was to be held that night. (At that stage, I was secretary-general of NUSAS's educational wing, NUSED, and I was also a vice-president of NUSAS.) The 'commission' claimed, without the slightest evidence, that these calls were to give 'instructions' to the SRC.

The East London *Daily Dispatch* commented at the time – undoubtedly by its then editor, Donald Woods – that the 9.07 pm phone call was not disclosed by any SRC member but was 'discovered' by the commission itself. It continued: 'Curiouser and curiouser. Now who could have told the commission about this phone call? Surely not the Special Branch. Although they are the only well-equipped phone-tapping agency, what interest would the Special Branch have in an investigation involving students. Obviously there must be some explanation. Maybe a member of the telephone department was co-opted at some stage on to the commission. Or maybe the members of the commission are psychic'.

These telephone calls were crucial to the 'commission's' conspiracy theory, and Dr Hyslop did not like them, but he was happy to let the Security Police examine student files.

The *Sunday Times* also found that the chairman of the Rhodes council, Mr Justice J. Cloete, was not the slightest bit perturbed. Asked about Security

Police activity on the campus, he said: 'As a judge I do not interfere in police activities'. I would have thought that if a chairman of a university council thought he could not comment on secret police activities on his campus, he would have been instantly dismissed, but no such thing happened to Judge Cloete. Instead, he issued an outrageous statement defending the Munnik 'commission' report and then when he was publicly criticised – by me, I should disclose! – he said: 'I am not making any more statements. It would be improper for a judge to join issue on this level'.

What this incident demonstrated was that the university at the highest levels admitted and condoned the administration's collaboration with the security police. They were not even embarrassed by it. When what is known today about the police, and particularly the security police, this collaboration really is astonishing. While the student activists on the Rhodes campus and NUSAS throughout the country were fighting for a democratic South Africa, the Rhodes University authorities were co-operating with the other side, the people using every means possible to perpetuate white minority rule.

Perhaps it wasn't that surprising: on 13 February, 1971, it was reported that the government had made a grant of R100,000 to Rhodes University to help it out of its financial difficulties. This was announced after the Minister of Education, Senator J.P. van der Spuy, had gone to Grahamstown to acquaint himself personally with the university's development. After the Munnik 'commission' report was partly released, what did van der Spuy say at the Orange Free State congress of the National Party? He praised Rhodes as a university trying to 'keep its house in order'. 'The commission found NUSAS to be agitators. The University Council stood firm and fined students who were found guilty. I appreciate the Council's actions and the fact they stood firm. This is what the government wants', Van der Spuy said.

However, it wasn't only this level that the authorities supported the status quo. My father, Frank Streek, was appointed to the Rhodes University Council in the early 1970s. He says today that his position on the council was 'difficult. I had an activist son and an editor who delighted in tearing strips off the Rhodes University pussyfooters'. (He was managing director of the East London *Daily Dispatch* at the time.) He had been involved in studies of poverty levels, particularly in the Eastern Cape, and had helped in an Adam Raphael exposure in *The Guardian* about the appalling salaries paid by the British- and Quaker-owned Wilson Rowntree sweet factory in East London. Various academics, including some from Rhodes, had published studies about the poverty datum line (PDL) and the minimum income families needed to survive.

When he joined the university council he was shocked to find that black workers were paid below PDL wages and did not receive pensions. At one meeting where increases to professors were passed without comment, he and another progressive member of the council, CK Rowling, raised the issue of black salaries. But they were brushed aside, particularly by Kitty Richardson

(incidentally, a member of the Munnik 'commission') and Dickie Ginsburg of King William's Town, on the grounds that if Rhodes increased black wages this would disrupt everything in Grahamstown and the Eastern Cape.

My father says: 'The facts were there and the liberal Rhodes University, instead of setting an example, dodged things until I believe the students forced the issue and embarrassed the council by collecting money for African workers'.

What is clear from this account is that the Rhodes University authorities were far from progressive, and not only in their relationship with the security police and the government. And I don't believe this should be forgotten or deliberately paintbrushed out of the university's history.

I indicated I would return to the Munnik 'commission' report because even today I still find it extraordinary that the whole university council and the senate (which unanimously supported the report) could have fallen for such arrant nonsense. Any fool had to know at the time that the students in the residences, many of whom did not, incidentally, support NUSAS, were getting increasingly frustrated by the extraordinarily antiquated residence and dress regulations. The 1970 SRC had raised the matter regularly and I personally warned Dr Hyslop that there was going to be trouble.

While the youth worldwide were going through the so-called cultural revolution from the Beatles to free love onwards, Rhodes University was stoically trying maintain obsolete dress codes. The incident that sparked the civil disobedience was after a boy was, horror of horrors, found in bed with a girl in Oliver Schreiner residence. When the authorities increased the penalties imposed by the warden of Oliver Schreiner, the students rebelled, invaded Hobson and then threatened a vote of no-confidence in SRC unless they took action. And that had little if anything to do with NUSAS and its leadership.

The Munnik 'commission', however, ignored the clear mismanagement of the situation by Dr Hyslop and his administration in order to develop the NUSAS conspiracy theory. The report was so weak and poorly argued that I was advised by a senior SC in Cape Town that it was defamatory of me and it had effectively made a finding that I was dishonest, but that I was advised not to sue the council because the publication of the full report was privileged and that in law I was remediless. The same applied to SRC President John Whitehead and other members of the SRC.

So, we had no legal case and we could only fight the report through the media. But how was it possible that the university council at the time could appoint someone like Judge George Munnik to head the committee? When I gave evidence to the 'commission', I insisted that I be given a copy of my evidence. Reading it some 33 years later, I am still astonished that someone with such right-wing and pro-Nationalist views could have been appointed by the council to head the 'commission', and the other members (Kitty

Richardson, the liberal Professor D. Hobart Houghton, and Grahamstown attorney A.P. Cole), the council and the senate could all endorse its report.

In my evidence, for instance, Judge Munnik expressed surprise that there was provision in the prison regulations for the education of prisoners and that NUSAS should have a fund for this purpose, particularly for political prisoners on Robben Island.

'Have you ever been to Robben Island?', he asked me.

'No', I replied.

Munnik: 'I have been. It is a fantastic set-up. It is one of the best prisons I have seen from a structural point of view'.

Streek: 'I don't know whether they would allow me, as a NUSAS man, to visit'.

Munnik: 'Each of the leaders has his own cell and desk and books. The only mistake was in allowing them to study through any university. Had it only been UNISA it would have been simpler'.

Remember this was an inquiry into the civil disobedience campaign at Rhodes!

Later he asked whether we didn't have a joint executive meeting with SASO – a ridiculous assertion – and then he moved onto black students within NUSAS. Munnik asked me about coloureds and Indians and I responded: 'They prefer to be called black rather than non-white'.

Munnik: 'Most of them dislike being classed with the Africans'.

Later he explained: 'Some authentic Africans cannot bear a coloured person'.

Earlier in the evidence I received other some pearls of wisdom from Judge Munnik: NUSAS would like to see a complete change in our society, wouldn't they? A complete abolition of the present set-up in South Africa, and to see the rules completely changed, and black power come, because this would mean majority rule... If ever there was a society which is an authoritarian one it is the Bantu society, from Chaka onwards'.

Enough. Clearly, a residence revolt at Rhodes had far wider implications that anyone could have thought possible. Yet, this was the sort of person the university council appointed to head the 'commission' into the civil disobedience campaign.

Rhodes University has moved into a very different place now, as David Woods said in his letter to me, and we should welcome this. But there are some disturbing skeletons in our cupboard. They can be buried now but they should not be forgotten.

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Students at Rhodes under Apartheid

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Introduction

During the period 1969 to 1978, while I was an undergraduate and postgraduate at Rhodes University or studying externally in Grahamstown, apartheid determined the entire student experience at Rhodes. Apartheid defined our life experiences before we entered Rhodes, our development as young adults during our time as students as well as our expectations of the lives we would enjoy as adults once we had left both Rhodes and Grahamstown. I hope, in this contribution, to explain why the ideology of apartheid and the power of the apartheid state was so pervasive throughout and determinant of the student experience.

I suggest that the 'liberal white English-speaking universities' cannot claim that they existed untouched as independent islands of critical thought and action within the apartheid waters of South Africa during the period of which I write. It is my view that the demise of apartheid as the determinant of who could study, who could teach, what could be taught, what could be done with knowledge was not the outcome of efforts of students from this university and others like it. The destruction of the apartheid project is, to my mind, a tribute to the sacrifices of other men and women. They were young people who were never permitted to enter any university, who went to so-called 'bush' or 'tribal' colleges established for those excluded from the white liberal universities. There were the liberation movements and other organisations which were not the product of nor peopled by white liberal universities and their graduates. There was the international community. Only peripherally do we find a few individuals who refused to absorb or be obedient to the lessons of an apartheid lifetime which lessons included this university experience.

My Personal Experience

I entered Rhodes as an undergraduate at the beginning of 1969, enrolling for the BA degree, which was interrupted in two respects. I left Rhodes for a year in the United States of America over the period July 1969 to July 1970, and I enrolled for and completed the then postgraduate National Higher Education Diploma whilst I was SRC President. Accordingly, I completed my BA at the end of 1973, majoring in Anthropology and 'Bantu' languages. I completed an honours degree in 1974 again in Anthropology and African languages. I was happily in residence in Hobson House for a full three year period, and thereafter

was an Oppidan for two years. I eagerly joined NUSAS and was an active member of the NUSAS Local Committee, and various sub-committees over a period of years. I was elected as SRC President at the end of 1971 and occupied that position for part of 1972 until the entire SRC resigned and was not replaced by a new SRC for some years.

I started working at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) in 1975 from which I had to resign, due to the refusal of the then authorities to grant permits required for me to conduct research in the Transkei on behalf of ISER. I enrolled for the LLB through UNISA, and I continued studying through UNISA and living in Grahamstown until the end of 1978. During this time I held a series of odd-jobs, including working in the stacks in the University Library, teaching at night at the Technical College, and during the day at Diocesan School for Girls. I have lived and worked in Johannesburg since 1979.

I cannot claim that my own experiences as a Rhodes student were typical of my generation. Perhaps my comments reflect some of the alienation which I felt at that time and still feel in retrospect. I have chosen in this contribution to discuss broader student life as I observed it rather than focus on the small group of which I was a part. My contribution therefore contains generalisations about an entire student body based on my own observations over a specific period in the history of Rhodes.

Who were we? Where did we come from?

All Rhodes students[1] were classified as 'white', almost exclusively South African, with many Rhodesians. The majority were the product of Christian National Education. Undergraduates were all born subsequent to the election victory of the National Party in 1948. Most of us came from affluent backgrounds in that our families could afford the luxury of allowing us to delay entering the job market or could afford to send us to university.[2] Our attendance at Rhodes confirmed that, as matriculants with university exemption, we were already successful members of South African society.

The parents of the 1969 intake of undergraduates, no matter their own national origin, had either applauded and supported the ideology and development of statutory apartheid or they had reconciled themselves to living thereunder and bringing their children up within such an environment. Our parents were the beneficiaries of the apartheid system. They were not violently opposed to it – if they had been, they would have been in jail, in exile or they would have emigrated.[3]

Christian National Education was proclaimed as the educational environment appropriate for all South Africans. Classification and division was the order of the educational day: we attended whites only schools, we were taught in either English or Afrikaans (occasionally both), Jews were separated from the rest at school assemblies. Structure was highly valued and exhibited in

school uniforms, compulsory games, rigid timetabling, and required school subjects for matriculation. The 'Great Trek' was studied at least three times during High School but never the attempted annihilation of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and communists by the Nazi regime less than twenty years earlier. English and Afrikaans were compulsory languages in a country where the majority of our fellow South Africans communicated in other vernaculars. Obedience was applauded and independence considered problematic. If your goal was not a matriculation certificate you were guaranteed employment in the civil service, on the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H) or in your father's business. If you were privileged, intelligent or ambitious then you worked towards a University Exemption which was virtually guaranteed because of the inequitable allocation of funds and resources towards the education of white children.

We spoke or chose to speak none or very little of the despised language of Afrikaans. That was the language of the 'poor white', the civil servant or the bureaucracy. The English came from an altogether more refined and proud heritage. To a certain extent, the antipathy towards Afrikaans may have reflected our real sense of marginalisation from the seats of power in this country. It is possible that some of us (rather misguidedly) were antagonistic for political reasons. Our separation from other white South Africans was easily expressed in such derogatory nicknames as 'hairyback' or 'rockspider', which were easily reciprocated, I am sure, at the Afrikaans universities.[4]

The religious demographics meant that students were Christian with a small minority of Jews. Muslims were 'coloureds' or 'Indians' and they studied, if at all, at newly established 'tribal colleges'. Atheists were not the intended products of our Christian National Education, although they fast emerged as we left compulsory church attendance with our families and at boarding schools for Sunday lie-ins in residences or digs.

What we knew of the South Africa in which we lived, was exactly what we were meant to know. Our parents passed on to us their own attitudes and beliefs explicitly as well as through the schools chosen for us, the churches attended, the newspapers received at home, the life experiences offered. We knew nannies and labourers but not black South Africans; we knew two of the languages imported into this country but none of the indigenous languages spoken by the majority of South Africans.

What we had learnt of the South Africa in which we lived was carefully circumscribed by Big Brother. There was no television. Radio was firmly controlled by the Broederbond-managed SABC. We all remember the early morning 'Current Affairs' as written and read by Red Metrovich. The English press was constrained by the imperatives of apartheid and security legislation, the requirements of its owners for maximum profit, the needs of its advertisers and the interests of its readers. It is not surprising that we read newspapers which talked about a world divided into people and 'Bantu', a world committed

to rule through a whites-only ballot box, a world comprising 'braaivleis, rugby, sunny skies and Chevrolet'.[5] Cinema and magazines were subjected to strict censorship.[6] We had been taught that we were on the side of those fighting against communism but no more than that communism was 'ungodly', destructive of civilisation and would stir up the natives.

Young white men were obliged to serve in the South African Defence Force.[7] There was conscription for 9 months, then for 1 year, for 18 months and finally for 2 years. There were 'commandos' and 'camps'. There were exemptions for students.[8] The conscription obligation loomed large over those who had not yet served and were vulnerable if they 'dropped out' of university. It was a reality for those who had already served and continued to be eligible for 'camps'. Rhodesian students had fathers, uncles and brothers fighting on one side of a civil war. They had themselves served or gained exemptions.[9] I do not recall any concern or agitation around this topic in the same way as was experienced during the 1980s when so many young South African men left the country in order to avoid conscription whilst others declared themselves objectors to service in the South African Defence Force.

In short, we were unknowing beneficiaries of the apartheid system, we were achievers entrenched within that system and we were certainly not revolutionaries in any sense of the word. I would therefore be surprised if anyone had expected that the response of students at Rhodes University, during the years about which I am writing, was anything other than accustomed to comfort, respectful of structures, acquiescent of direction, conformist and, on the whole, indifferent to and accepting of the apartheid regime. We were the children created by apartheid and when we came to Rhodes we were students within and under apartheid. We knew and expected nothing else.

What did we find?

On leaving home, and usually travelling away from our own cities, towns and farms to Settler country, we did not find a new and exciting world of different people, varied experiences and complex challenges.

As far as the student body was concerned, scholars who had been at single-sex schools (which private schools then exclusively were and a great many government schools usually were) were now confronted with men and women, although carefully segregated in separate halls and houses of residence. But we remained all white and mainly English-speaking and we were all from the privileged classes.

Our teachers, whether instructors, lecturers or professors, were also just like us. They too were white, and, on the whole, English-speaking. In the main they were South African although not the product of an exclusively apartheid regime upbringing. Many of the academic staff had studied abroad. They would have been our parents' generation, a bit older or a bit younger, and would perhaps have known a less restrictive environment, more greatly influenced by

international developments. Where they were non-South African one tended to find that they were not interested in parochial South African affairs or they lived here subject to bureaucratic discretion and were careful not to offend or they saw no need to offend. We certainly did not meet black South Africans who knew more than us and had come to teach us or who knew as little as us and had come to share the learning experience. Of course, there were a number of generous, thoughtful, critical thinkers amongst the teaching faculty who did participate in discussions about the wrongs of our society. But those who felt very strongly usually emigrated whilst others were obliged to be cautious since 'banning' in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act was a potent weapon against individual members of the academic community.[10]

My generation of undergraduate students fitted into residential life very comfortably when we arrived at Rhodes. We were not surprised to be an all-white enclave (with a few, very few, noticeable Chinese faces) in the country of the Mfengu and Thembu. The few black people we met at Rhodes were domestic staff in their purple and white uniforms in the halls of residence and, whose names frequently unremembered, were addressed generically as 'sisi'. Arriving at Rhodes did not disturb our comfort zones to any great extent. We had 'nannies' at home and now we had 'sisi's' in Res; we came from white group areas and middle-class comfort to private rooms and three square meals a day in the halls of residence. The only complaint would be the filthy little heaters, collected at the beginning of the second term each year, on which we melted marshmallows during the winter months, and the guaranteed loss of electricity during any cold spell and immediately before June exams. We seldom chafed against fairly rigid structures – we were sheltered at home and in boarding school and women's residences had strict clocking-in and clocking-out times. There was also the opportunity for endless and all-night games of bridge in the common room, discussions about relationships (but never sex, and certainly never homosexual relationships), agonising over the difficulties of certain courses and presentation of assignments on time. My residence, Hobson House, was filled with former head girls – we were intelligent and sometimes assertive, but we were respectful of authority because it had served us well. I recall no political discussions of any sort and no critique of apartheid at any level during spent three years at Hobson.

One unexpected outburst of student activism which challenged University Administration, particularly in respect of Residence Rules, was the May Civil Disobedience Campaign of 1971. Led by the SRC, hundreds of students defied rules on wearing of ties to lunch, academic gowns to evening meals, women's clocking-in times. Thousands of Rands in fines were accumulated within a week. In retrospect this was an explosion of volcanic proportions but entirely parochial and without broader political content.[11]

In those days, the Students' Representative Council at each English-speaking university participated in an automatic affiliation to the National

Union of South African Students (NUSAS). This was often a contentious issue as, from time to time, it was felt that the NUSAS head office in Cape Town had become divorced from the interests of students on local campuses. However, in retrospect, it was a valuable and important strengthening of student opposition thinking and organisation. I eagerly went in search of NUSAS when I arrived at Rhodes. I was encouraged so to do by my parents, who had every hope and expectation that I would engage with the complexities and the challenges of our very troubled society. I was surprised to discover that the majority of students in my residence, and in the courses which I was taking, had been warned-off having anything to do with NUSAS. Through meetings of Local Committee I met like-minded students. In our youthful arrogance we knew that apartheid was wrong because it denied black people the vote and the opportunity to fully participate in South African society and we were firmly opposed to detention without trial and deplored deaths in detention. However, we did not articulate any vision for a new society. Our concerns and protests were shared exclusively with other white English-speaking students at other such universities and – on occasion – with a Cabinet Minister to whom we would address lengthy and earnest petitions. Sometimes we shared our concerns through public protest. On a national level, and at other universities (such as UCT and WITS) I experienced a greater degree of sophistication, anger, commitment and connection to a world of 'struggle'. In a sense, NUSAS provided young South Africans with a more developed and angry critique of the apartheid regime as well as the funding for activities which were certainly intended to challenge the foundations of apartheid. At some stage NUSAS divided its various activities into cultural affairs under the rubric of 'Aquarius', economic/emerging trade union/underground Marxist activities under the rubric of 'Wages Commission', and examination of education under apartheid within an 'Education Commission'. I certainly met personalities who had a clearer sense that they were working towards undermining the structures of apartheid. At Rhodes our NUSAS activities were directed towards attempting to conscientise the rest of the student population or towards trying to learn from those sophisticated genuine radicals at Head Office, WITS and UCT.

We had absolutely nothing to do with students from neighbouring universities. UPE was Afrikaans and seen as the National Party challenge to Rhodes, while Fort Hare was perceived as being rather alien. Black students and University Colleges had been members of NUSAS but in 1968/1969 a group of black students formed the South African Students Organisation (SASO). It was led by people like Barney Pityana, Steve Biko and others. White liberal students felt somewhat puzzled and hurt by what they perceived as rejection of our good intentions. Although there had been minimal contact between white and black students, I never met anyone who expressed understanding of the reasons for black students forming SASO and exploring the position and response of black people to apartheid through organisations such as BCP and

BCM. Through the University Christian Movement, there was contact with other South African students in a non-racial context where the message was fundamentally challenging and opposed to all the premises of the apartheid regime. I think that in all the years I was a student, the only engagement I had with black students was either through the Federal Theological Seminary (FedSem) in Alice, UCM, and individuals working in BCP.

The Students' Representative Council was never, during the years that I was at Rhodes, a body that appeared particularly conscious or expressed itself to be representing the students at a university created by, existing for and operating within, an apartheid regime. SRCs tended to attract the ambitious and the well-intentioned. That ambition and those intentions were always couched in terms of dedication to local student issues, ranging from the requirement of wearing gowns each evening to dinner, the provision of sufficient funding for important sporting activities, co-ordination of house and hall balls in Great Hall. There was always one member of the SRC whose portfolio was that of 'NUSAS chairman', and there were certainly positions which tended to be more overtly political. Those politics were understood and expressed within very clear parameters: parameters were defined by our own life experiences and expectancies, our perception that it was important always to act within the law and our appreciation that students had not come to university to be political. It is then little wonder, that I, in my capacity as SCR President, in February 1972 welcomed new students to Rhodes, informed them they were entering a new society, quoted John F Kennedy that: 'Knowledge speaks a universal language', and, at (and now embarrassingly) boring length, addressed them on academic freedom. I piously rejected the proposition of a former State President, Mr C.R. Swart, that the government was entitled to interfere with what was taught in the universities and how it was taught. However, having done so, I stressed that should we engage in student action and protest it should always be responsible and lawful. Although I am now horrified at the platitudes contained in this address I suspect that it was novel for arriving Rhodes students to be told that universal brotherhood was important, and that we should not be bound by the narrow confines of Nationalism and racism. I do recall that it was considered sufficiently contentious for me to say that while organisations such as UCM and NUSAS upheld and propagated the truths and ideals of academic freedom through their activities, that this was a 'personal opinion' only. I also remember that the stress on the lawfulness and responsible nature of all proposed student activity arose out of the real concerns and fears which existed at the time for the powers of the state and the might of security legislation.

The university hierarchy and its administration was little interested in wider South African affairs and certainly not in the injustices of apartheid as found within our own quadrangles. We had a tradition of academics from the United Kingdom elevated to administrative positions whose own families remained or returned 'home' and who probably found 'separate development' a logical

extension to the Empire of which they were a part. In my dealings with Admin I was always given to understand that student politics and disturbance were messy, distracting and expected of youth, but not really the concern of mature administrators. In 1972 the then Principal and Vice-Chancellor addressed the same students as I did, and managed to avoid expressing any view on the impact of the apartheid regime on student life, academic teaching and university administration by saying that it would be 'presumptuous for any group within the university to express the views of the university personality as a whole'. It should be remembered that the University Administration operated subject to the influence of University Council who, comprising High Court Judges, businessmen and alunmni, were obviously concerned to ensure the retention of a status quo which was then the successful experiment in white capitalist exploitation of indigenous resources.

I studied no science and save for one course in each of the Fine Arts and Commerce faculties, I studied entirely in the Arts Faculty. Of course, efforts were made by academics genuinely committed to academic discourse and full exchange of critical ideas. In the subjects and courses which I studied, I can think of few instances where I believe that academic discourse was stifled. I do remember in Economics I it was compulsory to write an essay discussing the forthcoming budget to be presented in Parliament. Mine was returned marked 'too political'. I can think of instances where the course of study or the nature of the debate was truncated in many respects. Students did study Marxist and other critical political philosophy, but they were not permitted, by law, to read certain writers or certain books. Students were encouraged to do original research, but were not entitled to have access to certain original documents produced by banned authors or organisations and could not travel freely, without permit, in much of the country. Social theories were explored but we did not ever really know and understand, in any meaningful way, the society in which we lived. We could study 'Bantu' languages but could not be taught by people who actually spoke the languages so we focussed on linguistic theory rather than the original writings of black South African authors or communities.

The effect of apartheid on students at Rhodes

This university experience was not to create generations of discontented, marginalised revolutionaries but, not unexpectedly, was to effect a reasonably comfortable transition from conforming youth to conforming adults.

The impact was insidious. My generation and others attended Rhodes University without fellow-students whom we should have met, absent important and diverse experiences never shared, ignorant of ideas to which we were not exposed, uncritical of that which we never heard or saw, failing to challenge what we did not know existed, incapable of aspiring to that which we did not comprehend was even possible.

An obvious dislocation of the South African student experience is that we never perceived ourselves as being part of Africa. Our country had left the Commonwealth in 1961, we were never part of the OAU, and there were no links with the rest of Africa other than that regular train each term from Alicedale to Bulawayo or Salisbury. Our country was in Africa but not of Africa. Our university was similarly positioned. Rhodes prided itself on the extent to which it had modelled itself upon and had succeeded in mimicking the Oxford and Cambridge experience. We were certainly the academic legacy of Cecil John Rhodes in Southern Africa.

Students at Rhodes tended to ignore the 85 percent of the South African population who could never aspire towards and were legislatively forbidden from ever attending our university. We were given no reason to value and could not really comprehend the experience of being African. We did not study and we did not know the languages and culture, the law and traditions, the music and dress, the food and the art of the various communities – other that that of white Europeans – who make up the South African population. In many ways the lives of Rhodes students were barren as to African content, because we were not enriched by our own society, and we chose to feed vicariously off foreign cultures in Europe and North America. I do not think we ever conceived of ourselves as 'African' – we were English and South African but the heritage of the first overwhelmed the geography of the latter.

I suspect that we were aware of our isolation from the international community. Although South Africans were still, prior to 1976, welcome throughout most of the world, there were rumblings about sports and academic and cultural boycotts. But we knew that we were lagging behind developments on the world stage. In many ways, the undergraduates arriving at Rhodes in 1969 were on the cusp of the international student experiences of Woodstock and hippie lifestyles, opposition to the war in Vietnam, the Paris student revolts of 1968. One bizarre manifestation was to be found when a group of us were arrested after a protest in the High Street in about 1971 or 1972 and we decided to bang on the floors of the police van shouting loudly and rhythmically: 'Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!'.

The impetus towards a changing society?

Academic freedom may have been a well-worn mantra trotted out on important occasions. However, there was no suggestion that we, as South Africans with knowledge, skills and expertise, privilege and opportunities, should work towards a change in the political structures or the downfall of the apartheid regime. This was certainly not suggested to arriving students by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and it was definitely not pronounced by any honourary graduand at the annual graduation. Neither academic or administrative staff could have safely developed the theme of academic freedom to its logical conclusion by explicitly telling students that both South African society and the

University were unfree and it would have been less safe to have explicitly suggested to students how those chains could have been broken. For a variety of reasons, from total disinterest to fear, the result was little more than platitudes of dedication to academic freedom and lamplit dignified marches to the Cathedral in protest against the so-called Extension of Universities Education Act. Students were never told, and I do not believe that we ever chose to see, that we had entered into a partial university experience: partial by reason of the miniscule portion of society permitted to learn and teach at Rhodes, the explicit and implicit curtailment of the world of knowledge, and expected limitation on life's ambitions and experiences.

The corollary of this abnormal experience in an abnormal society was that we, as apartheid students, were quite unprepared to be leaders of and for change. Furthermore, we were not prepared for the changes which would undoubtedly come. It was hoped that Rhodes students would become leaders in South African society – managing directors and chairmen of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, members of Parliament, Judges of the High Court, scientists of international renown. But I recall no overt discussions about our participation in changing the apartheid regime. On the one hand, such discussions would have been against the law. On the other hand, such discussions would have been presumptuous since such leadership roles are earmarked for those who have the experience from which to lead and communities who desire to be so led. Certainly, such planning would have been very premature: after all, the period 1969 to 1990 still remained with the oppression of school children during the terrible years of 1976 to 1979 and with States of Emergency, detentions and killings over the period 1980 to 1990.

However, change did happen. Another generation came after us. There were students who entered Rhodes University after 1976 when even white South Africans were beginning to acknowledge that everything was not all right, that wrongs were being done, that there were voices that did need to be heard, that gunshot was not the way to stifle legitimate aspirations. There were academic staff who had also now been exposed to the same whisperings and murmurings, who had travelled, perhaps had learnt that beyond the borders of South Africa, liberation movements were growing in numbers. Certainly, the administration entered a new era with younger, indigenous, liberal leadership. I remember how impressed many of us were when Derek Henderson, early on in his reign as Principal and Vice-Chancellor, was prepared to debate Ian MacDonald in the GLT on his, Henderson's, decision to ban something or other. That such a debate could even take place was previously unheard of.

The world outside Rhodes was developing apace. The 1976 generation of scholars left school. Some went to universities from which they were expelled and went into exile. Others remained at university and qualified to make their contribution, during the waiting period, either in South Africa or abroad. Others of that generation went into exile immediately. No-one who was a youth in

1976 in South Africa could fail to have been unaffected thereby. The trade union movement was organising from the early 1970s. As workers organised, so did management respond and the intimidation and violence which ensued often led to greater energies in worker organisation and trade union development. NGOs sprang up everywhere, attracting people of all races and with common goals. The international community was involved and targeted specific areas for change, whether in employment standards, business practice, sporting activities, cultural events and head-on politically. The liberation movements organised, lobbied and attacked the apartheid regime.

Rhodes University and its graduates were involved at a number of levels. I lived in Johannesburg from 1979 onwards and I cannot speak of what was happening at Rhodes. I do know that some of my friends from Rhodes were to be found in NGOs, journalism, publishing, teaching, industrial relations and other areas making their contribution towards change. I also met Rhodes graduates of my generation who were influential in every field of endeavour in South Africa and who were completely oblivious to the need for change and the inevitable demise of apartheid. In recent years I have travelled much abroad and continually bump into Old Rhodians everywhere – Perth, Sydney, Delhi, New York, Vancouver, Toronto, London – and I wonder 'Why are you not at home?'.

I must end though by acknowledging those whom I did meet at Rhodes who were important in my own personal development in comprehending that nothing less should be achieved than the total destruction of the system of apartheid – when and how was agonising to speculate. But I shared banned books and magazines with some students, discussed earnestly with a couple of lecturers the contribution I personally wanted to make to a changing South Africa, fretted over the security police with close friends, joined the Black Sash and met women of integrity and commitment, made friends who were anguished over what was happening and who went into exile to return one day, joined a women's group and learnt that 'the personal is political', worked on a detainees support programme and so on. My own journey is, in some ways, a typical South African experience – confused, conflicted, critical – but enormously pleased to have been a part of the struggle against apartheid and even more pleased to be here today.

Notes

1. Save a few 'non-White' Chinese attending on grudgingly granted special permits.
2. Rhodes, as a primarily residential university not situated in a metropolitan area, was more expensive since students did not live at home and the opportunities for employment during term time were almost non-existent.
3. If our parents were mildly opposed then they had joined the Liberal Party or the Progressive Party, which still advocated a qualified franchise. If our parents had wanted a more 'civilised' or 'refined' system of treating the 'native', then they had

joined the United Party. That of course, presupposed that they had any interest at all in the political system which determined their day-to-day privilege.

4. 'Rooinek' and 'soutpiel' were terms mainly applied to English-speaking males – I don't know what English speaking females were called.
5. With a few exceptions such as the *Daily Dispatch* of East London and the *Rand Daily Mail* of Johannesburg.
6. As I learnt in later years when I appeared on numerous occasions before the Publications Appeal Board.
7. Of my four brothers, one served in the elite Parabats, two on the Border and one in the Police Force and one of them did extended camps in black townships during the States of Emergency.
8. Rhodes recognised that a significant proportion of male undergraduates would have obtained such 'exemption' and they were housed in one residence (Adamson) whereas those who had already completed national service were housed in another (Jan Smuts).
9. Surprisingly, I recall no discussion whatsoever of the issue of service in the South African Defence Force. It was no more than some dispute happening far away on an unknown border. I doubted many of us could have could have found the Caprivi Strip on the map. I do recall moans and groans about the petty miseries of time doing 'Basics' and then other training but no-one ever spoke to me about fighting and killing and occupied territories such as South West Africa.
10. Victims at white liberal universities included Bill Hoffenberg of UCT, Terence Beard of Rhodes, Rick Turner of UND, while Basil Moore of Rhodes had not been reappointed to a teaching position resulting in the 'storming' of the Senate Chamber at Rhodes in 1968.
11. Save that John Whitehead, the SRC President, was subsequently dramatically deprived of his passport whilst attending his LLB graduation and rendered unable to return to Rhodesia to complete his articles of clerkship.

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Rhodes University: A Different Place

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Rhodes University was a very different place 25 years ago. It was a place where a handful of black students (African, Indian and coloured) were allowed entry with the special permission of their respective racial authorities. It was a place to which these students could be denied access at the whim of a state official.

Grahamstown was a very different place. The only cinema barred all coloured and African students from its premises. The eating places barred all students of colour. The first day when I visited the town with my parents, my mom and I were unceremoniously asked to leave the Wimpy Bar when we wanted to buy a sandwich and a cup of tea. The local people had no hope or very little hope of their children attending Rhodes. Instead, the most they could dream of was being lucky enough to find work as domestics or drivers so that they could put food on their tables.

To coincide with the centenary celebrations, the university launched *A Story of Rhodes: Rhodes University 1904 to 2004*, in June 2004. It is insightful how this time is recorded.

One page of the 100-year history records a year of turbulence on the campus. One paragraph on page 93 refers to an experience that dominated my life as a student. The paragraph reads as follows:

> For a number of years Rhodes followed its pattern of ensuring a place for any qualified student, either at Rhodes or at Fort Hare, and then went along with the government's insistence on ministerial permission for black African students at Rhodes. When their numbers approached 100, however, Rhodes started to spread them throughout its residence system. Government officials quickly reacted in 1977, and Rhodes, with the agreement of its black African students, put them in separate residences in 1978.

This paragraph requires careful examination.

Rhodes did not only go along with 'the government's insistence on ministerial permission for black African students'. It went along with special permission for all students of colour. I was one of those students who was given special permission to attend Rhodes. As a graduate of UCT, I came to Rhodes to study journalism. I was a 'special permission' student. The Department of Coloured Affairs gave me special permission to study in terms of vague criteria that allowed students of colour to attend the white universities if they could prove that the subjects they wanted to study were not on offer at their exclusive university. The Senate of the University gave me special permission to complete the journalism degree over two years. Through the intervention of Professor Tony Giffard, I was allowed to do Journalism one and two concur-

rently in the first year of study and Journalism three in the second year. My Rhodes experience from that point of view was rather unusual.

By going along with the government's insistence, Rhodes immediately conferred second class status on a whole lot of us. But there was a pretense – always a pretense. Most white students were oblivious of the fact that we were there with special permission. There were some who were rather surprised that we were there at all. A fellow student living in Winchester House with me was more frank than most. Hailing from a school in Pretoria, she said that she was shocked and could not understand why we were at Rhodes. We were five black girls in the house with her and she said she had not expected this. She had been told that we have a low IQ and so could not understand how it was possible that we were sharing her residence with her. The irony of the situation was that she was registered to do a diploma in pre-school education because she had not qualified to complete a degree. Three of us were doing journalism degrees, one a law degree and one her honours in mathematics. But we were the ones considered to have the low IQ and not to be treated as full students on this campus.

The events of 1978 however forced these issues into the public domain. Any student on the campus during that year cannot justifiably claim not to have known what was going on. If they did not know, they were both blind and deaf because Rhodes was a very different place then. Suddenly in the second half of the year, the government announced that black students (coloured, Indian and African) could no longer live in residence with their white counterparts. With the final exam looming, we were suddenly embroiled in a political crisis and looked to the Vice-Chancellor and the university administration to defend us.

Our official historians say: '... Government officials quickly reacted in 1977, and Rhodes, with the agreement of its black African students, put them in separate residences in 1978'.

That such crude inaccuracies could still be acceptable ten years into our democracy speaks volumes about the historical distortions that will continue to be perpetuated unless we tell our own stories.

Allow me to tell you what happened that year. Students of colour – all black students, African, Indian and coloured, did not agree to go into separate residences. We were forced against our will to go into separate residences. And the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Derek Henderson, knew that we were opposed to the university's position. When we first heard that we would be without accommodation, we held a series of meetings to discuss what we could do. At no stage did the university administration indicate to us that they would stand by us, that they would not accept that their students be treated in this cavalier fashion. Not only did we come as second class citizens with special permission, but now we were casually to be evicted from our rooms. The numbers of students affected were about 50 as far as I can remember. When we marched on the administration and held a meeting with the V-C, there was no acknowledgement of our

feelings. There was no statement of outrage. There was no protest from the highest echelons of the university.

We ended the academic year uncertain of our futures, uncertain about where we would live the next year. Bear in mind that Grahamstown generally had limited accommodation and it was not easy for students to find places outside the residences. Also many parents were not eager to allow younger students to live off campus.

The first I was to hear of the university's official response to the state's attack on us was when I received a call from the V-C's office. I was informed that the university had decided to set up two residences – one for men and one for women – exclusively for students of colour. The request that the V-C was making to me was whether I would take up the offer of being warden of the women's residence. I knew immediately that this would not be an option. I just could not see myself accepting apartheid accommodation. This was not discussed with us. We were told of the university decision. When we returned to campus the following year, we had our first informal discussion and decided that we did not have an option, that we had nowhere else to go. I believed that it was the right thing for students to accept the accommodation, although we had not wanted it. We did not ask for it. It was forced upon us.

When I saw those separate buildings I just knew that I would never be able to bear it. That same afternoon, I literally ran up and down the streets of Grahamstown searching for accommodation. I found a derelict building at the dip on Raglan Road next to a shop. The shopkeeper pointed me to the owner who agreed to fix up the doors and windows, give me paint so that my friends could paint the place and reluctantly allowed myself and Ephne Williams to move in. That is where we stayed for the rest of 1979.

In the late seventies, the apartheid state was strong. It had killed Steve Biko. It was crushing the black consciousness movement in the Eastern Cape in particular. It ruled by decree. In a sense I can understand why it was impossible for the university to stand up against such authoritarianism. I can understand as I look back that perhaps the administration did not have the strength to fight the state. What I cannot understand is that we were never told: listen chaps, we are not happy about this and we are going to help you in every way. We think it is appalling what is happening and we just cannot be seen to be openly opposing the state. No. We were not told this. Instead we were up against the university administration and the state together. The university choose to go along with the state, not with its students.

What I further cannot understand is why there is this continued pretense that Rhodes University stood up for freedom of association and freedom of speech. Rhodes University did not even defend its own students who were there purely on merit.

Today I serve on the Council of this University. As a Council member I proceed with caution. I want this great institution to be even greater. I want it to

express a true non-racialism. I want it to create a space where we all feel we can tell our stories and where our experiences are acknowledged.

What I tell here is only in broad outline the events of those times. This does not pretend to be a scholarly and thorough record of that time. For it to be so requires painstaking research. The students who were here at that time should be tracked down and interviewed. The relevant authorities should be interviewed as well. A collection of this information would allow us to draw a reasonably balanced picture of an awful episode in the history of this university. This process may be just what the university needs to truly diversify. For as long as it does not acknowledge how very different the experiences of so many of us were, for so long will it continue to believe that it can continue to assimilate those who come to Rhodes today into the dominant culture. Rhodes is a very different place today. Yet how different is it? As a Council member, I say with great difficulty that I do not feel part of a team. I feel instead as an appendage. I will always feel as an appendage and not integrated for as long as there is no true diversity. I serve too on the Council of the Peninsula Technikon where I meet men, women of all colours and creeds at meetings that forced a South Africanness upon us. I have no intention here of blaming anybody. Instead I throw this challenge to all of us. How will we create a Rhodes that is South African and not British or Rhodesian? Truly acknowledging its past, its British history but moving into a new future.

While I am fascinated by the broad philosophical questions that this Colloquium has opened up, in the end I believe intellectual activity cannot be truly alive unless it can inform our daily practice – that we need to act and do. That we need to test the intellectual theories that we hold. It is with this in mind that I would like to challenge the Faculty of Humanities to commit itself to engaging its students to put on record the experiences of these unfortunate times lest we forget. Lest we forget that there was a time when so many went along with the machinations of the state and abandoned their intellectual duty and denied their souls. Lest we forget that if we are not constantly reminded we can easily follow this route again.

The second challenge I would like to make relates to this institution's relationship with this town. Grahamstown is South African in microcosm. It is a different place yet it is the same. When I speak to the citizens who live at the other end of town, they continue to see the University as something separate to them where they seek employment. While there have been many initiatives to connect the University to all residents, it appears that much more has to be done for citizens to understand and take ownership of that which is rightly theirs. Last year, 27 students in the local township passed with matric exemption. The University has no record of how many of these students have come to the Rhodes. Admirably, Rhodes has awarded local students two additional points to help them qualify more easily to be admitted. The skewed development in this area requires more than this. I would like to challenge the University to

consider admitting all these students and helping them with financial support. If that Pretoria High School student a quarter of a century ago could have been admitted on the basis of not having met the criteria but being allowed to do a diploma course, why not create the opportunities for the Grahamstown learner?

This University prides itself that it is in the black. Perhaps it should make the investment now that will not only compensate for years of injustice but also assure the people of this town that this is their University. Perhaps when I one day say Rhodes is a different place it will truly be a different place.

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Speaking Truth to Power: A Personal Journey through the Politics of Boycott and Engagement at Rhodes University during the 1980s

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Introduction

Re-reading my chapter in the recently published *Voices of the Transition*[1] where I offer a personal journey for and into democracy in South Africa, I noticed that I barely mention my Rhodes experience of 1980. This is curious, given that my years at Rhodes were, in many ways, life-changing. It was a time when my Marxism developed, when I engaged in national political activity, aboveground and underground, and when I was arrested, and later convicted of ANC activities. What follows, then, fleshes out my personal journey through Rhodes University during the 1980s.

Black consciousness, Marxism and non-racialism

Guy Berger, then a Journalism lecturer and now Head of Media Studies, first introduced me to Rhodes University in 1979. Guy used to attend meetings of a youth programme in my home town, East London, called Masazane (meaning 'let's get together'), of which I was assistant coordinator. It was affiliated to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), but had sufficient independence to be a home for radical political discussion, including black consciousness and the re-emerging ANC/SACP perspective, as articulated by people like Guy and Mandla Gxanyana, an ANC operative working under the guise of Black Consciousness. These perspectives engaged with the liberal perspectives of the SAIRR.

While on the one hand I was attracted to the black identity bestowed upon all oppressed people (i.e. African, Indian and coloured) by Black Consciousness, I was also inclined not to see all whites as oppressors, and all blacks as saviours. I was drawn to the understanding that apartheid was a systemic problem, and individuals were socialised to think and act in various ways. In particular, I was impressed by the class and gender analysis offered by Guy and others (including Jacky Cock, a guest speaker at Masazane), which allowed me to see beyond race as the only or primary line of fracture in our society.

Of particular significance is that Guy alerted me to a strange subject called Sociology, and, given my rejection by UCT on race grounds, encouraged me to study at Rhodes. I could get a special permit to do so if I registered for Journalism, because it was not offered at my ethnic university, UDW.

Both Guy and Mandla gave me ANC and SACP literature to read, and when I went to Rhodes in 1980, I started reading Marxist texts as part of my courses, and joined a reading group to study the ANC and SACP. This was supported by my contact with an increasingly explicit expression of Congress allegiances by NUSASs, and later AZASO (which was already moving away from BC towards a non-racial Congress position, and increasingly co-operating with NUSAS). However, despite my inclinations towards the ANC and SACP, the New Left literature I was exposed to at Rhodes made me wary of their allegiance to the Soviet Union, and introduced me to emerging anti-Stalinist currents within the party, exemplified by activists like Ruth First and Rob Davies, based in Mozambique.

At Rhodes I also met Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) activists who preached a hard-line non-racial, pro-boycott class perspective, and these debates were highly charged amongst black students on campus. I was part of an initiative to set up the Phoenix Cultural Society, which was an attempt to politicise students on campus, alongside the initiatives of NUSAS. However, the NEUM and BC activists would have nothing to do with NUSAS, so, in the interests of unity amongst black students, I found myself treading a fine line between my BC and NEUM comrades, and my comrades in the non-racial ANC-aligned socialist camp on campus, with whom I felt most at home. In addition to these influences, I had been approached by the ANC underground to plan a boycott of the upcoming Lions tour of South Africa, and a boycott of the South African Indian Council (SAIC) elections (none of which materialised at that time).

By the time I was arrested in July 1980 for possessing banned material and furthering the aims of the ANC and SACP, I was well on my way to becoming a committed underground activist.

The politics of boycott

All universities were subject to the constraints of apartheid, and Rhodes was no exception. In 1980 black students had to apply for special permission to attend Rhodes, and were housed separately from white students. We were a tiny minority on the campus, and felt like colonial subjects in a white world. Rhodes consciously saw itself as an extension of the British university, particularly of the traditional Oxbridge type. The residences were strictly segregated according to gender, and female students had to be in by a certain time. They were not allowed male visitors. Tea was quaintly served for all staff and students at specific tea times in the garden. The buildings, halls and images made you feel that you might be in England, and indeed this was the intention:

the university was established primarily to cater for the needs of English-speaking white students in the colony.

However, there was a secondary consideration, which was to civilise the natives into the mores of English culture. Cecil John Rhodes was after all the 'civilising' agent of British imperialism. Apartheid, however, upset this mission, and the university, partially because of its liberal-colonial mission, and partly due to pressure from students, did seek to bypass apartheid restrictions in certain instances. For example, Rhodes was the first 'white' university to racially desegregate its residences during 1980.

Being housed together, however, had the effect of creating a strong sense of solidarity amongst black students, and accelerated the political conscientisation of new students. All black students, as well as those white students who identified with the struggle against apartheid, were called upon to boycott all non-academic and non-residence facilities at Rhodes. This included the SRC, all sports facilities such as playing fields and squash courts, and activities such as Rag. Because black students were not allowed to use off-campus facilities such as cinemas and pubs, white sympathisers were asked to boycott those. Great resentment was shown towards those who chose to defy this boycott, and they were invariably ostracised.

A positive aspect of the facilities boycott was that it obliged us to build links with the townships. We thus played soccer on township fields, and attended social gatherings in the townships. This formed part of a broader argument that the university, positioned as it was cheek by jowl with the townships, needed to orient its teaching and research to grapple with social problems in its vicinity. In addition, the facilities of Rhodes needed to be accessible to the broader public, including the impoverished black residents of Grahamstown.

The boycott tactic centered very much around the politics of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS), which argued that there could be 'no normal sport in an abnormal society'. This view was extended to life at the university, such that there could be no normal university experience in an abnormal society. Participation in apartheid institutions was seen as legitimising those institutions, and the boycott strategy was meant to de-legitimise them.

It was a slogan that was popularised during the BC era, and which re-emerged with great force during the upsurge that followed the repression of BC organisations during 1977-8. The pendulum had swung towards Cape Town, starting with the Fattis and Monis strike and consumer boycott in 1979, and followed by the red meat strike and boycott in 1980. These events coincided with a massive high school student boycott throughout Cape Town in 1980, and which began to spread to other parts of the country. Politically active students at Rhodes, including many NUSAS students, were keen to express their solidarity with the strikes and boycotts.

Matters reached a head as the June exams approached. Black students were incensed by the increased brutality of state repression against the high school students, and argued that the boycott should extend to university students, as an act of solidarity. The counter-argument was that this would achieve little, and only result in students missing a year of study. They would be dispersed into their communities, and be deprived of the opportunity to assemble and plan effective solidarity action from their university base. This issue was debated fiercely, and late into the night. Eventually the latter position won out, to the relief of many students.

A site of critical engagement

The argument against a 'simplistic' boycott strategy came from the ANC/SACP perspective, which was forged during a long period of struggle that saw the boycott as a tactical weapon, and not a principle cast in stone. It should be used to achieve certain objectives under particular conditions, on the understanding that tactics of engagement might be more appropriate under other conditions. This was also the approach of the re-emerging trade union movement, which employed strikes and stayaways, as well as negotiations, to achieve its objectives.

The mere fact that we were at Rhodes University, under a racial permit, contradicted the simplistic boycott strategy, notwithstanding the convoluted arguments of SACOS and the NEUM that exempted places of learning from the boycott. Some of us were keen to use the resources Rhodes offered to further the struggle against apartheid capitalism. While we knew participation in the SRC was going to split black students down the middle, covertly using SRC and other university resources, through the support of our white allies in the SRC, to prosecute the struggle could still be pursued. This approach was adopted at all campuses where NUSAS and other leftist student groups had a strong presence, paving the way for an alliance between NUSAS and AZASO in the years to follow. University resources played a major role in supporting the Fattis and Monis and red meat consumer boycotts, and the Release Mandela Campaign. Copies of the Freedom Charter and other anti-apartheid material were easily printed at the university, and widely distributed.

NUSAS nationally produced impressive publications unmasking the Total Strategy of P.W. Botha, including analyses of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions. It also celebrated the revolutions in Angola and Mozambique. Many of these publications were banned, but that did not prevent their circulation on campus, alongside other radical publications such as *Work In Progress*, *The SA Labour Bulletin*, *Africa Perspective*, and others. All of these were collaborations between students and radical lecturers.

Despite its colonial trappings, Rhodes under Derek Henderson did, in large measure, try to live up to its liberal standards. It protested vigorously when we were arrested, sought to protect academic freedom zealously, and allowed a

diverse range of intellectual currents to run through its academic programmes. These included Marxism, particularly in Sociology, History and Political Studies. I was even allowed to introduce a Marxist perspective in my relatively conservative Economic History class.

On one occasion, when the Sociology head of department, Professor Higgins, failed my first year essay, calling it 'Marxist claptrap', he had the grace to concede later that he was in a bad mood when he marked it, and subsequently increased the mark to 65 percent (It was not a great essay, I was told by my Sociology lecturer Jacky Cock, who intervened on my behalf!). This revealed the degree of respect and power enjoyed by radical academics within particular spaces on campus, despite the fact that the student body on the whole (many of whom were ex-Rhodesians), as well as the administration (staffed by many ex-Rhodesians) was known to be more conservative than other English campuses.

Although all social science departments during those years were run by liberals of various hues, the space for radical, mainly Marxist, thought was opened for me in Journalism (Guy Berger), Sociology (Jacky Cock and Richard de Villiers) and Political Studies (Terence Beard), as well as History (Jeff Peires). Both the Liberal and Marxist perspectives, however, were anti-apartheid, which made me feel comfortable within those spaces of intellectual engagement I chose to attach myself to. In addition, despite my intellectual aversion to liberal capitalism, I was attracted to a libertarian interpretation of Marxism (i.e. a socialist vision of equality that contained substantial liberal freedoms).

The Rhodes Library contained many Marxist texts, from Marx's own works to the then-popular neo-Marxist world systems, dependency and under-development perspectives. Journals such as *Socialist Register*, *New Left Review*, *Monthly Review*, *Review of African Political Economy* and others were readily available, which surprised me. Many contained influential Marxist interpretations of the South African social formation, including those by well-known exiles such as Harold Wolpe and Martin Legassick. Of course, many texts were banned, but available under restriction – including Marx's more political writings, and more explicitly revolutionary work by writers like Joe Slovo, John Saul and others.

As students we delighted in attending lectures by liberal academics, and adding Marxist texts to the reading list, so that we could challenge them in class. The Rhodes Library was a favourite hangout, and we could not get enough of this fabulous literature we had never seen before.

Quite why the apartheid regime allowed the English universities such liberties remains a mystery to me. Was it because it served to maintain a façade of normality to the outside world, as a racially exclusive bourgeois democracy? Security police surveillance of universities was very evident, and they acted to detain activists who had become radicalised on campus. Yet they did not

venture to ban the study of Marxism, or Marxist interpretations of South African history, or prevent access to a range of Marxist texts and journals. However, they did ban all ANC and SACP literature, and other pro-Soviet literature. Did they feel that academic Marxism posed no threat?

If they did, then it was short sighted from their own point of view. As activists we were nourished by the access to radical thought of all kinds, and simply merged these with our understanding of the ANC and SACP. It deepened a non-Stalinist appreciation of Marxist politics that encompassed the re-emerging trade union movement, and undermined the narrow nationalist perspectives coming from black consciousness. Students and ex-students went on to play pivotal roles in the formation of community organisations, trade unions, the UDF and other radical organisations throughout the country. These organisations owe much of their independent radical outlook (embracing feminism, the environment, and participatory forms of democracy) to universities like Rhodes, which facilitated access to new intellectual practices occurring globally.

Carrying on the critical tradition

Rhodes University now operates in a very different environment. There is no anti-apartheid struggle, and students are in the main pre-occupied with getting a qualification that will secure them a good job. While this was always the intention of most students under apartheid, there was also a critical minority that used the university space primarily for subversive (anti-apartheid and/or anti-capitalist) purposes. Today universities are called upon to support socio-economic development within a neoliberal environment, where corporate needs and values are threatening their role as spaces of critical thought and engagement. New voices of subversion are emerging, but are still tiny and fragmented.

Can the critical tradition of certain spaces within the university (particularly within the social sciences) be maintained? So far there is little to suggest that government intends narrowing that space – at least not overtly. However, the threat comes from other sources. Given relatively low salaries, academics are tempted to supplement their income by performing consultancy work for government, the private sector or international agencies. Once they do that, they diminish or constrain their ability to engage critically with those with power – whether they be in government, dominant political parties, big business or international institutions such as the World Bank. Does this explain why academics today, in a much more liberal environment of free expression, seem less prominent as independent, critical public intellectuals than during the apartheid years?

But what does ‘being critical’ mean in today’s global and national environment? A critical perspective, I believe, does not have to mean criticising government as a matter of principle, or uncritically supporting

opposition parties and movements. The critical tradition, in the post-liberal or radical sense, has always meant articulating the interests of those without power – particularly the poor and marginalised – in the pursuit of social harmony based on social justice. In other words, it means speaking Truth to Power – *wherever* that power resides. Certainly, most power resides within governments and the corporate sector, but abuses of power may also occur amongst the leadership of organisations of the oppressed and marginalised, or within the university itself.

Rhodes University has shown that, despite its colonial trappings, it can play a role in developing a Critical Tradition. Hopefully, as it faces new challenges, it can find ways to play an even greater role. To conclude, I wish to quote from Albie Sach's Foreword to *Voices of the Transition*. He notes 'the twin anxieties that at times undermine critical intellectual discourse these days: fear of being considered anti-government and unpatriotic, and fear of being regarded as pro-government and sycophantic', and goes on to identify intellectuals 'who inhabit the huge and fascinating terrain in-between, and who are not afraid whom they might please and whom they might offend'.

This, I believe, captures the challenge of the Critical Tradition in the post-apartheid era.

Notes

1. Pieterse, E. and Meintjies, F., (eds.), 2004. *Voices of the Transition: The Politics, Poetics and Practices of Social Change in South Africa,* Johannesburg: Heinemann.

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Sociology – A Lot of Critical Thinking and a Few Great Women

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> [S]ociology's discursive formation has often demonstrated a relative lack of hierarchy, a somewhat unpoliced character, [and] an inability to resist intellectual invasions… (J. Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, 2000)

My Introduction to Sociology course at Rhodes University in the early months of 1978 will always be treasured. The lecturer was the Head of the Department, the late Professor Edward Higgins. To this day I, and I am sure many other former students, would insist that Professor Higgins repeated the same lecture in every class during the course, only altering the order of presentation and changing the emphases as he saw fit or felt. In fact, there seemed to be no logical order at all, as he darted from topic to topic with seeming wild abandon. But, as if under some uncontrollable compulsion, he constantly returned to two phrases that were to become forever etched on my mind and heart. These phrases were 'the sociological imagination', which I later realised he drew from the famous radical American sociologist C. Wright Mills; and 'debunking the conventional wisdom', that is, critically evaluating and undermining the dominant modes of thinking within a given human society. Professor Higgins was certainly no political radical – far from it – yet unintentionally he lit a fire in me that to this day remains alight.

As I continued at Rhodes doing majors in sociology and anthropology and then an Honours degree in sociology in 1981, it became increasingly clear to me that there was something inherently unique and special about sociology; this 'something' that I couldn't readily isolate and capture. But I certainly did not experience this 'something' elsewhere, for instance during my three years of anthropology. In fact, it was only last year after reading a recent work (quoted above) by the well-known sociologist John Urry that I started to come to grips with that 'something'. Urry argues that, relative to sociology, other social science disciplines are subject to 'more extensive forms of discursive normalisation, monitoring and policing'. The comparatively unmonitored character of sociology, and its broad and porous boundaries, makes learning this discipline and working as a sociologist an ongoing (almost unbridled) adventure of critical and passionate reasoning, at least potentially so. This formulation by Urry made my mind wander back to Professor Higgins and my initial taste of sociology, as the sociological imagination and the debunking motif give so much life and vigour to intellectual and discursive pursuits within sociology. Without doubt, sociology as a unique discipline played a big part in my devel-

opment as a critical thinker. Yet, as I argue below, this is not because of Rhodes University but despite Rhodes.

When I was initially invited to deliver a paper at the Critical Tradition Colloquium, I had mixed feelings. I had not returned to South Africa since my deportation in June 1987, after lecturing in the Sociology Department at Rhodes for three and half years. I had lost contact with all Rhodes colleagues and friends nearly fifteen years ago, and I had no profound desire to see them once again nor to set foot in the new South Africa. But, more importantly, I did not feel that I had anything meaningful to contribute to the Colloquium; or, perhaps more correctly, I was perplexed by the very notion of a 'critical tradition'. The term 'tradition' seemed too strong a term for what was probably an uneven and discontinuous and incoherent stream of critical thinking over a period of decades at Rhodes. The term is an historical representation that over-privileges qualities of consistency, direction and ordering in intellectual history. I certainly do not believe that critical reasoning at Rhodes was ever lived as a 'tradition'. I prefer the metaphor of a 'line' of critical thinking, and in particular a jagged and haphazard line written in pencil and not ink. I was also not particularly sure what 'critical' meant, as the term has rather ambiguous theoretical and political connotations. Whatever its connotation, though, the list of speakers planning to attend the Colloquium indicated, at least to me, that the term was being used in a nebulous and 'catch-all' manner. Lastly, I felt that by linking the Colloquium to the centenary celebrations, any history of critical thinking at Rhodes, including my personal history, would be 'captured' and made part of some glorified official Rhodes history. I was not particularly comfortable with this.

I do not believe that there was anything particularly inherent in Rhodes University as a tertiary educational institution under apartheid that generated spontaneously some kind of critical thinking. The space for critical thinking was not built into the structure of Rhodes as a social entity, somehow arising automatically irrespective of prevailing social and political conditions. Of course, it is not uncommon to assume or even assert that social and cultural forms are (unproblematic) natural and universal forms of existence. But the substantive reality of these forms is always socially and historically specific. Thus, like all 'space' in society, space for critical reasoning (including debunking and imagining) cannot be explained in terms of some theory of structural determination let alone determinism. It will also be shown below that a 'conditions are ripe' theory is unable to provide a full account of the space for critical pursuits. This space is socially constructed, constituted, contested, negotiated and managed. In other words, it entails a fair share of human agency and practice, as a comparison of two 'periods' at Rhodes University will show.

My first period at Rhodes (as a student) was during the immediate post-Soweto era. The Black Consciousness Movement and the trade union movement were active but the forms and levels of political mobilisation and

organisation were exceedingly limited. The most public display of protest against apartheid in Grahamstown – at least of the ones that I witnessed – was the solitary women of the Black Sash with their placards standing silently outside the church at the bottom of High Street. On campus it was just as dreary. White Rhodesians as a large minority of the student body seemed to dominate campus life, and there were only a few black students. Each year Rhodes students voted on whether to affiliate to the National Union of South African Students, and each year they voted 'No'. There were few opportunities for progressive-minded students to work off-campus in any meaningful political fashion. The most we could hope for was to belong to the student society called Delta, which published and distributed on a very irregular basis the *Grahamstown Voice or Voice of Rini* intended for a black readership. As Delta we were also engaged, and very naively I must say, in self-help development projects in the nearby Thornhill resettlement area in the Ciskei. The conditions at Rhodes at that time were not particularly ripe or conducive for critical thinking.

After completing my Honours at Rhodes in 1981 I did a MA in Sociology under Frederick Johnstone in Canada in 1982 and 1983 before returning in February 1984 to lecture in sociology. I immediately noticed the far-reaching and dramatic changes that had taken place in on-campus and off-campus politics in South Africa during the time I was away. Community mobilisation and organisation around the banner of the United Democratic Front had arisen, and progressive student activists – mainly black students now – increasingly aligned themselves with the extra-parliamentary movement. The national stay-away and the consumer boycott became the weapons of mass choice, and these activities became prevalent even in Grahamstown. There was a heightened state of political activism on campus with mass meetings and demonstrations that often drew the wrath of an ambivalent university administration under Vice-Chancellor Henderson. Despite state repression, notably in the form of detentions, the political mood on campus was upbeat and euphoric during this, my second stay, at Rhodes. During the mid-1980s it was difficult not to be some kind of critical thinker.

Yet as a student in sociology at Rhodes during the earlier period I received a heavy and regular dose of Marxist theory. For instance, our third year course on Sociology of Development dealt not so much with Parsonian modernisation and growth theories but rather with the underdevelopment, unequal exchange and world-system analyses of radical theorists. As well, courses on South African society centred around the materialist and class analyses of Legassick, Wolpe and Johnstone rather than the liberal 'convention wisdom' about race and racial domination. Meanwhile, in the Anthropology Department, there was a disdain and outright antagonism for Marxism amongst the staff, notably the department head. They were less concerned with the contradictions of South African capitalism than with what they saw as the irreconcilable contradictions

of Marxist theory. The point is that there were certain lecturers at Rhodes during my earlier period, in the Sociology Department but also less so in political studies, journalism and history, that sought to be at the forefront of critical analysis under apartheid conditions. They tried to break new theoretical ground, to be at the cutting edge of analytical thinking in the form of Marxism.

Notions of 'structural determination' and 'ripe conditions' do not provide a sufficient basis for understanding the emergence of these critical thinkers. I would suggest, perhaps somewhat un-sociologically, that a theory of greatness is more appropriate, particularly a theory of great women. In particular I think of Jaclyn Cock and Marianne Roux, with their contrasting personalities: the former sombre and the latter nothing short of eccentric. These women stood tall in the face of adversity, intimidation, and literal attacks on their homes, including the dynamite attack on Jacklyn's small abode. I do not know the intellectual history of these women, nor do I know their histories and experiences at Rhodes and who influenced and encouraged them. What I do know is that they sought quite consciously and with great conviction to open up and shape a space for critical reflection at Rhodes, or at least to maintain and broaden the space bequeathed to them by other earlier critical thinkers.

The quotation by Urry at the beginning of this paper suggests that sociology is necessarily a liberating discipline, as if somehow all sociologists are critical thinkers. In fact, Urry goes on to discuss how sociology 'has always skirted close to the edge of the [intellectual] academy (some would say over the edge) because of its proximity to various social movements'. This may be true, but it is not the full story, as the history of conservative, mainstream American sociology during much of the last century demonstrates (if anything, C. Wright Mills was one of the exceptions that proved the rule). Certainly, social movements enliven progressive thinkers and spur them on, as the extra-parliamentary movement did during the waning days of apartheid. But I am sure that a study of the personal biographies of such sociologists as Cock and Roux would show us that even in the face of adversity and isolation, critical thinking is possible. During the perplexing trauma of post-Soweto South Africa, these and other lecturers ensured that the line of critical thinking at Rhodes, always tenuous and frayed, was never completely broken. Thus, when I eagerly returned to Rhodes in 1984 to lecture in the Sociology Department, I was handed not just the keys to my office. I was given something much less tangible but much more precious: what the Colloquium refers to as a critical 'tradition'. I hope that, during my brief tenure as a sociology lecturer, I made a contribution (no matter how small) to ensure the continuation of that 'tradition'.

Nearly twenty years later apartheid South Africa is long gone, and so am I. I no longer live in South Africa nor am I an academic. But I now wonder about my former colleagues at Rhodes and the new generation of social science academics. With the end of apartheid and the intensity of the struggle against it,

have the sociological imagination and the critical passion also gone? Today is the age of global neoliberalism with its sub-regional hegemonic power in the form of contemporary South Africa. Because of this, it is more crucial than ever that academics at Rhodes adopt an unwavering critical approach to society and history, and not be co-opted into the hegemonic discourses of ruling classes and parties. It is important for them to increasingly recognise the significance of the progressive social movements in the country, and to sharpen their analytical insights by staying in close proximity to these movements.

I do not know if critical thinkers, whether in sociology or other social science disciplines, still ply their trade at Rhodes in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet, if the critical 'tradition' is alive and well, and I hope that it is, this serves to bear witness and testimony to the efforts of the great women (and a few good men) of the apartheid era.

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Who Was Alfred? A native gazing at Rhodes University from Makana's Kop

Shepi Mati
Democracy Radio
Cape Town

(In memory of Makana ka Nxele, Steve Biko, Siphiwo Mthimkhulu, Mthetheleli Gcina, Coletane Markam and all other men and women from this region and beyond who gave their lives resisting colonisation, conquest, settlement and the colonial violence that destroyed one way of life and also gave birth to Rhodes University.)

Colonial conquest, dispossession and the establishment of Rhodes University

> Wars, conquest and annexations provided one of the primary requisites of industrialism – an uprooted peasantry available at low cost for rough manual work. Peasant communities lost their self-sufficiency under the pressures resulting from the confiscation of their land and cattle, the imposition of taxes, the substitution of traders' merchandise for domestic products, the spread of education and Christianity. Wage earning become unavoidable for increasing numbers of men and women. Members of small agrarian societies had to acquire the discipline and skills of the industrial worker, accustom themselves to urban society, learn the laws and language of the conqueror. They learned the hard way: on the job, without formal instructions, by working under employers, supervisors and technicians who neither understood nor respected their language and customs. – Simons and Simons, 1983, pp.31-32.[1]

My Roots Go Deep into this Soil Yet...

My family roots lie deep into the soil of this region. I was born just a stone's throw away from here in eBhayi. One hundred years before my eyes saw the sun for the first time, my great grandfather was born in KwaMankazana, not far from here. The disintegration of the African communal subsistence life brought about by colonial conquest and dispossession scattered my family all over this region. Growing up in a small town called Adelaide, and in the farms bearing such names as Millness, Pearson, Pringle, Painter, and Moorcroft, I still carry childhood impressions and vivid memories chasing baboons away from the maize-fields, enjoying *umthubi*, the first milk of the cows that had just given birth and feasting on the tails of newborn lambs. One hundred years earlier African people from this region – the amaXhosa and the KhoiKhoi – were fighting to protect whatever little was left of their land and livelihood. They, are the ones that gave birth to me and shaped me long before I came to Rhodes. They, are my alma mater.

Here I experienced the disruption brought about by the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction under Bantu Education. Here I threw my

first stones at the symbols of apartheid. Here I graduated from the university of political resistance. Between 1980 when I began my matric and 1985 when I arrived here as a first year journalism and media studies student, I had worked as an activist in the Young Christian Movement, the Congress of South African Students, and as a wine steward and switchboard operator. This was my university. I spent three full months undergoing my graduation into manhood in a dormitory township called Mdantsane not far from here. There in the seventies my uncle had already been banished for picking up the spear against colonisation and oppression. The very colonisation and oppression that gave birth to Rhodes University.

My foreskin lies buried there. The university of initiation into manhood was an opportunity to reflect on my life, and to refine my sense of what is right and what is wrong, and my basic values and perspectives on life. My *ingcibi* was an ex-political prisoner called Mgabelo, a man who circumcised many young activists on Robben Island. Halfway through our initiation period, Mgabelo skipped the country only to emerge as a political commissar in Angola. A professor of sociology in this university by the name of Jan Coetzee was to later capture the story of Mgabelo in a little booklet called *Plain Tales from Robben Island*.

To place in context the multiple meaning that Rhodes University and the centenary celebrations hold for me, I will share some of my family history and other anecdotes with you. I'd like to tell you a family legend of how my great grandfather was nearly cast away by his mother during one of the wars of dispossession. The legend goes that when my great-grandfather, Daniso Daniel Mati, was still a tiny baby his mother was hiding with him in the caves. While hiding, others in the group urged her to 'throw away this thing, it's not even human yet and if it screams we'll all be located by the whites and be killed'. It is said that my great-grandfather's mother swung her arms with baby in hands three times about to throw him away when finally her motherly instinct took over and she ran away to hide elsewhere with her child. My great-grandfather almost paid with his infant life to realise the colonial dream which also gave birth to Rhodes. But, it took a woman, my great-great-grandmother, to defy her own people and at a certain level against the colonists' dreams. And from this lineage in the family, like that great-great-grandmother, numerous rebels, resisters and freedom fighters were born to sacrifice and contribute to the struggle for our liberation from apartheid. This, incidentally, also made it possible for one member of my family, me, to enter this institution. Thanks to the motherly instinct and the will to rebel, my great-grandfather lived and when his mother died in one of these wars, was raised by his brothers, to tell this tale to his children, grand-children and great grand-children. There is no way of verifying the authenticity ('where is the evidence?' a Rhodes Scholar might ask) of this legend but it represents the actual experience of my people under

British colonialism and will remain an integral part of my family history as I will pass it on to my children and children's children.

My family has lived in this region for three hundred years or more. In these open fields and built-up areas they undertook their initiation rituals, they fell in love here, exchanged lobola and were married here. Today many of their children wander the streets looking for work to feed their families. The graveyards of relatives are scattered throughout this region. They lived and died in this part of the world, the world of Rhodes, and yet I was the first generation of this old family from this region to have had an opportunity to enter this hallowed institution. And this, only in 1985, eighty years after this institution was established. Today I'm asked to join in the centenary celebration of Rhodes. I can only do it with an acute sense of conflict and ambiguity. I am a graduate of Rhodes, but my family over generations had to pay an enormous social price of me to enjoy this 'privilege'.

And yes, I am firstly a graduate of my people, who are known to generations of Rhodes scholars only as Alfred, Maria, Jane or John, names that are not theirs, but imposed upon them for the convenience of whites who refused to and fail to pronounce our names. Of course they were only concerned not with who we really were but with giving instructions to us as we slaved away building institutions like these. And later, much later, they granted us a qualified privilege allowing a select few into these hallowed corridors of knowledge. Indeed that privilege was nothing more than civilising the noble savage, and in my time attempting to create a middle class to serve as a buffer against an increasingly 'restless native'.

In Adelaide, the only form of employment was in seasonal labour, the railways, domestic service or contract labour.

While white babies received the best care black mothers could give, black babies were nurtured on lullabies – *Thula Thul' Thula Bhabha! Thula Thula! Thul'umam' uzaw'fika ekuseni!* – by their grandmothers. While young white women took their university studies here, young black women were learning to harvest oranges as seasonal labourers. While young white men responded to their army call-ups before coming here, young black men went underground for their university studies into the depths of the gold and coal mines of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. There is a song of lament by Stompi Mavi 'Lomlung': uTeba ngokwenene ndiyamzonda ngokuthath' isithandwa sam. Andisoze ndiy' eGoli. Uzubathuthe loliwe! Uzubathuthe loliwe! Andisoze ndiy' eGoli'.

The song says 'uzubathuthe loliwe!'. The steam train took them away from their loved ones. The steam train brought them back home, often penniless. Sometimes the mines swallowed them forever. Hugh Masekela captures the sorrow of these miners faraway from their families and loved ones. While the magnates of the Rand lived in glory and splendour, contributing to the coffers of Rhodes University year after year, young men from this region were either

deep underground creating wealth for this country or as old men busy dying from silicosis and black lung disease.

So when I left Rhodes University in November 1987, I vowed never to come back to this institution, to this town. A few years later I wrote this poem.

Graham's Town! Ghost town!
I thought I'd left you
But you haven't left my heart
Those wild jols
The noise of your student evenings
Those tormented beggars
The Church bells on solitary Sunday evenings
The spies we drank with in the pub
Hidden among the saints
Such loneliness
Such sadness.

Thus when I got here eighty four years after this institution was established I was still an *ikrwala*, newly graduated into manhood. The proud bare chest and headdress of a hundred years earlier was replaced by a London Fog jacket and a Scottish cap. The barefeet and armbands had given way to a pair of Crocket & Jones shoes and a Viella shirt. But the ochre on my face was still visible.

About six months earlier I had applied to study Journalism and Media Studies here, and to study Law at Wits University. For me my studies were linked to the long-term political choice I had made, the fight for social and self-emancipation. Journalism would provide me with tools always to seek the truth. Law would provide me with tools to fight for justice against unjust laws. Both these professions would enable me to continue, in everything I did, in the Harry Gwala sense giving expression to my gut instinct of fighting alongside the marginalised in their quest to make the world a better place for themselves and for their children. I still believe it is necessary and possible and believe this perspective still guides me in the choices I make in life today.

My first political responsibility on campus was to oversee a Black Students Movement (BSM) table just outside the student centre, enlisting new members. About sixteen years earlier, a group of black students had staged a walkout from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). And this happened on this very campus. Their grievance – white students in NUSAS unable to relate to the experience and challenges of black students. This walk-out was to be the prelude to the birth of SASO which produced the next generation of militants – Steve Biko, Mapetla Mohapi, (both died in detention), Terror Lekota, Saths Cooper, Strini Moodley, Johnny Issel, Barney Pityana and many others.

Under the slogan 'Black man you're on your own!', they were mobilised as a generation of young militants trying to reverse and undo the historical processes of conquest and settlement. The process of conquest for this region

has 1820 as the decisive moment with the arrival of the British settlers. And 1904 the establishment of Rhodes University as a centre of higher learning that we could only gaze at from Makana's Kop. So the Black Student Movement of 1985, while having shifted from BCM, were in a certain sense still trapped by many of the same constraints faced by our predecessors, and was still guided by the strategic perspective of the 1968 black student activists – that of mobilising the oppressed, most of whom have yet to enter this institution even today, ten years after democracy.

As black students in this institution mobilised into the BSM, we had to contest on a daily basis for our right to higher education. I remember very well a meeting we had to claim our share of the sports levy. We argued that since we refused to participate in official sports codes and had established a non-racial sports body, we had a right to our fair share of the sports levy all students are required to pay on registration.

Then there was something that none of us could verify but was generally consistent with apartheid. You see we had come here under a permit. And the Separate Amenities Act ensured that we could not go to the same entertainment facilities with our fellow white students. So we understood that a waiver had been given under the law to allow blacks to go to the same cinemas as whites but only on condition that they are accompanied by whites who must outnumber them two to one. As a result most of us ended up spending many precious hours in the pub here on campus as no special permission was required among drunkards.

In my time here a serious attempt at co-option of an educated black middle-class element was central to the apartheid regime's strategy. This system then also produced a new breed of black student – 'the private school graduate' – who spoke English in a very strange way that if you'd turn your back for a moment you'd be forgiven to think you were hearing a white English-speaking youngster. So much had changed since 1968 yet so little too. This was a new challenge for the BSM – how to organise this new type of black student and get them actively involved in the cause of freedom and in identifying with the community from where they came. You see the political consciousness of the black middle class those days began and ended mostly with colour frustrations. Today in many respects, it is this social stratum which has benefited the most from political freedom.

'Fascist' Raids

I had hardly been in Grahamstown for a few days when a national raid of UDF activists took place. It was this raid that led to the treason trial of Terror Lekota and other comrades in Delmas. These raids represented an unbroken tradition of conquest and contesting struggles for liberation.

As usual the 'fascists' arrived in great numbers and I was woken by loud bangs on the doors and windows. In an instant, I had dashed to my luggage and

grabbed some of the politically explosive books and hidden them inside pots and pans in one of the kitchen cupboards. Once inside, the fascists combed every little corner of the house. Meticulously they went through each item of my luggage and took away everything that contained words on paper. Such was their fear of the word.

Now among my items was a singular article. It was photocopied from the *African Communist*, a banned journal of the then-banned South African Community Party. In order to hide what I was photocopying, I had placed a newspaper on top of it. It so happened that the photocopy came out surrounded by the words 'Omo Washes Brightest' in big and bold font. Beneath this, and in small font characteristic of the *African Communist* in those days, was the title of the article by Joe Slovo, 'J. B. Marks: A Communist, Freedom Fighter and Man of the People'. Can you believe it that the cop who was making an entry of all my items entered 'Omo Washes Brightest' as one of the articles taken from my possession? Such is the consequence of the fear of ideas. And Rhodes University usually took a 'don't get yourselves in trouble' attitude to developments like this. And if *in loco parentis* meant acting like and in the interest of parents, then this institution failed many young men and women who just could not understand the meaning of academic freedom outside freedom of the individual and for society.

A few days after this incident I penned the following poem:

On the 19th of February[2]
That morning in Grahamstown
I crossed paths with
– strange armed men
hunting for my comrades
searching for banned literature
looking for bloody communists
inside the torn
pockets of my shirt
and trousers.

As you can hear by now, I'm not a poet. But the situation those days transformed many of us to perform extraordinary things we ordinarily thought incapable of. I am glad that the veteran writer and poet James Mathews, once remarked 'when Apartheid is gone, we'll see who is the real poet! We will then separate poetry from stringing a series of Amandlas and Vivas and declare this protest poetry'.

Among the NOBODIES

Then there were days and nights of booze and philosophising. We would stretch the lazy afternoons into evenings and beyond drinking beer – if we were well off financially, otherwise it was cheap wine as usual, punch and anything

goes. My favourite spot was the beer hall in the coloured township. Here, I always became aware of my privilege as the university student among the salt of the earth – men and women shorn of all but the bare minimum of honour and dignity. I remember once I wrote a poem about how these wretched of the earth looked as if they'd been resuscitated against their will to endure another painful term of life. These were descendents of the KhoiKhoi and amaXhosa. And in their veins ran the blood the Scottish, Dutch and other European working men.

But amongst them were Latin graduates, flower arrangers, shepherds without sheep, and men of the cloth. I do not forget the pickpockets, the tongue-twisters, the spies and ex-convicts who could slit a throat at a drop of a hat and smile while closing an Okapi. To all who dared to tread its hallowed entrance the beer hall bared the arsehole of apartheid.

Among the friends I acquired in Grahamstown, one stands out – tall and poetic. We simply knew him as Madala. Today he is known as Eddie Maloka and is the Director of the Africa Institute of South Africa based in Tshwane. I remember once at the height of the state of emergency, anyone wondering around the streets of this town at night, including students, had to carry a special permit from the police. You can imagine how valuable this permit was for those of us in search of drinking holes after dark. So this one evening myself and Madala were casually walking and deep in discussion about the challenges facing the South African revolution. Suddenly a white combi slowly drove past us. Instantly, and with a quick glance between us, we recognised it as a police van. We knew it would make a U-turn somewhere in front, but we were still a few blocks away from the house we were going to sit for that evening. But if we walked at our current pace, we could make the house before they reached us and we'd lock ourselves in. This was the most realistic course of action. But alas, the next minute I turned to look around, there goes Madala striding away like a giraffe running from a hound of hyenas. Suddenly there I was, in complete solitude, and in front of me a police van surely making a U-turn. Hey, I picked up my pace straight into the house and locked myself in. Then my worries turned to my comrade. After an hour I received a call that he had arrived safe and sound back on campus. This was the life we lived here, always on the edge, sometimes by design but most times determined by the powers that be. And this was captured in a poem by Madala which became a signature tune for all our cultural activities on campus: 'If I die!'.

The hands of the apartheid spies we rubbed shoulders with here on campus are equally stained with the blood of Mathew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkonto, Sicelo Mhlawuli and Fort Calata as their actual murderers. They died not far from here, and here we refused to let them die.

Although the institution tended towards complacency and an attitude of 'let's not cause trouble' towards apartheid, among the lecturers and professors were outstanding individuals distinguished by their courage and commitment. I will just mention a few.

Tools of Analysis

Fred Hendricks was my first year sociology lecturer. I had a problem of short-sightedness which I only discovered once back inside a lecture theatre. Thank God this was only a physical short-sightedness, and not a political issue. Anyway as a result of this defect, I sat right in the first front row. Now I could hear behind me whispers of my fellow classmates doing guesswork about the identity of our lecturer. 'He looks Portuguese to me!', one would say with steadfast conviction. 'No I think he's Lebanese!', another would chip in another. 'Hay kona, he looks white to me!'. All along Fred the 'Greek' was pacing up and down getting us to grasp the basic tools of sociological analysis.

I don't know if any of those classmates of mine ever grasped the essence of this discipline called sociology. But they certainly were occupied with the spirit of higher learning and the quest for truth in their own tutorial on the politics of the identity of our lecturer. Such is what our system produced that first year students were more occupied with their lecturer's identity instead of the basic tools of sociological analysis. Fred was later to distinguish himself as, to borrow the words of Che Guevara, 'someone who risked his skin to prove his platitudes' when he spirited Lulu Johnson, an escaped detainee, out of Grahamstown into the Transkei. At the time of the state of emergency, and without a passport, very few people would have taken the risks.

A Global Perspective

Then there was African Political Studies. Marian Lacey was a committed political activist and academic. With her trademark hoarse voice, she pushed us as far as we could go in understanding political and comparative developments in Latin America and Southern Africa. I remember one lecture we had in which she played the tape of the last time the President of the People's Republic of Mozambique, Samora Machel, sang and chatted to the people of Zambia in Lusaka International Airport on his way home to Mozambique. He was not to arrive home. Lured onto a hill in Mbunzini on the border between South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique, President Machel together with his entire entourage save one bodyguard died in a tragic plane crash.

This was to us a singular blow sustained by all freedom fighters in southern Africa and throughout the world. And most of us became ardent scholars of the writings of Samora Machel.

Whose History?

Perhaps one of the most critical moments for Rhodes University was the case of African History. Julian Cobbing was one of the most progressive historians this institution has ever had. I can still see him pacing up and down in our African History seminar, only to lash out at a poorly formulated response to a challenge he'd issued earlier. 'You're all products of Bantu Education!. Look at this insti-

tution – directly opposite us is the Anglican Cathedral, where they instill the fear of the Almighty. If you slip out of that religious indoctrination, then over here Rhodes University awaits you to take off where the Church failed. If this ideological indoctrination fails and you come out a rebel, to our left just a few metres from here are the headquarters of the Special Branch. They'll deal with you, they'll panel-beat you to conformity. Now if they also fail, directly opposite them is the Supreme Court. There they'll finally deal with you by removing you from society'. This, he called the quadrangle of Fascism. But some of us believed in the truth and justice of our quest for freedom and believed this 'quadrangle of Fascism' would perish at the hands of our efforts and that of thousands of others throughout the country. And I believe that also Julian knew this as he alerted us to the institutions of consent and coercion that we were up against.

F.W. de Klerk was Minister of Education. His cabinet engineered a political decision to cut back on funding to institutions of higher learning, especially because these funds tended to prop up causes and programmes regarded as 'hot beds of radicalism'. I remember the battles we waged to retain the African History course under the onslaught of conservative liberals who included the Head of Department, Prof Rodney Davenport. Their contention was to effectively drop African History under the pretext that it was undersubscribed, while retaining a British History component at Honours level. This was how power defined Rhodes. Naturally we felt insulted and ridiculed. It was like rubbing salt on a fresh wound of colonial occupation. They had financial resources and power, we had ideas, songs, history, a vision and the will to struggle. And of course we had on our side Julian Cobbing.

> The victors, who invoke the right of inheritance to justify their privilege, impose their own memory as the only memory allowed. Official history, the wardrobe where the system keeps its old costumes, deceives by what it says and even more by what it keeps silent. This parade of masked heroes reduces our dazzling reality to a small, ridiculous show: the victory of the rich, the white, the male and the military. – Eduardo Galiano.

Clandestine Political Classes

One of the things we did here to arm ourselves with ideas and to build a cadre for the movement for liberation was to set up clandestine political study groups. We had sessions here on campus and in the township. Out of these sessions, emerged such leaders as Langa Zitha, a trade unionist and communist and now MP, a *pantsula* called Mtswala who I last heard went to organise underground for the Mineworkers Union, Nothemba Kulati who today takes care of the wounded in spirit and flesh and is active in the trade union movement. And of course other young township activists who were to play a leading role in the struggle for liberation. While most other students were taking a Sunday afternoon nap, or busy drinking away their frustrations at the pub, we'd be buried in a room somewhere at a hostel or in a backyard room in the township

discussing and analysing *The Communist Manifesto*, 'The Road to South African Freedom', 'The Strategy and Tactics of the ANC', the Freedom Charter, 'The Preface and Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', Gramsci and many others. We drew inspiration from the analytical mind of Govan Mbeki, and the organisational abilities of Wilton Mkwayi. We were inspired by our forebears who had already taken up the spear in defence of personal and social liberation.

Makana's School

Just over two hundred years before I arrived here for my journalism studies, a left-handed child was born somewhere in this region. His people named him Nxele, the left-handed. To the Boers he was known as 'Links'. And the British corrupted this to 'Lynx'. To me, Makana ka Nxele defines the history of this region more profoundly than one hundred years of Rhodes University.

He grew up roaming these hills. Makana was to become one of the greatest guerilla strategists of the anti-colonial wars of the 19th century in this region. He was a leading general of the War of Resistance of 1818-1819 under Chief Ndlambe. The colonial historians call this the Fifth Kafir War. There's an African saying, which goes 'Until the lions have their own historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter'. Ten years before this university was established, one of the arch-colonialists of the time and a man after whom this institution became known, led the annexation of the last independent African territory, Pondoland.

Thomas Pringle, a man who was far ahead of his times, writes of the visits Makana would pay Van Der Lingen, the settler army chaplain in this very town to engage him in polemics on *their* God versus *our* Dalidiphu. This represented the battle of ideas between the worldview of the indigenous people and that of the colonialists. But thanks to the cannon, this battle was decided in favour of British colonialism. And today thanks to Rhodes University, the WMCM (white middle-class male) paradigm keeps mutating. Otherwise how are we to explain the Rhodes-Mandela Scholarship? Someone once said 'the more things change, the more they remain the same.' How true, it would appear, of this institution.

The visits of Makana took place before 1818. Seven years prior, the colonial administration had driven the Africans beyond the Great Fish River. The military campaign was led by none other than Colonel John Graham, a man after whom this very town is named. This is how Thomas Pringle captures this campaign of plunder and subjugation:

> A large force of military and of Burgher militia was assembled for that purpose under the command of Colonel Graham... Mr Brownlee mentions that the Caffers envinced extreme reluctance to leave a country which they had occupied the greater part of the century, and which they considered as by right their own... The hardships, also, of abandoning their crops of maize and millet, which were at the time nearly ripe, and the loss of which will

> subject them to a whole year of famine, was urgently pleaded. But all remonstrance was vain: not a day's delay was allowed them. They were driven out with considerable slaughter, and in a spirit of stern severity, which, although partly attributable to the provocation given by the treacherous slaughter of Stockenstrom and his followers, admits but of partial palliation... I have now lying before me a journal, kept during that campaign by my friend Mr Hart, who was then a lieutenant in the Cape Regiment. From this it appears that the Caffers were shot indiscriminately, women as well as men, wherever found, and even though they offered no resistance.

This is the context in which the War of Resistance of 1819 under the command of Makana ka Nxele is to be understood. Pringle again:

> In the early morning of April 23, 1819, 10 000 warriors, led by Makana, made an attack on Grahamstown. But the white troops were in a camp surrounded by a stockade, and cannon were mounted at the corners. Makana's spearmen were mown down by grapeshot and finally driven back. Thus Makana failed to take Grahamstown.

About two months ago in June of 2004, justice was restored to the memory of this war with the naming of the planes of eGazini where these brave soldiers of resistance fell as a National Heritage Site. These men were prepared to risk their skins for others. Their spirit of selflessness inspired many generations of freedom fighters including those who emerged from within the belly of this institution – Guy Berger, Devan Pillay, Ian Mgijima and many others. As for Makana, his own spirit of self sacrifice was to be demonstrated in the days and nights following the counter-attack of the settler army.

> Three months later a white army crossed the Fish River and drove the Xhosa back as far as the Kei River. Many of the Africans were killed, and all their remaining cattle were captured and their homes burned. But one day Makana suddenly appeared in the English camp and gave himself up. 'People say I have occasioned this war', he said. 'Let me see whether delivering myself up to the conquerors will restore peace to my country.

And so Makana was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. The historians have recorded that some days after his surrender, a delegation of his *amaphakati* came to the camp of the English commander, Colonel Willshire. They came to ask that Makana should be set free and they offered themselves and other leading men as prisoners in exchange. According to Thomas Pringle, the words of their spokesman were taken down by Captain Stockenstrom, who was present. The words spoken by these men are immortalised as the clearest and most eloquent explanation of the causes of the war and the feelings of Makana's followers. Here they are:

> Speaking with dignity and with great feeling, the black man said: 'The war, British chiefs, is an unjust one. You are striving to extirpate a people whom you forced to take up arms. When our fathers and the fathers of the Boers first settled in the Suurveld [that is, west of the Fish River] they dwelt together in peace. Their flocks grazed on the same hills; their herdsmen smoked together out of the same pipes; they were brothers... until the herds of the Xhosas increased so as to make the hearts of the Boers sore. What those covetous men could not get from our fathers for old buttons, they took by force. Our fathers were men; they loved their cattle; their wives and the children lived upon milk; they fought for their

> property. They began to hate the colonists who coveted their all, and aimed at their destruction. Now, their kraals and our fathers' kraals were separate. The Boers made commandos on our fathers. Our fathers drove them out of the Suurveld; and we dwelt there because we had conquered it. There we were circumcised; there we married wives; and there our children were born. The white man hated us, but could not drive us away. When there was war we plundered you. When there was peace some of our bad people stole; but our chiefs forbade it. Your treacherous friend, Ngqika, always had peace with you; yet when his people stole, he shared in the plunder. Have your patrols ever found cattle taken in times of peace, runaways slaves or deserters, in the kraals of our chiefs? Have they ever gone into Ngqika's country without finding such cattle, such slaves, such deserters, in Ngqika's kraals. But he was your friend and you wished to possess the Suurveld. You came at last like locusts [referring to the attack in 1818]. We stood, we could do no more. You said, 'Go over the Fish River… this is all we want.' We yielded and came here... We lived in peace. Some of our bad people stole, perhaps; but the nation was quiet… the chiefs were quiet. Ngqika stole... his chiefs stole... his people stole. You sent him copper; you sent him beads; you sent him horses, on which he rode to steal more. To us you sent only commandos.
>
> We quarreled with Ngqika about grass… no business of yours. You sent a commando. You took our last cow... you left only a few calves, which died for want, along with our children. You gave half of what you took to Ngqika; half you kept to yourselves. Without milk... our corn destroyed... we saw our wives and children perish... we saw that we must ourselves perish, we followed therefore, the tracks of our cattle into the Colony. We plundered and we fought for our lives. We found you weak; we destroyed your soldiers. We saw that we were strong; we attacked your headquarters, Grahamstown... and if we had succeeded, our right was good, for you began the war. We failed... and you are here.
>
> We wish for peace; we wish to rest in our huts; we wish to get milk for our children; our wives wish to till the land. But your troops cover the plains, and swarm in the thickets, where they cannot distinguish the man from the woman and shoot all.
>
> You want us to submit to Ngqika. That man's face is fair to you, but his heart is false. Leave him to himself. Make peace with us. Let him fight for himself... and we shall not call on you for help. Set Makana at liberty; and Islambi, Dushani, Kongo and the rest will come to make peace with you at any time we fix. But if you will still make war, you may indeed kill the last man of us... Ngqika shall not rule over the followers of those who think him a woman.[3]

In Makana's attempt to escape from Robben Island he drowned on the rocks of Bloubergstrand. Since then there has been a saying in the Eastern Cape,'Ukuza kuka Nxele'. Hope deferred, dreams deferred, and with it, liberation. That was the time of my great-great-grandmother. This is the mortar with which this institution was built!

This institution could have chosen to take sides with those in bondage, as a gesture of true pursuit of freedom. But it chose to defer this role.

Now that the majority of the citizens of this country have political power, what is Rhodes University doing to study the wars of dispossession of the 19th century? Now that the academic community is free to rethink, what is Rhodes University doing to study the legacy of Makana ka Nxele and others?

Where are the chronicles of the black men who built this university, brick by brick? Where are the records of the women who cleaned these hostels and

cooked the food in these dining halls? Where are the stories of those who maintained these landscapes and gardens? Where is the story of Alfred?

For every geologist who graduated in this institution, black men and women had to make sure he had his breakfast at 7 o'clock every morning before lectures while other black women and men carried sealed correspondence on the age, aesthetics and social meaning of rock art between offices.

For every lawyer, black men and women had to ensure the cutlery and dishes in which she ate her breakfast were washed and her lunch meal was cooked and ready in time.

For every linguist black men and women had to ensure his lecture theatre was spotless by the time he arrived for his first lecture of the day.

For every pharmacist black men and women had to make sure her laundry was done and pressed every week.

For every sociologist black men and women had to ensure his bed was made every morning.

And yes as our anthropologists were sitting in the shade of trees pruned and on lawns trimmed by black men and women, discussing theories of gazing at the native, they hardly pondered who Alfred was.

While Rhodes produced these scholars, those who laboured for Rhodes were earning peanuts. While Rhodes graduates led expensive lifestyles and drew five digit cheques, the life and labour of Rhodes workers were forever cheap. This is the social cost of Rhodes University. This is the price paid by black men and women for Rhodes University to celebrate its centenary today. It is on the backs of these nobodies, these nameless men and women that every young man and woman graduated in this institution from 1904 to the present. The greatest tribute is truly and honestly due to these men and women who laboured to make Rhodes University complete each day of its life looking neat and well-fed. They bore the greatest social cost for the survival of this institution, yet for more than half of its 100 years, this institution could not even allow their children to set foot in its hallowed lecture theatres as students. And when it did, for most of that time they had to attend on a special permit issued only if their so-called homeland universities did not offer the particular course they intended studying.

> Before you say I must stop politicking, Istvan Meszaros has something to say to you: Politics affects the life of everybody... politics is far too important to be left to the politicians, even the most far-sighted of them.[4]

A Luta Continua!?

What is the challenge facing all of us today, especially those of us who are associated with this institution? This for me is to build new institutions committed to a critical appreciation of the where we come from, a dialogical and analytic engagement with where we are now, and placing before all of us a compelling vision of a future based on solidarity and caring. And to build this

new institution requires a courageous leadership with a bold political will and a commitment to transparency and tolerance of difference. There are no holy cows in this battle for reconstruction and redefinition.

Let us use this occasion to reflect honestly and critically. What does this institution mean for ordinary men and women? What do we leave behind these hills when it's time for us to graduate and go away to join the wabenzi or to run our family factories? What scars does Rhodes inflict on me that I will carry for much of my life?

Knowledge institutions are powerful institutions. And just as we need to redefine power elsewhere, within universities also, we need to redefine power and knowledge. Or as Edward Said says about the role of the intellectual in society 'Always Speak Truth to Power!'. Only once this begins to happen will we take pride in this institution.

A New Beginning

I began by locating myself in this region. What does this institution, this place mean to me today? For this region, this institution could choose to walk alongside the marginalised as they struggle to contest the terms of political power and search for substance in democracy. Or it could choose to serve the interests of those who see institutional democracy as an end in itself. While I was a student here, we were very suspicious of the market and of consumerism. Today there are some among us who want us to believe that the market is a new God and consumerism is something honorable to aspire to. Just as this region became a hotbed of resistance to colonial conquest and apartheid, it could become a seedbed for a more just and humane Africa based on caring and solidarity.

It is my sincere hope that this presentation contributes to the critical tradition of those who experienced Rhodes and its predecessors.

How critical is your tradition? What is there to celebrate?

What is the present generation of students doing in relation to the communities around this area?

So why not Makana University? And who was Alfred? I remember in one of my years as a student here at Rhodes picking up a copy of a Jubilee Edition of the *Rhodean* around campus. I still have the publication somewhere. Though I cannot remember all the detail of that publication, one thing stuck with me. Among all the pictures of the white people, there was a solitary picture of a black worker with a caption that went something like this: 'Alfred. He started as a labourer in 1915 and is a headwaiter at Jan Smuts Hall'. That was about all, no other name, no family name, let alone a clan name. I thought of those photographs I still see in coffee-table books, 'Anonymous Xhosa male in the late nineteenth century', or 'Xhosa tribesman on his way home to die, he served us well'.

Notes

1. Simons, J. and Simons, R. *Class and Colour in South Africa: 1850-1950*. London, IDAF, 1983. pp. 31-32.
2. 1985. And the house I was temporarily staying in was shared by a group of white activists, including the notorious apartheid spy Olivia Forsyth. And the occasion was a national raid on UDF activists which led to the Delmas Treason Trial.
3. Roux, E. *Time Longer Than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*, pp.14-16.
4. 'The Need for a Radical Alternative: Interview with Istvan Meszaros', by Elias Kanellis in *Monthly Review*, Volume 51 No 8, page 4. http://www.monthlyreview.org/100kanel.htm

African Sociological Review, 9, (1), 2005, pp.211-233.

When Rhodes met Mandela: History breaks down into images, not into stories[1]

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Introduction

1987. I left, the way I arrived. But heading in a different direction. As I stuck my thumb out near Makana's Kop, I realised Rhodes University, was 'only the outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one state to the next ... '[2] On the opposite hill, the 1820 Settlers Monument loomed.

I could not get copies of the pieces of paper that I had accumulated over the years at the university. I did have in a sealed envelope a letter of recommendation from Professor Edward Higgins, head of the Department of Sociology. I did know its contents but was hoping it would indicate to a prospective employer that I was a suitable boy. The trajectory sketched out by Higgins was one travelled by many, many university students in South Africa in the 1980s. Often though different impulses influenced how one got to travel on a particular road to '*politics*'.

What happened in the narrow stretch of turf named Rhodes University in the previous eight or so years?

I suppose it is the conceit of every generation to think that *it* was the one that affected, if not quite changed, its *alma mater* most. I am not so sure what change means any more and will leave the theorists, comrades and historians to talk in objective terms about structures of governance, transformation and so on.

While I allude to these issues, personally, I can only make sense of the eighties at Rhodes by talking about feelings. I say this upfront because if 'history is a narrative constructed from the perspective of a present... then what one chooses to focus on in the past, what elements one privileges... are largely determined by present preoccupations'.[3]

The Beginning

> What makes up a life; events or a recollection of events?
> How much of recollection is invention?[4]

I arrived in Port Elizabeth in February 1979. Waited at the airport for the Leopard Express to Grahamstown. Engaged a brother and sister from Durban also en-route to Rhodes University. We talked rugby. I never played but knew the game. My father had taken me as a kid to Kings Park. Often there were not

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have known MR ASHWIN G DESAI for the last nine years as an undergraduate student, as a post-graduate student and as a tutor and teaching assistant in this Department. Mr Desai is one of the most affable and charming young men I have met in my long career. In some ways, he is the personification of the old medieval motto, viz., "Firmiter in re sed suaviter in modo". However, Mr Desai is a man of strong, unshakable convictions which he publicly defends and for which he has twice suffered imprisonment. Yet, this experience has not embittered him or taken the fire out of his opposition to the evils and injustices flourishing in South African society.

As far as the discipline of Sociology was concerned, Mr Desai proved to be one of our better students - well above the class average. He obtained three degrees at this University, viz., B.A., B.A.(Honours) and M.A. In addition, during this period, Mr Desai was active in students affairs and, in times of unrest, he emerged as one of the more credible student leaders.

Because Mr Desai is a man of wide and deep sympathies with a keen appreciation of the lot of the underdog, he sometimes fails to come to grips with the profounder aspects of Sociology. I have in mind, in particular, his Master's thesis which was a rushed job, so much so that it was returned to him for substantial revision and editing. It was not question of Mr Desai not being the master of his subject-matter, but rather it was a case of Mr Desai having too many irons in the fire and devoting insufficient time and attention to this one specific task. Like many student activists, the intellectual life had to take, so to speak, a back seat.

I regard Mr Desai as an academic investment; he is a man of undoubted intellectual potential and I consider him capable of pursuing doctoral studies provided he puts sociology first and relegates political activism - no matter how worthy the causes - to a very low rung on the ladder of priorities.

Like all of us, Mr Desai is a man of his time, sub-culture and chronological age. As is the case with so many committed and concerned young sociologists, Mr Desai tends to believe in the totally redemptive power of politics and he would do well to ponder Lord Shaftesbury's remark that "Politicians are chameleons and take the colour of a passing cloud". Unfortunately, many young sociologists, like Mr Desai, give their prime loyalty to audiences or values outside the academic community and fail to develop a professional interest in, and approach to, sociology, forgetting that the line between sociology and ideology is often an extremely thin one. There is no doubt in my mind that when Mr Desai realises that rhetorical sloganeering is no substitute for sober analysis and, furthermore, when Mr Desai finally grasps the fact that sociology is not the ideological ammunition dump for the revolution, he will undoubtedly make progress as a sociologist. Indeed, he has the ability to become a good sociologist - it all depends on what he regards as his priorities.

Professor E Higgins

E August 1987

more than five or six of us in the non-white section. My father's heroes, mine too, were the 1974 Lions. I kept that particular sentiment to myself during the conversation.

The Leopard Express arrived. The driver, an old black man, told me blacks were not allowed on the microbus. The brother and sister looked away. A sympathetic white man dropped me on the freeway. I felt nothing really.

I had no idea how far Grahamstown was. About thirty kilometers was my estimation. Evening was fast turning to night, as I stuck my thumb out again and fixed a smile to my face.

It was around this spot that a friend, Anusha, was, a few years later, to be hit by a car while hitchhiking. By the time of her accident, we had stopped talking. She had participated as a beauty contestant in Rag. She had made a brave speech about racism and apartheid. But it did not matter. Black students boycotted Rag. She had crossed the line. The warmth and love she had given me in the short time we had spent together were, in a word, erased. Days before her death, our paths crossed on campus. I passed her without a hint of recognition.

Little did I know, as a car slammed on brakes next to me, that Rhodes would be a laboratory of (ex)communications.

Little did I know that the politics of the time provided the perfect cover for my inability to respond to affection in relationships with women. How I struggled when a 'lover' cuddled up. 'How dare she mix sex with intimacy?', I kept unconsciously asking. Was it a throwback to my childhood? Was it the 'street-corner' of my teenage years that spoke about women with such loathing?

I jumped in the back seat. My bladder needed relief. But for thirty kilometers, I could hold on. Thirty, forty, fifty kilometers flashed past. I asked in soft voice: 'How far is Grahamstown?' 'Another fifty kilometers'

I thought I was going to be robbed. They seemed like nice people. My dagger was in the bag in the boot. My bladder was straining. My mother likes to tell my friends about how I would never wet the bed as a kid. I would jump off the bed and pee on the floor and jump back into bed. I burst into the Adamson House Common Room, looking for the toilet.

Some older guys approached me. 'Do you drink?' 'A little, sometimes', I stammered. A half a bottle of Vodka was thrust into my hands.

From the age of 14, in Himalaya Hotel, I was a regular at the Supper Club. The plan always worked. When a slow song was played and the couples closed their eyes, I would work the tables. Gulping. At lunchtime on Friday, the breaks at Chatsworth High were longer because Muslim students went to Mosque. We sat in the bushes outside Pelican and drank a bottle of Brandy Ale: R1.08. At the age of 16, I had jumped over the wall into Auntie Ivy's shebeen in Leopold Street and stole her brandy and drank it by myself. At 17, I was a waiter at Admiral Hotel. There, the patrons would insist on giving me a drink as a tip. I, who had spent the last five years in a stupor, was being asked, do I drink? I

drank it all. My granny always said 'first impressions are important, my boy'. Summoning as much nonchalance as is possible with one's legs crossed, I asked, 'Is there more?'

'Non-white' male students were segregated into Adamson House. Women went to Prince Alfred. About 30 males that increased to just over 50 in 1980. This arrangement was as fundamental to subsequent political eruptions on campus as the works of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. Here we had a ready-made platoon, barracks and rear-base.

The (Class) room

There were lectures to attend. Sometimes. In the classroom, things were generally dull. In Industrial Sociology, we had a guy called Coetzee. Not J.M., so the young women students were safe. Our minds were not, though. He read from his notes in a voice that seemed designed to cover his Afrikaans accent. Lecture after lecture was devoted to an interminable discussion of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Parsonian functionalism with its emphasis on self-equilibrating systems, value consensus and neglect of the central issue of who holds power. Few of us felt self-actualised by any of this, nor did it all quite fit together. Jackie Cock really challenged. She taught institutions. Education. How do class and race hierarchies reproduce themselves? We met in Jackie's class with Bernstein's elaborated and restricted codes, J. W. B. Douglas's 'The Home and the School'. They fed directly into where we came from, what we were up against. Jackie Cock is still applying those now forgotten principles of sociology. Challenging in the law courts and in the streets the vestiges of a narrow sexuality, an activist in the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and exposing the oxymoron of corporate social responsibility.

Mervyn Frost in politics was the antithesis. While professing to be a liberal and thus open to new ideas, he was ideologically myopic – displaying a virulent anti-Marxism. He got arrested in a march. Made a painting, I think of it. It was his first and last march. Later, as many of us grew obsessed with replicating the Bolshevik Revolution in South Africa, combing through and debating the *April Thesis* for years on end in suitable conspiratorial tone and dress, his cynicism towards populist rhetoric was to become a valuable reference point. I am sure somewhere in Middle England he must smile at the prospect of all the 'Bolsheviks' in his class that now peddle their wares at the World Bank and give sage advice as directors of merchant banks. The aging but still imposing Terence Beard read from *Leviathan* – the 'war of all against all', of life being 'nasty, brutish and short'. It was so relevant to the South Africa of the 1980s. But in Beard's clipped Oxford accent, it was difficult to stay alert. But to be fair, many of us were not particularly interested. Hobbes was proposing that you can have elections, but then the people must give the person (even a parliament) total power. Absolutism through democratic means that brings people together into a single unit, a Commonwealth: the Leviathan. Leviathan, a scary, mighty

sea-creature in the Book of Job, whose path you should never cross. The Leviathan – 'one person of whose acts a great multitude... have made themselves every one the author'. We had no idea that the future (Thabo Mbeki and Essop Pahad), was round the corner.

Althusser became quite a presence too. Keyan Tomaselli had some influence on this. At first, many of us became interested in this challenge to economic determinism. But were there real differences between structural Marxism and Parsonian structural functionalism? Was it not convenient to follow the Althusserian dictum that knowledge is the outcome of theoretical practice? That social change is a 'thing' that just happens or 'history without subject'? After all, Rhodes, with its own dictum, 'small is beautiful' was quite adept at keeping 'experience' outside the doors of learning. Or is this too harsh? Was it just a question of intellectual faddishness, come a decade late to Africa from Europe?

Took a class with Julian Cobbing. We vaguely knew of his reputation 'as history as de-bunking'. Clearly undergraduate students brimming with a potted history pigeon-holed into Marxist frameworks were not his cup of tea. Did he really suffer from the British disease of empiricism, or was that corridor gossip? Marianne Roux. Our beloved doctor of sociology. Her flying off the tangent, her quirkiness, her ability to cut down social distance (although this could be a problem if you sat at the front of the class, as one would constantly duck the spittle), her lack of assuredness, makes her unforgettable. She was the one who introduced us to the liberal versus neo-Marxist debate. What was the debate all about? The liberals were of the belief that as capitalism took off in South Africa, apartheid would wither away. The neo-Marxists argued that apartheid and capitalism were functional to each other. Some of these theorists, because they believed that apartheid and capitalism were inextricably linked, embraced the dogma that the destruction of apartheid would lay the basis of a socialist outcome.

Does it all matter that my generation are all liberals now and are at that stage of our lives when we want to write our history (if only to distance ourselves from it) then to be part of making history?

Increasingly though, our introduction to analysis-in-class did not feature heavily in our lives. It was the 'outside struggle about race privilege that took precedence.

In 1980 the black students decided to join the growing schools boycott across the country. Our residence, caught up in a kind of group psychology, thought we could have an impact too. It was actually quite powerful. About 50 students, playing Pink Floyd, boycotting classes, while the campus went on as normal. Largely, middle class kids, at an expensive white university, prepared to give it all up. There was a sense of race solidarity. Many of the schools from which black Rhodes students had come were on boycott. We were with them. We were them.

Students from Cape Town, Soweto, Port Elizabeth, Ixopo, Umtata. Nobody really from back home, 'no one to link my present with my past, no one to note my consistencies or inconsistencies. It was up to me to choose my character, and I chose the character that was easiest and most attractive'.[5] Agitator. Activist. Enforcer. Talker. Swagger. Black. A few months before two of us from the residence had decided to break ranks and try out for the university soccer team. It was just a fortnight or so before the inter-varsity between Rhodes and the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE). We made the second team. But then, the administrators at UPE announced that black students could play on their fields but could not attend the dance. We withdrew from the team expecting solidarity from our fellow white Rhodians. Wishful thinking. The episode became a powerful weapon to argue against playing for campus teams. For a while this incident was written up in black student history as a deliberate ploy to expose the hypocrisy of administrators and students at Rhodes. The truth is that we so much wanted to kick a football on a level playing field. But if UPE had allowed us to dance, would my trajectory have been different? Despite the strictures of apartheid, identity could still be a slippery thing in the 1980s.

The administration asked the warden to telephone parents. To impress upon the old people that we would lose a year. Probably would not be allowed back. Most parents had made tremendous sacrifices to get their children to university. Some older students had already lost a year of study at 'bush' universities. The administration was determined to break the boycott.

The resistance started to collapse. Class aspirations trumped race solidarity. The journalism practical examination was early on. I boycotted it. With the summary end of the boycott, I lost out. The administration was unsympathetic, especially as I was already a 'trouble-maker'.

My aspirations to graduate with a B.Journ were over. In any case, the journalism department was a strange place. There was a cartoon on the department notice-board with a journalism student being asked by Joel Mervis, the then editor of *The Sunday Times* what his qualifications were: he replied, a B.Journ from Rhodes. Mervis replied: well we will have to overcome that handicap. Given the level of journalism Mervis might have been onto something. Was affecting an ironic mien though really the way to fight a system as crude as apartheid?

The local demands of the 1980 boycott centered around the end of the permit system. It was a requirement for black students wanting to study at 'white' institutions. We also demanded action taken against those who attacked black students and an end to segregated residences and financial support for black students from the local townships.

It would be interesting to know what the percentage of black kids at this University that come from financially poor backgrounds is now. Sure, most students could do with a bursary and many can't afford any more beer or airtime

at the end of the month, but how many of these are from model-C schools with C-Series parents? I suspect our claims to transformation are, like reports of the death of apartheid, highly exaggerated if we take class and not race as the dividing line. Or are we so brow-beaten by the clamouring of the new elite that we just accept their blatantly self-serving and parasitic model of affirmative action as our own admissions policy. Is Rhodes just as craven before this government as it was before Vorster's in facilitating the *volkskapitalisme* of a very small minority?

Organising

1980. The residence was overrun. A Security Branch raid. I was arrested. Why? Others were also rounded up. Guy Burger, Ian Mgijima, Ihron Rensburg, Alan Zinn, Devan Pillay, Chris Waters.

I landed in Swartkops Police Station. I knew nothing. Could write very little. The SB thought I was a hard nut. They called in what they referred to as the 'panel-beater' squad. They knew their job.

Just as suddenly, I was released. They had made a mistake. The Captain, Siebert, gave me a chilling talking to – saying that George Botha's[6] blood was still on the bottom floor of the headquarters and reminding me of Steve Biko's fate in the same building. I had heard of Biko but, since I had come to Rhodes to chase women and soccer-balls, I didn't really care. Until then. I knew very little about the history and philosophy, the theory and practice of politics. But being a detainee changed that. The Unity Movement gave me literature to read. Soon many of us in the residence were reading books on South Africa's political history. Especially, the journal of the Teacher's League and the language of 'Herrenvolk' and 'kragdadigheid'. The articles though were predictable and preachy. There were no tools of liberation. No weapons. Nothing to build a memory of the future.

By the end of 1980 the rudiments of organisation were starting to emerge. Earlier on, the Phoenix Cultural Society [PCS] was given life. It had Unity Movement influence. This meant that there was much militant posturing and navel-gazing but very little action. Many hankered for more than the policing of each other to prevent 'collaboration' that defined this organisation's politics. After long discussions, the Black Students Movement [BSM] was formed. I became its first president. It was a catch-all organisation that had mainly black consciousness and Charterist influences. But in truth, the reason for being of the BSM was simply black students getting together in a hostile and alienating white environment.

By now, Adamson House was seething with rebellion. Wild drinking sessions. Banned literature on the move. And a growing reputation for defending ourselves against racist white students.

I do not want to romanticise this environment. There was a machismo here. Sexism. Bullies who preyed on the mild. The mild who had no protection. A

long way from home, unable to turn to the authorities for protection. All of us, boys nearly men, no discos, no sport, no community. An iron cage imposed by the system, willingly policed by us.

And then there was the Warden, Moosa Motara. He had views on inter-race, inter-religious relationships. Banging on doors, reporting those who dared to have parties in their rooms after the designated hour. The Taliban had come early to Grahamstown.

Calibans. Cursing. Where white Prosperos failed, there were others. A group of black theology students who lived in Livingstone House were brought in to stay with us. To temper the excesses of the Res. We called them the God Squad. But there were no Damascus Road turnings for us. Nothing was going to haul things back.

The administration conducted an investigation and came to the conclusion that there were 54 thugs in Adamson House. Dr. Derek Henderson, the Vice-Chancellor was hurt. 'They were challenging the government, taking in more and more black students. Is this how we repay trust?' Among his administration, there were whispers of Prosperos exasperated by Calibans: 'A devil, a born devil, on whose nature/nurture can never stick'. But Henderson was a computer scientist. He made calculations. We had earlier called for desegregation of the residences and the administration's position was that it was against the law. All of a sudden the residence was broken up. By 1981, we were filtered into the white residences. The collective space for meetings was broken up and many black students found the need to acculturate into the dominant setting.

It may be hard to imagine in this day and age but back then university campuses were 95 percent white. It may be even harder in this day and age of white Zimbabwean victimology to imagine a classroom invasion by white Selous Scouts and their kin. Led by this vicious 'Rhodesian element', some white students took to insulting and threatening black students. The administration turned a blind eye.

When I think back at the 'liberals' that dug in on all sides of the Rhodes administration, I want to be sympathetic. Especially, in the context today where 'comrade socialists' are doing somersaults and the leaders of the erstwhile MDM (Mass Democratic Movement), hatch economic programmes made in secret and present them as non-negotiable. But were the 'liberals in the administration' the opposite of the Security Branch down High Street?

In J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* he first counterposes, the 'humane' Magistrate and the murderous Colonel Joll. Later, the Magistrate reflects: 'For I was not, as I liked to think, the indulgent pleasure-loving opposite of the cold rigid Colonel. I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow. Two sides of imperial rule, no more, no less'.[7]

Symbolic violence. Cultural arbitrariness. The wearing of academic gowns to dinner. The amnesia that we came from different places, stratified by race. The tenuousness of the permit. The high table. High tea. The fork and knife.

Weapons!

Circa 1982. Came out of the cafeteria with two friends. Lying in wait were a group of white students. It was night. The first punch made me wobbly. The second one took away my memory. But I found that I was the one charged for stabbing a fellow student, in what I experienced as an unprovoked attack. Life expulsion loomed. The right-wing in the law faculty licked their lips. There was only one independent witness on which the balance of probabilities rose or fell. A white guy, Ian Rothery. He had claimed in his statement, that he saw a slashing knife. Flashing life. Could it have been a Parker pen? Technical arguments. Dermis. Epidermis? How deep? Rothery recants. Not sure. Professor Schaffer, the prosecutor declares him a 'hostile witness'. The scale tips against us again. Until, out of the blue, Hector Wandliss, in priestly garb, with Bible in hand, takes the stand. A silver pen, he proclaims, he is sure. There is truth and there is justice. Justice won the day.

Location

The sport issue was crucial. By boycotting the university teams, it forced us into the townships. The Phoenix Football Club (PFC) affiliated to the township league. Every weekend we would make our way to Foley's field in Joza Location. The ground would be packed. Everybody wanted to beat the university team.

The team was open to all Rhodes students. An outstanding goalkeeper, Peter auf der Heyde, joined PFC. He earned the nickname Peta Balac after the Chief's goalkeeper. Peter's move was more than symbolic. White lefty students had a soccer team called the Sex Pistols and played together on the campus. Other lefties played rugby for Rhodes. Their argument was that they contested SRC elections and the like and needed to ingratiate themselves with white students.

But there were other reasons. The comfort zone. Fear. It was not as if there were no role models. The Watson brothers had illuminated a path in Port Elizabeth. Why did no one follow at Rhodes? After all, it was a place where there were progressive students and a vibrant NUSAS branch.

One of the most disconcerting sights was to see hundreds of black people come to the campus to watch the rugby team play. Cheering the bodies they served everyday in the residences. As black students organised, so the workers almost mysteriously stopped attending.

Ironically, it was NUSAS itself that was the barrier – 'Whites organise whites'. But it was more than that. NUSAS personnel saw themselves as the resource people, ideas people. That was the relationship with black people. At a

distance. But indispensable and able to exert a sort of editorial control over what the restless natives got up to. All the while their monopoly of the progressive conscience of the university was intact and, I got the impression listening to their strident but careful denunciations of fellow whites, that they rather enjoyed the moral high ground. For its own sake. It was almost chic to be a lefty. Ironically, it suited them to privilege the need for racial redress above anything more thorough-going. For many, with important exceptions, there seems to have been a recognition that they would never be able to safely enjoy the cultural and economic capital they were to inherit until the impetus to Black revolution – apartheid – had been done away with.

As more black students came from private schools, sons and daughters of those working the levers of Bantustans 'and taking advantage of deracialising capital', common perspectives started to emerge.

The soccer venture of black students had progressed. Phoenix was broken up and players joined individual township teams. I began playing for United Teenagers. It was an experience of a lifetime. For the first time being 'black' was real. More than boycotts, fighting racists, reading Biko. I was black and becoming conscious. Campus politics slowly receded, as many of us became more involved in the rhythms of the township. The Grahamstown Youth Movement (GYM) was formed.

Every now and again, campus interventions would be made. Rag became a focus. It was a time of drunken debauchery and racial attacks would always increase. A debate was set-up. We broke into the Rag offices the night before. Took the files, photocopied them and returned them. Over 70 cents of every rand collected was spent on parties and the like. The debate in the Main Hall was a blowout for the pro-rag lobby. The next day we marched against the floats. Violent battles broke out. The cops sjambokked protesting students. White students helped arrest black students. Rag lost its innocence. NUSAS students started to join a growing, exciting non-racial gathering. Jeremy Price, a former SRC vice-president, Mandy Wood, among others, left NUSAS for this growing non-racial gathering, an informal network fast becoming a movement.

What activism and debate did not to any significant degree involve were the governance structures of the university. We had a vague idea that there was a close correlation between big capital and the university. This was epitomised by the Chancellors during the 1980s and early 1990s. Basil Hersov from Anglovaal and then Gavin Reilly of Anglo-American. It was probably appropriate that the inheritors of Cecil John Rhodes's theft were deployed to look after his other legacies. In retrospect our somewhat anecdotal and mechanistic analysis of the time is borne out if one looks at the list of honorary graduates. Big capital figures prominently with 'liberal' politicians that worked within the system. Both Ernest and Harry Oppenheimer, Raymond Ackerman, Peter Searle, Sir De Villiers Graaff, the State President at the time of the declaration of the Republic Charles Robberts Swart who received a doctorate in 1962,

Julian Ogilive Thompson. It says something that in 1994 that both Govan Mbeki (he was refused in 1992 when the ANC was still posturing a progressive economic programme) and Michael O'Dowd got doctorates. Mbeki, a mythical figure among the 'radical intelligentsia', O'Dowd the darling of big capital. For Mbeki 1994 beckoned defeat in victory. For O'Dowd victory in defeat.

And post-1994 a discernible shift is noticed in the new rulers. Surnames like Mbeki, Ginwala and Asmal start to figure in the list of honorary graduates. With Jakes Gerwel as Chancellor, the university is able to link political legitimacy and its attachment to capital. Gerwel, Mandela's Director-General, educationist and now a new entrant into the game of black (self)-empowerment that feeds off the trough of old white capital and the privatisation (oops, restructuring) of state assets. It does help that the new political class is anointed with the mantle of anti-apartheid and even liberation fighters. As Max du Preez has laconically commented in *Pale Native*: 'When Harry Oppenheimer died in 2002, all honoured him, including the ANC and the Mbeki government'.[8] Ernest Renan got it half-right when he wrote, 'The essence of a nation is that all individuals have things in common, and also that they are obliged to have forgotten many things'.[9] What he should have added is that you have to remember things in new ways too.

Should we have taken the governing structures of the university more seriously?

The Tri-cameral Parliament

We did take other structures seriously. In 1984, the state introduced the tri-cameral parliament. As the tri-cameral parliament proposals began to take hold, the UDF had very little visibility in the Eastern Cape (EC). We followed the debate around participation in proposed referendums. Stories filtered through that the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) wanted to call for a referendum and to participate in calling for a no vote. The Eastern Cape Charterists were generally against participation. All the different groups legitimated their arguments by calling on their different 'voices' in exile. Here we had the most senior political leadership in the country, close to the everyday struggles, veterans of banning orders and prison, having to legitimate their positions by insisting they received their directives from London, Lusaka, Lesotho or Swaziland. It was quite hilarious at the time but the long term consequences were serious. Later, when I returned to Durban, I realised how important one's spatial location was. If one accepted that one was fighting for hegemony within an 'ethnic enclave' then this was prioritised. How this translated into the building of non-racialism or was perceived outside of the enclave were at best secondary issues. This is why participation in the South African Indian Council (SAIC) or even referendums was flirted with as it was a way to show the community was progressive and at the same time earn one's seat at national executive level.

In the end the state baulked at holding referendums. However, the UDF in the region were unable to translate the politics of refusal into a sustained campaign. Despite some posturing the Port Elizabeth unions could not move beyond syndicalism. We on the campus generally refused to participate in running from Res to Res getting signatures for the UDF's proposed million signatures. This was much to the de facto leader of NUSAS, Roland White's, disgust as he was now a regional treasurer of the UDF and if he could not deliver a constituency at least he could deliver some signatures. (White is presently using his skills learnt as treasurer of the UDF at the World Bank). By this time many on the campus had long moved beyond a militant abstentionism. A merry band of students decided on our own initiative to spread out into the hinterland of the Eastern Cape, calling for a boycott. It was my first introduction to the depth of 'coloured' poverty and the callousness of white farmers.

The Labour Party (LP), led by Allan Hendrickse was a well-organised powerful force. Enormous bodyguards who also doubled as thugs always surrounded him. Backed by the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), we stormed a Labour Party meeting. They knew some of us already. Inderan Pillay and myself were arrested a week before handing out anti-tricameral pamphlets. After a high-speed, scary ride in the back of a police van, we were threatened at a makeshift police station, a caravan actually, and released. We managed to wreak some havoc at the meeting and beat a hasty retreat to Grahamstown. It did give Russel Ally a chance to drive at speed. His father was a well-known racing driver, and clearly Russel thought these skills were hereditary.

That was a curtain-raiser to a more sustained campaign. Every weekend for about a month, we went to places like Queenstown, Adelaide and Alexandria. Some twenty cars would spread out. It was an autonomous effort of middle class kids on a mission. In Port Alfred, we came across the bleakness of poverty. Walked into one house, a man sat alone. The only piece of furniture was a bed. He pulled out a bag from under the bed. Fading photographs. Of better times. He was once a worker in the motor industry in Port Elizabeth. Injured at work, he was paid R250 and told the he would be re-employed when he could walk again without a limp again. 'Look, here, I can'. Like much of the country's manufacturing industry, the motor sector was going through a rocky period. Here was another unknown statistic, paying the price. As the disinvestment drive picked up a gear, 4000 workers would lose their jobs at the Ford engine assembly factory in Port Elizabeth. He reported for work after six months and then every three months thereafter and finally gave up after seven years of false promises. 2004. Ford and General Motors are back. Minister Alec Erwin, who encouraged them to leave, welcomes them back.

Reconciliation

Truth. We did not bother telling him about boycotting the tricameral parliament. It did not make sense.

The Labour Party, as we became effective, got more vicious. One tactic they liked was to throw buckets of urine on the anti-tricam canvassers. Benita Whitcher got one full in the face. Many years later when we tease her about it, she still gets pissed off.

In Port Elizabeth, a busload of armed LP thugs surrounded us. We retreated into the home of Neela and Basheer Hoosen. Audrey Brown stood her ground though on the verandah and returned the insults. They backed off. Her vocabulary was better. Audrey was later to find fame as a presenter on SATV's police file. Given my lifestyle, and the new government's penchant for criminalising almost all forms of dissent, I sometimes had a vision of my mug-shot appearing on police file and Audrey reading my name. It's probably the only way to get on TV if you not from government with Snuki (phd, Bulgaria) in charge.

The LP was really a group of gangsters led by a coward, Allan Hendrickse. He was about to go down in footnote as the man who swam on a 'Whites Only' beach and then apologised to Rubicon Botha for it. But as I write this, President Thabo Mbeki invested him with high national honours, the Baobab Award.

Question Time

Back on the campus, the rift between the loose grouping of black and white students and NUSAS was widening. But the debate was more than about race. The loose groupings were starting to develop a critique of the ANC/UDF. Was the ANC committed to fundamental transformation? What was the continuing influence of Stalinism? Why should the struggle only find authenticity if it were given the stamp of approval from Lusaka? Should not the internal groupings dictate the nature and pace of the struggle? Where was MK as the townships rose up?

Running through this was the idea that our organisations should pre-figure the society we were trying to build and exemplify the values we hoped it would have. We became the focus of attention. The NUSAS leadership were able to identify the 'problem elements'. Olivia Forsyth (later exposed as an apartheid spy) reached into NUSAS, COSAS and the UDF. Roland White too emerged as a key figure. Both were very powerful. Behaving in tandem like 'common-sergeant-majors', instilling fear and so eliminating 'embryo oppositions'.[10] It was only in 1996 that I read Fanon.

First, the label UDF-militant was spread around. It roughly translates into Thabo Mbeki's trademark insult, 'ultra-leftist'. Apparently, the former NUSAS leader, Auret van Heerden, was a prime mover. Some of us had seen the literature, but had never been particularly militant.

Well-known black student leaders were deployed to enforce discipline. Simphiwe Mgoduso and Saleem Badat arrived to give us a 'dressing-down' and jar us back into the fold. Simphiwe stayed a few days. One day we were walking down Albany Road. A street-kid was running around a police-van, pursued by a rotund, red-faced policeman. No matter how much he tried, the cop could not get hold of the child. People were gathering and laughing. Suddenly the policeman ordered me to help him. I refused. He threw me into the police van. Simphiwe disappeared and never returned to Grahamstown.

One of the major fights within the BSM was about the exclusion of black students on academic grounds. The liberal [dis]guise lay revealed. We accepted you into the university, now perform. Science exclusions were high. Many students had never seen a laboratory. They were competing with students who came from the most highly endowed private schools in the country.

We wrote articles, debated with the administration and marched. I realised then that those who did not recognise race, claimed to be non-racial, could entrench racial privilege and stereotyping. On one particular occasion, we occupied the administration on behalf of those students excluded. The vice-principal, Professor Brommert, addressed us. He told us those students who had illnesses, accidents and so forth were given consideration. One of the marchers got up and told Professor Brommert that one of the excluded students was involved in an accident but was excluded. Professor Brommert scanned the file said, 'There is nothing in the file here showing an accident'. The student replied, 'The accident is Bantu Education'. Professor Brommert, somewhat hard of hearing, and not very bright, looked at the file, and said, 'The student has not produced a certificate to verify that she had such an accident'.

Out of these mobilisations, and in the face of both administration and faculty reticence, an academic support programme was born. We can be proud of that. But, now, in these days where education has been massified, where the acquisition of knowledge has been MacDonaldised and departments (sorry, cost-centres) where critique (sorry 'arcane and irrelevant studies') are being eroded (sorry, 'rationalised'), I find myself hankering after the rigorous academic standards demanded by certain of our lecturers. There is no way, under a Marianne Roux or Jackie Cock, that one could pass sociology three and take up a position in the civil service and still be as politically and historically illiterate as the crop of graduates are these days. Forget the enquiry into MBA's, half the MA's in this country should be revoked.

Back to Class

It was inevitable that some of us would be attracted to the union movement. Black workers at Rhodes, feeding off the increasing assertiveness of Black students, started organisng. When a third year student, Colm Allam, wanted to research the working conditions of Rhodes workers, the administration's

response was hysterical. Over and above, his supervisor's head, the university withdrew permission.[11]

During the anti-tricameral campaign, some contact was made with the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU). Smarting against allegations that they were 'workerist', NAAWU got involved in the campaign. They wanted to maintain their independence and refused to work under the tutelage of the UDF. But the move out of the factory was half-hearted. The NAAWU leadership was to pay heavily for its hesitation in consolidating community links and higher levels of political consciousness. But these were difficult times for the union as General Motors and Ford decided to withdraw from South Africa. The consequences of the campaign, the human cost involved, the machinations of the motor companies, await their historian.

Back on campus in the mid-eighties there were discernible shifts. The profile of black students was changing. Black students from private schools arrived. Black students whose parents were trespassing into white 'group areas' and the corporate world and who were prickly about race exclusion but quite aware and keen to maintain class divides. Why should they want to play on township fields, the very place they were escaping? They had spent three to four years on the beautiful fields of St. Andrews and Michaelhouse. They had white friends from school and were integrated into the culture.

From our side, the SACOS 'no-participation' position had no flexibility. As the number of black students grew, could we not have campus sport under the banner of SACOS? No. To play on the fields was to collaborate. But the township facilities were just not enough.

At a SACOS national meeting, we were told by one of the leaders, when we questioned the strategy of non-collaboration, that the ultimate aim would be to stop playing sport altogether. Oh, okay, so that's the revolution! There was be-suited smugness here.

There were other 'black holes' too, in our 'liberation'.

Wounds. Jeremy Price. A gentle soul with incredible media skills. Vice-president of the SRC, NUSAS loyalist. But he started to drift. Into the world of black students and black politics. But this was a very macho place. Soon Jeremy's behaviour started to change. He was much more aggressive. He got into a fight and was stabbed. He had black girlfriends. We became extremely close friends. There was though, a perpetual sadness to him. About four years ago, one of the most beautiful woman to grace Rhodes in the 1980s, Nia Magoulianiti, said she saw Jeremy on a Greek island. 'You do know he is gay' Yeah, right, I thought. Anybody who does not want you, is gay. Beauty and vanity.

Last year we spoke. He lives in the US now. He still could not mention it to me. He said that his lover had just ended their relationship. The lover was worried that Jeremy would jeopardise his political career. In the fight for 'liberation now' much was repressed. In this black world, there was little space for

discussion of sexuality and intimacy. For me it was normal because it was simply an extension of my upbringing.

Much has been written by the likes of Hein Marais[12] about the flowering of autonomous anti-apartheid rebellions. What he does not capture, cannot, are the sacrifices, the imaginations, the excitement of this time. The cruelty, the genuflection to 'the line' of those who sought to smash these 'almost movements'. Deterrorialisation? Reterritorialisation? One of the problems with the broad sweeps in which the transition gets written (even the critical ones) is that they occlude more than they reveal.

That is why people must tell their stories. For the stories told, however small their immediate impact, is a process of illuminating a past history that is not simply the story of the heroic new ruling class who liberated us. Even if they are 'biased', missing of some detail, they 'are so very valuable. They allow us to recognize the interests of the tellers, and the dreams and desires beneath them'.[13] Above all they provide a signpost for those who hanker, are prepared to struggle for more than non-racial neo-liberalism. Witness the Minister of Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi in the aftermath of the 2004 elections. Fraser-Moleketi declared that the election results showed that the masses of South Africans have 'declared that no amount of sophistication or camouflage by the opposition can make them lose sight of *their* liberators'.[14] The history of the defeat of apartheid gets rewritten as a struggle conducted by the ANC, the people, passive recipients of a 'gift' from 'their liberators'. And so the process must continue, of the people, waiting patiently and unquestioningly as 'their liberators' make available the fruits of liberation. The effect of this 'sleight of hand' where people are asked to believe that their struggles against apartheid were not the 'real struggle' and that the 'real struggle' was delivered to them by semi-divine beings is often under-estimated in writings on political transitions. It feels as if semi-divine heroes were able to make the world in the past but that in our fallen age we just have to get on with the job of trying to survive in the world that we've been given. Almost always it is the new power-wielders and emerging elite that demand or try and invoke this reverence for The Struggle. This is no accident. They are then able to use the almost magical power of these mysticised heroes and struggles of the past to disguise their very concrete betrayals, the increasing deprivation of the poorest and to delegitimate the struggles that are being fought in the here and now. 'The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it... people want to be masters of the future... to change the past. They are fighting for access to the laboratories where photographs are retouched and histories are rewritten'.[15]

Shit, if only we'd been taught Fanon rather than Nkrumah, we'd have understood better what was happening. As space was been closed down, as autonomous, creative and liberating actions were siphoned off into a single nationalist stream, we started to develop doubts. As all political imagination

was forced within the four-corners of the Freedom Charter and Oliver Tambo's Christmas message, 'a few of us were moving on'. Ironically and unbeknownst, we were swapping the sullied suit of postcolonial nationalism for the straitjacket of actually existing Trotskyism. On reflection, one of the reasons for this slide was our obsession with issues of power and domination. Lenin.

From the Black to the Red Line

Some of us were recruited into a reading group. Lenin and Trotsky. Soon I discovered that we were Trots involved in something called a permanent revolution, and our weapon was a party run by a central committee. The attraction to Trotsky was propelled by a 'received' Marxism of society passing through stages, (deterministic laws of history). This translated into a political programme that socialism could only emerge after capitalism had fully developed the productive forces of society through the 'revolutionary role' of the bourgeoisie. Trotsky offered a skipping of stages, a challenge to the two-stagism of the SACP. This is why we fell in love with the Bolshevik Revolution for it was a living example that had confronted the Marxian laws enunciated in *Capital*. We wanted to make history, not be told we could not do as we pleased. We were at an age and a time when it made no sense to talk about the limits of the possible. Ironically, in the form we received it, Trotskyism trampled on this adolescent exuberance.

For the Trots, open political activity like participating in marches, petrol bombs, was frowned upon. Reading was the thing. Security, was our perpetual concern. But if we valued secrecy above all else, how would we win the masses to our ideas? If we stood aside from the mass struggles, how would they be won over? Did not Marx warn against confronting the world 'with new doctrinaire principles and proclaim: Here is the truth, on your knees before it!'[16]

And what about a hierarchy that would have made the Catholic church uncomfortable, inscribed in the way we organised? But these questions were not easily asked. To whom did you address them? In any case the thrill of reading and interrogating, *What is to be done?*, *State and Revolution*, and *The Transitional Programme*, overwhelmed the questions. For a time at least. We never read Gramsci: 'for the purpose of human history, the only *truth* is the truth embodied in human action, that becomes a passionate driving force in people's minds'.[17]

But this idea that history had somehow endowed a chosen few to articulate and direct the struggles emerging from below sat uneasily. All political interventions became planned, speeches emptied of all emotion. The vanguard denies creativity, spontaneity, even joy. Our meetings were funereal. I preferred Irish wakes. The readings were interesting but the emphasis on recruitment and encadrement, alienating. We could not develop real warm relationships because ticking away was whether the person was worthy of recruitment to the next level or not. The meetings and organisation reminded

me so much of my upbringing. The home was gloomy and always enveloped with a hint of sadness. Somehow the family was involved in some greater goal. It was cold and clinical.

So I, physically and psychologically, moved out of the organisational gaze. Trying to marry infantile disorder with left wing communism. To build something in the community around Grahamstown. To make, to be part of 'trouble'. I went to live in Max Pax on the edge of the coloured township. Next door we tried to build a resource centre.

We met activists who were linked to SACHED in Cape Town. We started driving to Cape Town to meet and organise reading materials. We met with a fascinating group of young women organised into the Students of Young Azania (SOYA). The women on campus that were involved, were still very conservative. On one occasion I was brushing my teeth and one of the SOYA woman came into the bathroom and ran her bath and jumped in. She then proceeded to want to have a conversation with me about the meeting the night before. I had never really encountered liberated black women. Around the age of 13, some of us began to hustle *Scope* magazines. Semi-naked white women. No Immorality Act to worry about. The law was literally in *our* hands. Three or four of us would masturbate in a backroom. Who came quickest. I was good. It was a habit I never kicked. No matter how I tried. One girlfriend at Rhodes, lying back on the bed sucking on a juice, called me Minute Maid. I took it as a compliment.

Before the centre started it was burnt to the ground by the Security Branch.

An 'inglorious' end.

By the beginning of 1987, I was effectively marginalised on the campus. The number of black students had increased and the kind of hegemony required to police a politics of 'boycottism' was impossible. We increasingly alienated those who wanted to take advantage of what Rhodes had to offer.

Also 'goons' speaking in the name of Lusaka were effectively marginalising dissident voices both on the campus and in the township. Black consciousness supporters were hounded and many had to retreat out of the township and take refuge on the edges of 'Sugar Loaf'. Stories of a 'hit-list' of leftists, drawn up allegedly by the 'movement', circulated in East London.

Things reached a head at the funeral of 'Bully', a member of GYM who was shot by police in Joza location. ANC supporters insisted that we not allow any Unity Movement, BC or SACOS speakers. We stood our ground. But the knives were out literally and figuratively. For many this was a period of retreat. Violence against non-ANC fighters hung in the air. Rumours abounded that at the scene of the murder of the Cradock Four an AZAPO T-shirt was found.

By 1987 I was not only marginalised but physically broken. In January 1987 the Eastern Cape section of the 'Party' had been summoned to Cape Town for a dose of 'democratic centralism'. Kumi Ponasamy, Noami McKay and myself

headed off in Noami's Ford Escort. With Kumi at the wheel we met a horrendous accident just outside George.

Kumi was in a coma for over 40 days. He lost an eye and had brain damage and lost part of a foot. Noami had serious internal injuries. I also had all broken bones. Noami and I landed at a farm hospital. My arm hung limply and blood dripped through a Checkers bag.

Kumi. The 'Party' sent a cadre to look after him. Kumi had hidden a large cache of banned literature. The cadre and Kumi's wife began an affair and left East London with Kumi's son.

Straining against the discipline of the reading group, the marginalisation and broken body, I sought mass politics again. Was this a reading of the situation, ego or principle? Was it all of them? Little did I know how much the avenues 'back' had been closed down. The 'whispering campaign' exposing my left wing tendency, the openness of my critique of Stalinism, of two-stagism, of the Freedom Charter, moved off the campus and permeated the township.

The second state of emergency was declared. As I was preparing for a May Day rally, the Security Branch (SB) pounced. I was staying at the back of Nancy Charton's. She was a retired politics lecturer. She was full of life and warmth. By now the SB knew from the likes of the Olivia Forsyth that some of us were not central to the UDF/ANC. But we had no idea that the groundwork for dealing with 'mavericks' who may just upset future, dimly envisaged CODESAS, was also being laid. Crises of hegemony can lead to surprising outcomes. Capital, the Nats and the ANC were already trying to ensure that the outcome would be pre-determined. Negotiations, coinciding with a fresh wave of detentions?

Often, despite all the reading and sophisticated understanding of Marxist texts, all the Left has is conspiracy theory.

Luck. Friends see me get arrested. Vaainek. A detainee gets beaten by other detainees for being a supporter of Black Consciousness. Is this the conduct of liberation fighters? The panoptical gaze operated not by wardens but by the gatekeepers of the revolution. The Trots abandon me. Didn't they tell me to keep my head down. Now, I am a security risk.

2004

> What the liberation struggle therefore produces is its own gravediggers.[18]

Why has this generation of the 1980s, so privileged to have had the grandest education possible, to have been part of vibrant debates, taken 'other' paths? To turn Gramsci on his head. A time of the War of (self) Movement, a War of (self) Positioning. The trend is too broad for one to make individual vilification.

Forget the economic debates. Our life choices don't reflect a belief in the justness or sustainability of neoliberalism. Just the opposite, we know the system is unjust and occasionally we will go so far as to say so. But it is the

subjective gratification provided by the individualism of liberalism, that so beguiles. After confronting liberalism for a decade, how Rhodes must smile, as we return as its tools.

Did the education at Rhodes win out after all?

In any case, we were always Janus-faced. We had one eye on Mandela, those notions of sacrifice, freedom, integrity and the other eye on Rhodes, with the notion of self-enrichment, on building empire's fields.

And now that we have the Mandela/Rhodes Foundation headed by Jakes Gerwel and run by Rhodes alumni, Shaun Johnson?

In his speech, inaugurating the foundation, Mandela, whilst castigating those who dared to bring apartheid reparation lawsuits against American multi-nationals, commented, 'I am sure that Cecil John Rhodes would have given his approval to this effort to make the South African economy of the early 21st century appropriate and fit for its time'.[19] Appropriate for whom? Statistics South Africa, a government agency made public a report in October 2002 that revealed that black 'African' household income had spiraled downwards by 19 percent between 1995 to 2000, while white household income increased by 15 percent. Households with less than R670 a month income that stood at 20 percent of the population in 1995 had increased to 28 percent. The poorest half of all South Africans earned only 9.7 percent of national income, down from 11.4 percent in 1995.[20] Pensions decreased in real terms between 1991 and 2000.[21] Inequality has been exacerbated by the lack of state support (like a social wage) with over 13,8 million people in the poorest 40 percent of South Africa's households not qualifying for any social security transfers.[22] At the same time, while taxes to the rich have been cut and unemployment reaches catastrophic proportions (youth unemployment of 50 percent), basic services like transport have been privatised, water and electricity have been corporatised and the state has demanded 'user fees' for school, health care and other services.

It is an economy where there is a quick cross-over from politics into making money in the private sector. It was something Rhodes was a master at, blurring the edges of political office and personal enrichment. There are opportunities for the enrichment of people whose political connections get them onto the various boards – Umgeni Water in Durban, The Johannesburg Water Company and so on – and who are paid on highly lucrative incentive schemes that reward them for increasing profit. So it goes. When water and electricity are finally privatised local elites stand to become very rich as the ANC demands that multinationals partner with aspirant black capitalists. Sipho Pityana, former foreign-affairs Director-General, is one of a long line of MP's and Director-Generals that have directly entered the private sector. He joined banking giant Nedcor and now heads a black investment company. Pityana's investment company quickly acquired 30 percent of Aberdare Cables. Co-incidentally, Abedare's main business is with Eskom and Telkom, two

parastatals in the throes of privatising, while at the same time raising the stakes with suppliers on black empowerment. Pityana is also a member of the NEPAD business group steering committee. Eskom, of course, has extensive business interests in Africa. 'This trend is no accident. As Pityana explained... director-generals and other senior public servants bring with them an understanding of public-policy intentions, high level involvement in transformation and a track record of bringing about large-scale organisational change. They also have networking advantages'.[23] And the feeding frenzy is set to continue. Leading members of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) have linked with white mining magnates in a 'get rich' scam. (*Mail & Guardian*, March 26 to April 1, 2004).

Mandela's Cecil John Rhodes once wrote: 'I contend we are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence... Africa is lying ready for us, it is our duty to take it'.[24]

Post-1994 South African corporates have moved with speed into Africa. South African businesses are 'running the national railroad in Cameroon, the national electricity company in Tanzania, and managing the airports located in or near seven Southern African capitals. They have controlling shares in Telecom Lesotho and are leading providers of cellphone services in Nigeria, Uganda, Swaziland, Tanzania, Rwanda and Cameroon... They control banks, breweries, supermarkets and hotels throughout the continent and provide TV programming to over half the continent'.[25] Accusations of malpractice keep piling up. Cellphone giant MTN faces charges of operating illegally in the DRC; Shoprite Holdings of dumping sub-standard goods on the African market. Darlene Miller's research on Shoprite-Checkers in Zambia paints a picture of crude apartheid-like working conditions and racism.[26] In November 2004 workers at Shoprite Checkers in Malawi went on strike. Some workers claimed to be paid as little as R23 a week. The strikers were demanding a 400 percent increase but were forced to call off the strike as hundreds of Malawians responded to a Shoprite Checkers advert to take the strikers' jobs.[27]

The UN Report on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the DRC named seven South African companies. Beauregard Tromp commented that South African businesses have been quick to use Mbeki's foray's into Africa to cut deals 'sometimes by hook or by crook'.[28] And as Sahra Ryklief put it: 'Mbeki's African Renaissance is the best thing that has ever happened to South Africa's (still overwhelmingly white) capital in a long time'.[29] A recent study of JSE Securities Exchange listed companies doing business in Africa revealed that their profit margins are two and even three times more than profit margins in South Africa.[30]

Would Rhodes approve of our new sub-imperialist role in Africa under the guise of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that aims to subject the entire continent to a self-imposed structural adjustment programme?

Apartheid was built on the notion of white superiority and blacks as the inferior 'other'. Have we now turned that inside out? Is composing the new South African nation premised on our superiority over the rest of Africa? As Peter Vale puts it, 'the idea of the rainbow nation, the new South Africa signifies a cleansed beginning for the country's people. But the celebration shows there is a darker side... the constructed face of national identity, the harbinger of nationalism used for the purpose of privileging'.[31]

Biko whose life's trajectory is so bound up with his exclusion from staying at a Rhodes University residence warned in 1972: 'this is one country where it would be possible to create a capitalist black society, if whites were intelligent, if the nationalists were intelligent. And that capitalist black society, black middle class would be very effective... South Africa could succeed in putting across to the world a pretty convincing, integrated picture, with still 70 percent of the population being underdogs'.[32]

Mandela stands tall at the citadel of excess, the symbol of Rhodes's legacy, Sandton City. And now that Rhodes has met Mandela, what exteriority is left?

What is to be done?

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Rhodes University From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing

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Introduction

I arrived at Rhodes University in Grahamstown at the age of twenty-one to do a Journalism degree. The year was 1976 and I heard for the first time a name that I would never forget – Soweto. By the end of the decade it was a cycle of teargas, gunshots, barricades, riot police and funerals. In Grahamstown funerals became the hub around which the wheel of violence and death continued to spin. The police would shoot a marcher/bystander/householder; it did not really matter, during a funeral procession. The angry residents would erupt in outrage and more people would get killed. The next week, another funeral, more teargas drifting across town. Alfred 'Blaai' Soya, Violet Tsili, Boyboy Nombiba, Freddie Tsisli, Tununi Nxawe, Nikele Mjekula, were just some of the people who died in 1980, when I was doing my honours and working as a journalist on the *Herald* newspaper in the Grahamstown office.

Grahamstown did not let you escape into the myopia of the white suburbs distant from the townships as in other parts of the country. The proximity of settler city and township led to a constant awareness of all the manifestations of assault and counter-assault, of the attempts to implement and to resist the apartheid grand plan. For me the most frightening thing at that time was the absolute polarisation between black and white in Grahamstown. The township was barricaded and a no-go area for any white person. The anger was so palpable as to have a physical presence, a kind of static in the air. On the other side the often young white riot police rode around town in their hippos, buffels and vans, their fear as tautly cocked as the shotguns and Rl rifles they brandished. I felt the edge of both. I was arrested and manhandled by a nervy bunch of the cops for singing in the street (disturbing the peace) with a bunch of friends after celebrating the end of exams with a few shots of tequila. Another time I was surrounded and threatened by a group of black youths while trying to hitch-hike out of town.

Mass removals, detentions without trial, torture and deaths in detention. I remember when Steve Biko died we fasted for a week. I was cultural councillor on the SRC and Chair of the NUSAS re-affiliation campaign. At the end of 1980 a number of fellow students and Guy Berger were detained. Guy was sentenced to a few years in Pretoria Central for furthering the aims of the ANC. Jacky Cock had a stick of dynamite thrown through her window in a well

orchestrated attack (the lights for the block were extinguished during the operation). By that stage I had decided not to do any more army camps, after narrowly missing being sent to Namibia for three months during the last three-week camp I attended in 1978 in northern Natal.

Rhodes University

I spent a day reading through old student newspapers to prepare for this paper. Apart from the nostalgia the thing that struck me most forcibly was the abnormality of it all. Only ten years of democracy and the memories have already started to fade. In the 1970/80s Rhodes University was a scary place. The majority of staff (academic and administrative) and students were actively racist. This is not surprising as a large number of predominantly white administrative staff were from the local (white) settler farming, civil service (including the police and military base), and business community. The majority of male students had just come back from two years of military indoctrination and service in Namibia, Angola or Rhodesia. The University had to build ramps for wheelchairs because of the number of ex-combatants that had had their legs blown off by landmines or by their fellow soldiers.

Many of these young men were suffering from post-traumatic stress (the so-called Vietnam syndrome). There was no counselling available for them. My own brother, who was part of the ill-fated Angolan campaign to take Luanda in the early 1970s, suffered from nightmares for years and eventually drank himself to death. Tension ran high on campus; fights in the various bars around town were commonplace, a coloured student friend of mine had a thunder flash thrown through his window, gay students were beaten up, many students worked for the security and military police spying on their fellow students and liberal/left lecturers.

I don't want to exaggerate the situation. There was also a sizeable group of people, lecturers and students, who were committed to non-racialism and a more equitable distribution of wealth. Who were committed to transformation of the university from a Eurocentric little Oxford with all its colonial trappings to an institution that would be part of and reflect its place in Africa. When I talk about colonial trappings I am not bandying about empty slogans – in the 1970s we had to wear academic gowns to our dining halls every night, where we would be served by black waiters in uniform, the warden and his/her acolytes would sit on a raised platform at the high table dispensing discipline and favour, rooms would be cleaned by black servants, drunken beauty queen-bedecked rag processions would raise money for the 'less fortunate' and graduation ceremonies aped those in Britain down to the last detail. I remember being shown around Oxford University by a friend a few years ago and being struck by the uncanny resemblance of the dining halls to Rhodes halls. All that dark wood!

I was involved in a number of initiatives to move the university towards a non-racial African future, and to get young white South Africans to commit themselves to that future. In 1978 I was the cultural councillor on the SRC and the chair of the NUSAS pro-affiliation committee. Rhodes had for a number of years dawdled along in splendid isolation and the left on campus was determined to get the university back into the national student organisation. NUSAS was at that stage running a national campaign, 'Education for an African future'. After a heated campaign that saw the anti-affiliation campaign spearheaded by the SRC president (now Advocate) Izak Smuts, the pro-affiliation faction lost the referendum. There were 984 students against and 849 voted in favour. Rhodesian students played a major role in the anti-affiliation campaign. The poll was a very high: 79 percent.

The Rhodes Journalism Department conducted a survey of students after the referendum. The study was designed to measure the level of information – not opinions – through eleven questions to which there was a right or wrong answer. The questions were based on information that both the pro- and anti-affiliation campaign organisers believed that students needed in order to make a rational decision.

The survey found that:

- 68 percent of respondents were ill-informed (scored five or less out of 11);
- 10 percent were unable to answer any of the questions;
- 79 percent did not know the NUSASs president's name;
- men were more informed than women;
- South Africans were more likely to vote for affiliation than Rhodesians;
- Those voting in favour of affiliation were more informed than those voting against.

Asked to comment on the results of the survey, Journalism lecturer Graham Watts put it succinctly: 'A more homogeneous, educated community with easy access to information would be difficult to come by. I would not hesitate to describe the referendum vote as abominably ignorant. The question remains – what did these people base their decision on?'

A fair question. For me these students, especially those voting against affiliation to NUSAS, were an excellent example of what went on in the broader white community in both South Africa and Rhodesia. They voted as they were told by those in authority, with the pack, against the ungodly, left-wing communist terrorists (that NUSAS was seen to be promoting) to preserve white privilege and the colonial lifestyle and to keep black Africa at bay. Rhodesia is Super! And golly, the last thing you wanted was for facts to get in the way!

Another initiative I was involved with in 1979 became known as the 'Quad Squat'. With a group of likeminded members of the hedonist left (as our particular group was known), we snuck into the main admin quad in the early hours of the morning, through the majestic arches designed by Sir Herbert

himself and erected a squatter camp on the beautiful green lawns. We used old corrugated iron and tents, and also set up numerous carefully prepared notice boards outlining our concern with the Eurocentric and irrelevant content of the university curriculum. We stuck banners and posters around campus advertising our protest squat, and when the university awoke from its slumber, there we were encamped and ready for action. The mode of operation was to hand out pamphlets to passing students and staff and to engage them in debate about the merits of studying romantic English poets while people were being forcibly removed from their homes and relocated to Bantustan resettlement camps such as Glenmore on the Fish River near Grahamstown. In fact the impetus for the Quad Squat was provided by another Journalism Department survey amongst students, where one bright young spark when asked about the Glenmore resettlement camp said he thought that it was a Scottish biscuit!

Response to the Quad Squat was predictable. A few lefty lecturers gave their lectures in solidarity in the quad, while others allowed guerrilla theatre in their lectures ('security police' arresting black students and dragging them forcibly out). The university security officer ripped down posters around campus and Dr Henderson the Vice-Chancellor in his usual fashion didn't take action against us but also didn't support the protest. The more liberal professors while also not actively supporting the protest, expressed their approval in the press afterwards, mainly on the ground of freedom of speech, etc. Those opposed were probably best represented by the sentiments of Professor Edward Higgins of the Sociology Department:

> As I see it, Monday and Tuesday's squatting exercise represented some kind of collective ego trip by people who, while they may be genuinely concerned about the injustices in out society, are probably suffering from a colossal guilt complex. In the squatting business I found the means methods unacceptable and unacademic. Such disruptive episodes should not be tolerated by serious academics.

Conservative students variously threatened to attack and destroy the camp (we slept there overnight), water bombs were thrown at us, and a counter-demonstration in support of 'colonialism' (complete with black servants, cigars, bashers, blazers and bowls) was held on the second day. The event culminated with a mass meeting addressed by sympathetic lecturers. Right-wingers heckled with racist interjections such as 'why don't they keep their townships clean', to which Jeff Peires replied with great passion, 'Because they're too busy cleaning your fucking house!'

The last word came from Andre Brink (Head of the Afrikaans/Nederlands Department at Rhodes at that time) who said:

> The cause of such a protest is worthy and should be brought to the attention of as many people as possible. An act is something that requires total commitment, and even sacrifice. A gesture is something performed by an actor without the necessity that he should take full responsibility for it. I feel this demonstration was more a gesture than an act.

He was probably right. Many of the participants of both the NUSAS 'Education for an African future' and of the Quad Squat are now living in Sydney, Geneva and London. Not all, mind you. Larry Strelitz, Guy Berger and I are still here, in the same town at the same university. I wonder if that qualifies as an *act* in Andre Brink's eyes, that is, requiring total commitment and sacrifice.

An interesting addendum to the relevance/Africanisation crusade is an experience I underwent a few years later when I was lecturing in the Department of Development Studies at the University of Bophuthatswana. The results of a research project conducted through the Institute of Education in conjunction with some English teachers at local schools came up with some surprising results. Questioning the ability of students in a rural African context to understand the olde English, the historical context and the cultural references that abounded in the classics (Hardy, Shakespeare, etc.) prescribed by the Department of Education, researchers suggested some Af Lit alternatives. The teachers and parents, on the basis that the aforementioned classics constituted 'real education', vociferously rejected these home-baked offerings. As Kurt Vonnegut is fond of saying: *so it goes*.

Back at Rhodes, the real question of course is what has changed since the 1970/80s.

Well, the teargas, buffels, and funerals have gone, along with the morally challenged slime balls like the Edwards brothers and Olivia Forsythe.[1] So too have the waiters in the dining halls, rag and the Athies Auction (an event where female first years students were auctioned to the highest bidder to be their slave for the day). Cliffie Abraham's liver also finally gave up the ghost. The administration, academic staff, students, and university council have transformed and are moving towards an acceptable level of racial equity, more so in some areas than others. Many students are from other parts of Africa. Many academics are doing research in and have connections with other African universities/countries. A small number of academics are working with local NGOs and community groups as well as with local, provincial and national government to implement second-generation socio-economic rights (such as land, governance, poverty alleviation and local economic development). A number of institutes are working on areas such as English in Africa, social development, social and economic research and educational outreach programs in schools. Loosely affiliated institutions such as CADRE and PSAM are playing an important role in HIV/AIDS research and public service monitoring respectively.

But the institution is a long way from being an African university. Role models are still Britain, USA and Australia. The restructuring of the South African tertiary sector and the loss of the East London campus to Fort Hare has contributed further to the isolation of Rhodes Grahamstown from its Eastern Cape environment. In Eastern Cape government circles the focus is very definitely on the new Fort Hare. It is seen as a major opportunity to create a new

vibrant African university with strong research, training and policy-formation links with the provincial and local government. Many regard Rhodes on the other hand as an 'academic university' in the somewhat elitist ivory-tower sense. Adding to this perception is that as the crisis in the Eastern Cape Education Department deepens, the university is becoming increasingly inaccessible to the majority of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially in the rural hinterland of the province.

In conclusion, we need to ask ourselves what we mean by 'Africanisation', especially within an increasingly globalised world and an international academic context. At a minimum it means that Rhodes should move fairly rapidly towards a situation where its staff and student profile matches the broader demographics of the country. It means that a large part of our educational focus should be to provide educated and skilled people firstly for the Eastern Cape, secondly for the country, and thirdly for the continent. It means that our research should have a similar orientation. All this needs to be done without compromising the ability of staff and students to interact with international universities or the recognition of their degrees in other parts of the world. It will be a long haul that will have to conquer the twin peaks of inertia and vested interest. With others, I have pulled on my boots and packed my pitons.

Notes

1. Some of the more infamous security police spies at Rhodes.

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Comprehensive Listing of Participants in the Colloquium 'The Critical Tradition at Rhodes University', August 2004, Grahamstown

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