Against Alterity – The Pursuit of Endogeneity: Breaking Bread with Archie Mafeje

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Introduction

The passing away of Professor Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje on 28 March 2007 was a great shock to so many within the African social science community and beyond. At a personal level, it was particularly shocking: Archie, as we fondly refer to him, was to be with us at Rhodes University (Grahamstown-iRhini) for Thandika Mkandawire' s DLitt graduation ceremony and we had worked frantically to finalise Archie' s travel arrangements just the Friday before he died. He was to return to Grahamstown in May for an audio-visual interview that I was to have with him, exploring his biography and scholarship; I had sent him the questions and he was keen on the project. Scholarship is biographical, and it is even more so in Archie' s case. It was going to be a time to break bread with this most engaging of scholars; elegant in thoughts and taste. I had wanted to test out some of my hypotheses regarding the contours of his works and life with him; ' sort out' a few nagging issues in his works. Although he had been in poor health for a few years, when we sat down to what turned out to be our last dinner in Pretoria in February 2007, he was in the best shape in which I had seen him since 2002. He had spent December 2006 and January 2007 in the Transkei (South Africa), among family members. He had received herbal treatment, he said, which proved quite helpful. His hands (especially the fingers) were much improved, and he was going back to Mthatha (in the Transkei) on Tuesday 27 March as part of the arrangement to resettle in the Transkei by mid-year. Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha had agreed to provide him a place to work and reflect; and he would be able to continue his treatment. I thought we would have him around for many years to come.

All these reflections are anecdotal, and as with anecdotes there will be as many as the number of individuals who encountered Archie. By themselves, they may be of limited intellectual significance. In this instance, it is in the personal that I seek the scholarly. The loss of someone like Archie pushes us to search for meaning that is both deeply personal and intellectual.

Meanings and Encounters

The meaning of Archie Mafeje for three generations of African scholars and social scientists is about encounters. For some it would have been personal, for others it was through his works, and for most in the community the encounter via scholarly works became personal and intimate. And Archie reciprocated more than most. Babatunde Zack-Williams, in an intervention at a February 2006 conference in Pretoria, spoke glowingly regarding the impact that Archie' s ' The Ideology of " Tribalism" (Mafeje 1971) had on him. Tunde wondered aloud why Archie was absent from a conference in a city of his residence on how to reinvigorate the study of Africa. The impact that Tunde referred to is shared by many, but I missed that by some five years. My encounter was through his ' The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective' (Mafeje 1976). I was a first-year undergraduate student at Ibadan, and I had been rummaging through the journal section in the basement of the University of Ibadan Library. I came across a new issue of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* and pulled the copy off the shelf. I suspect it was the name *Mafeje* in the contents page that drew my attention. I had never heard of him, which might be forgiven in a fresh undergraduate. I started nibbling through the article. By the time I got to the third page, I was hooked. I took the journal to the sitting area and buried my head in it. It was so elegantly written, with incredible detailed knowledge of the field and the debates from various parts of the world. His conceptual handle on the debate so rigorous and velvet, it was incredibly exhilarating. While taking no prisoners, he did not mind taking himself a prisoner too. Kathleen Gough had charged Anthropology with being ' a child of Western Imperialism' (Gough 1968), which I found delightful. In response, Raymond Firth (Firth 1972) rebuked Gough and others like her; quite the contrary, Firth insisted, Anthropology was a ' child of Enlightenment' . Mafeje' s response in the 1976 article was: ' What' s the point of dispute, folks? Imperialism is the child of Enlightenment, anyway'. It was so detailed and elegantly argued I walked on air for days afterwards.

I was not to meet Archie Mafeje in person until 1992, at the CODESRIA General Assembly in Dakar. It was an incredibly engaging experience, and I got a copy of his *Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (Mafeje 1991). He autographed my copy with the words: *With pleasant memories after a most vigorous encounter with the irreverent but a wel-*

come sense of rebellion – Dakar 15/2/92. The ' irreverence' was around the debate we kicked off at the assembly on ' icons' . I had argued that a viable intellectual community develops around iconic individuals, events and/or ideas. I told Archie that we won' t act like the Orthodox Church; we won' t polish our icons and put them on a pedestal. When we disagree with them, ' we will kick their butts' . He was quite tickled by it. Jibrin Ibrahim would later take a dip at being iconoclastic in an article, ' History as Iconoclast: Left Stardom and the Debate on Democracy' (Ibrahim 1993). The problem is when you denounce Issa Shivji for ' manichean vituperations' , as Jibrin did, you should expect to have your feathers plucked; and plucked his feathers were. The ' icons' were not going to roll over and die or rock in their chairs watching the sun set (Amin 1993; Mafeje 1993). Even so, Archie and Samir were as gentle as one could expect of them in the circumstances. Issa stayed out of it. Archie' s focus was on conceptual rigour as a prelude to political action as well as empirical misrepresentations of what the iconic ' Left stars' did or did not do. He probably thought Jibrin was mistaken but not an ' enemy' .

My take on the idea of ' icon' and iconic ideas was quite different from Jibrin' s. It was about constructing our intellectual community rooted in ideas firmly grounded in our conditions and drawing critical scholarly inspirations from those who went before; not in squeamish adulation but critical engagement. But to return to Archie, the *Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* is another example of what Mahmood Mamdani called Archie' s ' artisanal' approach to intellectual work: painstaking and rigorously argued.

The 1992 encounter speaks to what many people confuse as intellectual arrogance and a gladiatorial stance in Archie Mafeje. He demanded of you a rigorous engagement with your field, extensive depth of knowledge, and knowing your onions inside out. But even the most brilliant mind is not infallible; Archie knew that. He lived on rigorous intellectual engagements and a willingness to engage with you if you thought he had not finely tuned his ideas. But ideas were not just esoteric things for their own sake. They are important because they mean so much one way or another to the lives of millions on our continent. That is why he comes across as fierce on ' dangerous' ideas – as in his contentions against Ali Mazrui – or those who subsist on ' the epistemology of alterity' (Mafeje 1997b: 5). It would equally explain why he chose not to have a public spat with Ruth First after her response (First 1978) to his article on the Soweto Uprising (Mafeje 1978b). Ruth First was a comrade even though they inhabited different points in the anti-Apartheid struggle.

Against Alterity

If there is a common thread tying all of Archie Mafeje' s professional writings, as distinct from his more political writings, it will be the relentless contestation of the epistemology of alterity and the pursuit of endogeneity. Endogeneity, in this specific case, refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one' s intellectual work. ' To evolve lasting meanings' , Mafeje (2000:66) noted,' we must be " rooted" in something. Central to endogeneity is averting what Hountondji (1990) referred to as ' extroversion' . In spite of the claims of being nomothetic in aspiration, social analysis is deeply idiographic. Those who exercise undue anxiety about being ' cosmopolitan' or universalist fail to grasp this about much of what is considered nomothetic in the dominant strands of Western ' theories' . All knowledge is first local: " ' universal knowledge" can only exist in contradiction' (Mafeje 2000:67). It is precisely because Max Weber spoke distinctly to the European context of his time, as Michel Foucault did for his that guaranteed the efficacy of their discourses. ' If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed' (Mafeje 2000:67).[2] In this paper, I will limit my focus to this aspect of Mafeje' s works.

While ' The Ideology of " Tribalism" ' is often cited as the launching of Mafeje' s[3] attack on alterity, the drive for the centring of the African ' self-knowing' is evident in *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (Wilson and Mafeje 1963), co-published with Monica Wilson, his supervisor at the University of Cape Town. The preference for the research subjects' own self-definition – e.g., ' homeboys' rather than ' tribesmen' – in the book presaged his 1971 paper. A similar mode of writing, which proceeds from the subject' s perspective, is evident in two of his other works published in the 1960s: ' The Chief Visits Town' (Mafeje 1963) and ' The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community' (Mafeje 1967). However, in contrast to the muted negation of alterity in these earlier works, ' The Ideology of " Tribalism" ' was a more self-conscious critique of the continued use of ' tribe' and ' tribalism' .

While Mafeje' s paper was not new or alone in contesting the concept of ' tribe' and ' tribalism' – cf. Vilakazi (1965), Magubane' s 1968 paper (republished in 2000:1–26) and Onoge' s 1971 paper (published 1977) – that much Mafeje (1971:12; 1996:260–1) himself specifically mentioned.[4] Nonetheless, Mafeje' s intervention was a focused ' deconstruction' (Mafeje 1996, 2001) of the categories on conceptual and empirical grounds. Empirically, Mafeje argued, the word ' tribe' did not exist in any of the indigenous South African languages – or, to the best of my knowledge, any that I know. Conceptually, those deploying the concept are unable to sustain it on the basis of their own definitions of tribe(s) (hence tribalism). It is a method of critique that defines Mafeje' s scholarship, anchored on conceptual rigour or its absence.

' Classical anthropology' , Mafeje noted (quoting Fortes' and Evans-Pritchard' s 1940 *African Political Systems*) defined tribes as ' self-contained, autonomous communities practicing subsistence economy with no or limited external trade' (Mafeje 1971:257). Others (citing Schapera' s 1956 *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies*) would define tribes as a group of people who claim ' exclusive rights to a given territory' and manage ' its affairs independently of external control' (Mafeje 1971:257). In this sense, tribes are defined by subsistence economy, territoriality and rule by chiefs and/or elders. Anthropologists and others who persisted in using ' tribe' and ' tribalism' as their framework for analysing Africa were violating their own rules. Territorial boundedness, political and economic isolation, and subsistence economy no longer apply under the conditions of colonialism. To argue, as Gulliver did (in the 1969 edited volume *Tradition and Transition in East Africa*) that they continue to use ' tribe' not out of ' defiance' but because Africans themselves use it when speaking in English (Mafeje 1971:253–4) would be woolly-

headed. Mafeje did not ' deny the existence of tribal ideology and sentiment in Africa…The fact that it works …is no proof that " tribes" or " tribalism" exists in any objective sense' (1971:25–9). The persistence of ' tribalism' in such context is ' a mark of *false consciousness*' (Mafeje 1971:259, emphasis in original). More importantly, that cultural affinity (what he called ' cultural links') is deployed in securing ' a more comfortable place' is no evidence of ' tribalism' . More forces may be at work than ' tribal' identity, including occupational and class identities. Mafeje cited Mitchell' s 1956 monograph, *The Kalela Dance* and Epstein' s *Politics in an Urban African Community*, which both point to such alternative explanations.[5]

At the heart of Mafeje' s argument is Anthropology' s conceptual conundrum. The categories might have been valid once, Mafeje argued, but not any more because the colonial encounter ended the territorial and political isolation of the ' tribes' and their subsistence economies. Further, the ' territoriality' that was supposed to be the conceptual basis of ' tribes' did not exist in Mafeje' s reference group, the AmaXhosa; they were never organised under a single political unit even when found in the same region. This is a theme Mafeje returned to in his 1991 book in the case of the Great Lake Region of East Africa. In spite of these, anthropologists who studied sociational dynamics outside the ' tribal homelands' persisted in deploying the categories. It is this invariant commitment to the categories that Mafeje called ' tribal ideology' or the ' ideology of tribalism' . It was no longer scholarship but ideology – not that Mafeje thought scholarship could be non-ideological.

The new army of political scientists trouping into Africa in the periods immediately before and after ' independence' would go on to deploy the same mode of writing and thinking. If the anthropologist could be excused because the study of ' tribes' is his/her *raison d'être* the Africanist political scientist had no such excuse (Mafeje 1971:257). The result is that similar phenomena in other parts of the world are ' explained' differently – with ' tribe' or primitivity being Africa' s explanatory category. The tribal categories are used simultaneously to explain ' pattern maintenance and persistence' and the failure of ' modernity' !

Much in the same way that Magubane' s vigorous critique of the Manchester School (Magubane 1971) was liberating for many African students studying Anthropology or Sociology in the United States at the time, Mafeje' s paper, of the same year, had similar edifying effects on the same cohort of African students studying in the UK or Anglophone Africa, as Zack-Williams has noted.[6]

Mafeje pursued his line of thought at the expense of conceding that the category might have been valid at an earlier time (Mafeje 1971:258). Not only does Anthropology deal with its objects of inquiry outside history, it is ill equipped to address the issues of history. The ' isolation' (political and economic) and territoriality that were supposed to define the African communities before the colonial encounter hardly stand up to scrutiny when approached from the perspectives of History and Archaeology. Neither about Africa, Asia or the Americas, is it possible to sustain the claims of territoriality and isolation. None of the groups in West Africa that are still routinely referred to as ' tribes' would fit the definition hundreds of years before the first intrepid anthropologist arrived on their doorsteps. Further, the very act of naming and labelling requires encounter. ' Germanic tribes' , as a label, is only feasible in the encounter with the Greek or Roman ' Superior Other' who does the naming and the labelling. Isolation is thus unimaginable. *Alterity rather than any conceptual validity is foundational to labelling one community of people a 'tribe', another a nation*. The Germanic tribal Other is immediately the ' Barbarian' : an inferior Other. The appropriation of such alterity by the labelled is one of the legacies of colonisation, such that it is still possible for Africans themselves to speak of their local potentates as ' tribal authority' ! What is required at the level of scholarship and everyday discourse is the complete extirpation of the category of ' tribe' – evident in Mafeje' s works from 1963 to 2004, but insufficiently extirpated, conceptually, in 1971.

The same extirpation cannot be said for the category of ' Bantu-speakers' (Mafeje 1967, 1991), which he used as a shorthand for speakers of ' Bantu languages' (2000:67). Even if it is possible to categorise the 681 languages referred to by linguists as belonging to the ' Bantoid' subset of the 961 languages in the Benue–Congo group – itself a ' sub-family of the Niger–Congo phylum' [7] – labelling the languages as ' Bantu' is the ultimate in extroversion and alterity. While the languages may share linguistic characteristics and *Bantu* generally means ' people' (*Abantu* in IsiXhosa), none of the groups is self-referentially ' Bantu' . The labelling is rooted in European alterity, which found its apogee in the Apartheid racist group classification, with all Africans designated ' Bantu' – hence Bantu education, etc. A geographic classification, similar to ' Niger–Congo' rather than Bantu, might be less eviscerating. Even if one were to accept the singularity of classification involved – ' 961 languages' as so linguistically close as to be given a name – it does not explain why Africans have to absorb the alterity. What is more, other linguists consider Malcolm Guthrie' s method, which is the source of the classification, as deeply flawed. The role of missionaries in inventing the fragmentation of African languages and then scripting exclusive ethnic identities on the back of such fragmentation is widely known (Chimhundu 1992). Undoing this fragmentation has been the essence of Kwesi Prah' s Centre for the Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Cape Town. The idea of ' Bantu-speakers' is an aspect of the inadequate ' negation of negation' (Mafeje 2000:66) that I had hoped to explore with him in the audio-visual interview planned for May 2007. It is a task that we must take upon ourselves as surviving African scholars.

Negation of Negation: Mafeje on Anthropology

Mafeje' s (2000) *Africanity: A Combative Ontology* is perhaps his most eloquent and elegant enunciation of the twinned agenda of the ' determined negation of negation' (ibid., p.66) and the pursuit of endogeneity. The former requires an uncompromising refutation of the epistemology of alterity that has shaped modes of gazing and writing about Africa and Africans. Such negation of alterity is the beginning of the journey to affirmation: a method of scholarship rooted in the collective Self and speaking to it without the anxiety regarding what the western Other has to say or think about us. In its specific sense, the two write-ups (2001, Mafeje 2000) were in reaction to the ' cosmopolitan' anxieties of the postmodern monologue that Achille Mbembe sought to foist on the CODESRIA community. The

year 2000 marked the reappropriation of the institution from the intellectual misuse to which it had been subjected.[8] Mafeje' s pieces were an ode to a recovered patrimony. However, Mafeje' s ' determined negation of negation' goes back much further, and its object was the discipline of Anthropology as the epitome of alterity.

' The Problem of Anthropology…' (Mafeje 1976) was an intervention in the debates between different factions of anthropologists: on the one hand, the new generation of anthropologists with a radical orientation, and on the other, an older generation of ' mainstream' anthropologists. Kathleen Gough represented the former and Raymond Firth, the latter.[9] While Mafeje mentioned Magubane (1968) as one of the new generation repudiating mainstream Anthropology, Magubane was never an anthropologist; he trained at the University of Natal as a sociologist.

As mentioned earlier, ' The Problem of Anthropology…' was elegantly written – in the best tradition of Mafeje' s scholarship. Elegant erudition aside, Mafeje' s contention was that Anthropology had passed its ' sell-by' date, and it was time to move on to something different. ' Among the social sciences' , Mafeje argued, ' anthropology is the only discipline which is specifically associated with colonialism and dissociated with metropolitan societies' (1976:317). The alterity associated with Anthropology is not accidental or temporal; it is immanent. If, as Raymond Firth (1972) claimed, Anthropology is ' the legitimate child of Enlightenment' , the leading intellectuals of the Enlightenment, unlike latter-day anthropologists, were preoccupied with accounting for ' the moral, genetic and historical unity of mankind' and ' had little regard for exotic customs' (Mafeje 1976:310). However, insofar as the scholarship of the Enlightenment ' sought to make its own anthropological viewpoint universal' (ibid.) it inspired a ' civilising mission' in relation to non-European peoples – a pseudonym for pillage and imperialism. Anthropology, as a discipline, is rooted in this venture; it is in this sense that, contrary to Firth' s claim, Anthropology is a child of imperialism, and a foster-child (if not grandchild) of Enlightenment. English socialists like Beatrice Webb, for instance, did not think it strange to talk of East Asians as savages (Chang 2008); Christian missionaries took such labelling for granted: a pervasive conception of Africa and Africans that has received a renewed impetus. Anthropology is one discipline founded on such inferior othering of its ' objects' of study.

Unlike Gough and others who sought to reform Anthropology, Mafeje' s contention is that epistemic ' othering' is so *immanent* to Anthropology as to be its *raison d'être*. The point is not to reform it but to extirpate it. Mafeje uses ' anthropology' in at least two senses: anthropology as a conceptual concern with ontological discourses (Mafeje 1997a:7), and Anthropology as an epistemology of alterity. While Mafeje associates the latter with the discipline, it is equally as much a mode of thinking and writing that considers the ' object' as the inferior or the exotic Other. It is the latter that one would classify as the ' anthropologised' reasoning about Africa – a discursive mode that persists and what I consider the *curse of anthropology* in the study of Africa. As a discipline, however, Mafeje was careful to distinguish between the works of Colonial Anthropology (most emblematic of British Anthropology) and works of practitioners such as Maurice Godelier and Claude Meillassoux. The former is more foundationally associated with Anthropology ' as a study of " primitive" societies' (Mafeje 1997a:6); the latter, Mafeje insisted, must be taken seriously: ' their deep idiographic knowledge, far from diminishing their capacity to produce nomothetic propositions, has helped them to generate new concepts' (Mafeje 1991:10). They approached the African societies on their own terms – without alterity.

Anthropologists may claim they are no longer concerned with ' tribes' , but alterity remains their *raison d'être*. The study of the ' exotic Other' is only a dimension of alterity; often the ' less-than-equal Other' . As an undergraduate, I had the good fortune of studying in a university that insisted from the early 1960s to eliminate Anthropology. Even so, my first-year teachers included social anthropologists who came with Anthropology' s mode of native gazing, which struck me then as the ' Sociology of the primitive Other' . It was probably the reason why Mafeje' s ' The Problem of Anthropology…' resonated so much with me when I first read it. The claims by contemporary anthropologists that they are committed to the wellbeing of their research subjects or that field method defines their discipline are rather lame. Even the most racist colonial anthropologists made similar claims of adhesion to ' their tribes' . We will address this further later in this paper.

Further, ethnography is no more unique to Anthropology than quantitative method is to Economics. The methodological opaqueness of the anthropologist' s ' field method' quite easily gives way to methodological licence. Since the function of anthropologists is to ' explain' exotic, foreign cultures, and strange customs to their compatriots, methodological licence and the erroneous coding of the ' objects' of Anthropology are taking on the same instrumentalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century' s new age of Empire as applied Anthropology did under colonialism. Closely associated with the epistemology of alterity is erasure, which becomes distinctly imperial at inter-personal levels; and those attempting erasure tend to employ derision and intellectual bullying.

In response to Mafeje' s (Mafeje 1996, 1997b) critical review of Sally Moore' s book (Moore 1996: 22), Moore sought to deride his claim that he ' might have prevailed on Monica Wilson not to [use the tribal categories] in *Langa*' (Mafeje 1997b:12). Moore' s response was that while Mafeje might have been responsible for the fieldwork, Wilson produced the manuscript, an assertion that hardly reflects well on her own understanding of the process of producing a manuscript. Authorship, if that is what this confers on Monica Wilson, does not mean exclusivity of even the most seminal ideas in a manuscript. Significantly, Moore confused ' detribalisation' used earlier by the Wilsons for a rejection of the category of ' tribe' or ' tribalism' . Conversely, Moore failed to account for the recurrence of this rejection of alterity in two other publications by Mafeje (Mafeje 1963, 1967) in the same period. She might simply never have bothered to read them.

In response to Mafeje' s observation that she failed to account for the works of African scholars in her book with the lone exception of Valentin Mudimbe, a distinct form of erasure, Sally Moore' s response was twofold. First, that she left out the works of African scholars like Magubane and Mafeje because she concentrated on books and monographs not journal articles (Moore 1996:22). Second, that she cited many more other African scholars. On both accounts, she was less than candid. The sources she used are profuse with journal articles –German, French,

English, etc. (Moore 1994:135–60). Several of these are American anthropology journals, including *Current Anthropology* in which Magubane' s piece appeared. It is difficult to imagine that Moore was unaware of Magubane' s 1971 paper at the time it was published given the uproar it generated and her seniority – she was Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Southern California at the time.

On the second charge, Moore' s response was that she did nothing of the sort and listed several African scholars she claimed she cited. Other than Mudimbe, she engaged with none of the others. When she did, if one can call it engagement, they were part of general citation rather than an engagement with their ideas. The two references to Onwuka Dike (Moore 1994:11, 15) were from his obituary on Melville Herskovits. You would hardly know that Dike founded the famous Ibadan School of History. The references to Jomo Kenyatta were either incidental to Moore' s discussion of Malinowski or an oblique reference to Africans publishing ' ethnographic monographs of their own peoples' or ' emigration' (Moore 1994:32–3). In the latter, Kenyatta was part of five Africans grouped together, but the reader will have no idea what exactly they wrote. The reference to Paulin Hountondji was second-hand, and part of African intellectuals who ' rail against what they see as the misreading of outsiders' (Moore 1994:84): hardly an evidence of intellectual courtesy.

The only African scholar she discussed with any degree of ' seriousness' was Valentin Mudimbe, and even so, it was in a remarkably derisive and imperial manner. She referred to him as ' a Zairean who lives in the United States' , like he did not belong. Mudimbe' s *The Invention of Africa* was dismissed as ' complex, indigestible, and highly opinionated' (Moore 1994:84), without any apparent awareness that to label someone opinionated is to be opinionated. If one were to look for the enduring tendency to treat Africans and their intellectuals as children one need go no further than read Moore. She would make similarly condescending remarks about Mafeje in a later article (Moore 1998), labelling his work as driven by ' polemic strategy' , ' noises' , ' diatribe' , etc. As before, Moore failed to engage with a range of Mafeje' s works or even the ' Anthropology and Independent Africans' (Mafeje 1998) to which she claimed she was responding. Again, you might be forgiven for thinking she was talking to a two-year-old! How, for instance, is the crisis of funding that African universities face an answer to the alterity immanent to Anthropology? It was as if Africans will have to choose between alterity and generous funding. Yet the high point of the rejection of alterity was when research funding was readily available *within* the universities themselves. The University of Ibadan (Nigeria) rejected the idea of a Department of Anthropology in the early 1960s when it did not have any problem of research funding and its staff had no need to seek external funding. The researches undertaken by Kayode Adesogan[10] in organic chemistry were funded entirely from grants from the university (Adesogan 1987). It led to his contributing more than twenty new compounds to the lexicon of chemistry, precisely because his scholarship was rooted in endogeneity (Adesina 2006:137). The same can be said of the diverse schools of History in Africa – from Dar-es-Salaam to Ibadan and Dakar. They flourished in the periods *before* the funding crisis. What they shared in common was an uncompromising rejection of the colonial racist historiography (Adesina 2005, 2006). The difference in chemistry and history is that alterity is not immanent to them. History did not originate in the study of the ' primitive' Other nor was reserved for it. It was, therefore, amenable to epistemic challenge on its own terms. The same cannot be said for Anthropology!

Mafeje was fundamentally right in seeing through this in his review of Moore' s book. He ended the review by saying he did not mind the candour of those who write about Africa as:

> Simply a continent of savages (read 'tribes') and venomous beasts…As a matter of fact, I like black mambas lethal as they are and wish Africans could learn from them. Perhaps, in the circumstances their continent would cease to be a playground for knowers of absolute knowledge and they in turn would lose their absolute alterity. (1997b:14)

It was a 'call to arms' that many failed to heed. The debate in *African Sociological Review* 2(1), 1998, is interesting for the persistent claims by the professional anthropologists that Mafeje' s critique was ' *passé*' (Laville 1998). If Anthropology has transcended its alterity, why do so many anthropologists persist in exoticising their ' objects' of inquiries? When the professional anthropologists transcend alterity, how will the result be different from Sociology? If, as Nkwi (Nkwi 1998:62) argued, ' the trend in African Anthropology is towards the interdisciplinary approach' is the ' discipline' still a discipline? Nkwi is right in arguing that more Africans were engaged in active objections to Anthropology than Mafeje acknowledged: Mafeje mentioned himself and Magubane. A case in point is Omafume Onoge at Ibadan. But Mafeje was referring to focused dissembling of Anthropology' s epistemology of alterity, not the ' narcissism of minor differences' within the camp (cf. Ntarangwi, Mills and Babiker 2006) that the deliberations of the African anthropologists he was critiquing represented. Most Africans simply walked away from the discipline rather than dissipate their energies in arguing with the ' owners' of the discipline. Central to this is the inherently racist nature of its discourse – alterity. I recognised the racist epistemology in my first term as an undergraduate; Mafeje (1976) only confirmed what I knew. More than thirty years later, we have African students expressing similar feelings within a few days of being in their first-year Anthropology class at Rhodes University. It is either the discipline has overcome its epistemology of alterity or it has not. Clearly it has not, precisely because whatever the negotiations around the ' protective belt' of the discipline' s core discourse, the core remains rooted in alterity.

The claim to field method (ethnography) as a defining aspect of Anthropology is equally intriguing. Ethnographic technique was used before the rise of Anthropology and is used in other disciplines beyond Anthropology. As Mafeje (1996) noted, he did not have to be an anthropologist to write *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*. I made extensive use of ethnographic technique in my doctoral study of a Nigerian refinery (Adesina 1988); I did it as a sociologist. A discipline' s claim to being mono-methodological is hardly a positive reflection on its credibility. Research problems suggest the research techniques to adopt, not the discipline; most research issues would require multiple research techniques, not being wedded to a particular one.

Anthropology was born of a European intellectual division of labour. When they stayed home and studied their own people, they did Sociology; when they went abroad to study other people, ate strange food and learnt strange customs and languages, they did Anthropology (Adesina 2006). The idea of a ' native anthropologist' , as Onoge noted, is a contradiction. In spite of protestations to the contrary, Anthropology is still more oriented towards the study of the ' exotic Other' than not. When they write about their own societies most still write as if they are outsiders. In 2007, it is still possible to come across a manuscript written by a Yoruba medical anthropologist with a title that reads in part: ' ... of the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria' . It is the kind of extroversion that Hountondji (1990, 1997) warned against. Clearly, if the audience was conceived as Yoruba such exoticisation would not be necessary.

Those who wish to study non-Western societies in the tradition of Godelier and Meillassoux should get beyond casting these societies as exotic objects that need coding for the ' non-Native' audience and broaden their methodological scope; in other words, move over to doing Sociology.

Against Disciplinarity and Epistemology?

However, two issues that I have argued with Mafeje about and would have discussed at the planned interview are his repudiation of ' disciplines' in the social sciences and ' epistemology' . Given his ill-health in the four years before his death, I thought it would be taking undue advantage of his health condition to raise these issues on the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin.* In an intellectual appreciation such as this one these concerns are worth flagging. Mafeje' s rejection of disciplines, I suspect, derives from his recognition that to develop a robust analysis of any social phenomenon you need the analytical skill drawn from a diversity of disciplines. Nevertheless, to reject disciplinarity on such grounds is to confuse issues of *pedagogy* with those of *research*. While knowledge production is inherently inter-disciplinary, interdisciplinarity works *because each discipline brings its strength to the table* of knowledge production. We address the broad scope of knowledge essential to rigorous analysis by offering ' liberal arts education' , but in the context of disciplinary anchor. From the point of pedagogy, transdisciplinarity is a recipe for epistemic disaster: you end up with people who are neither conceptually rigorous nor methodologically proficient. They are more likely to regurgitate than be profound. Mafeje' s own profundity comes from fusing his trainings in Biology, Sociology, Social Anthropology, Philosophy and Economics rather their absence.

Mafeje' s rejection of ' epistemology' is rooted in his aversion for dogmatism, but that is hardly the same as epistemology, which as any dictionary will attest is 'the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, its presuppositions and foundations, and its extent and validity'. The study of specific epistemic standpoints – from positivism to Marxism and postmodernism – is the business of epistemology. The crisis of dogmatic adhesion to an epistemic standpoint can hardly be construed as a crisis of epistemology. Postmodernism' s pretension to being against grand narratives ended up erecting a grand narrative of its own. What it had to say that was brilliant was not new, and what was new was not brilliant. We deconstruct postmodernism' s deconstructionist claims precisely from the standpoint of epistemology – accounting for a paradigm' s presuppositions, foundations, claims to knowledge production, extent and validity, as the dictionary says.

The Pursuit of Endogeneity

Right from the start of his intellectual career, Mafeje' s rejection of alterity was not simply a matter of rebellion; it was immediately about affirmation. It is instructive, for instance, that not one of those who purported to contend with him in the *ASR* 'debate' showed an awareness of anything Mafeje wrote before 1991. As mentioned earlier, the idea of endogeneity is about scholarship ' derived from within' , and that is not simply a matter of ethnography. Rather than works of anthropology, Mafeje' s sole-authored works in the 1960s (Mafeje 1963, 1967) are works of profound ' endogeny' . They reflect a strong sociological mindset, combining fine field-craft with analytical rigour. For instance, Mafeje located the *imbongi* or bard in a comparative context, Mafeje (1967:195); he drew comparison with the Celtic bards; an immediate extirpation of alterity that would have marked the *imbongi* as a ' praise singer' of a primitive culture.[11] He demonstrated their role as social critics who can be withering in their poetic social commentaries. Rather than ' tribe' or ' tribal' Mafeje used the categories of ' South African bard' and ' South African traditional bards' .

The profundity of *The Theory and Ethnography of an African Social Formation* – apart from its artisanal nature and conceptual rigour – derives from Mafeje' s effort to understand the interlacustrine kingdoms *on their own terms* – from within and without the burden of fitting them into particular ' universalist' typologies. In the process all manner of intellectual totems were overturned. I suspect that this is what Mafeje meant by his rejection of ' epistemology': the freedom to allow the data to speak to the writer rather than imposing paradigms on them. What such scholarship calls for are authentic interlocutors able to decode local ' vernaculars' : the encoded local ontology and modes of comprehension (Mafeje 1991:9–10; 2000:66, 68). Mafeje argued that this is what distinguished Olufemi Taiwo' s account of the Yoruba from those of Henry Louis Gate and Kwesi Prah' s interlocution of the Akan codes from Anthony Kwame Appiah' s. This capacity, as others have demonstrated, does not come simply from being ' a native' (Amadiume 1987; Nzegwu 2005; Oyèwùmí 1997): it requires endogeneity; it requires being authentic interlocutors. The result in the case of the latter has been seminal contributions to African gender scholarship without the anxiety of wanting to be cosmopolitan. The same applies to the diverse African schools of History.[12]

In earlier works, such as his review of Harold Wolpe' s *On the Articulation of Modes of Production*, Mafeje (1981) demonstrated such profundity as an interlocutor, decoding the local ' vernacular'. Added to this was a more conceptually rigorous handle on what Etienne Balibar meant by ' social formation' and why Wolpe' s idea of ' articulation' is a misreading of Balibar. Similar capacity is evident in his ' Beyond " Dual Theories" of Economic Growth' (Mafeje 1978a:47–73). The village (' traditional' economy) is intricately linked to the ' modern' economy of the cities. Some thirty years after Mafeje' s critique of the ' dual economy' thesis, the debate on ' two economies' is going on in South Africa without as much as an acknowledgment of his contribution on these areas. Similarly, the collection of

essays in a special issue of *Africanus*,[13] concerned with a critique of the ' two economies' discourse in South Africa and Wolpe' s ' articulation of modes of production' as the basis of some of such critiques, did not contain a single reference to Mafeje' s works in these areas.

For Mafeje:

> Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse... when Africans speak for themselves and about themselves, the world will hear the authentic voice, and will be forced to come to terms with it in the long-run... If we are adequately Afrocentric the international implications will not be lost on the others. (2000:66–7)

The resulting product may ' well lead to polycentrism rather than homogeneity/ homogenisation... mutual awareness does not breed universalism' (Mafeje 2000:67).

A Return to Intimacy

Archie, Bitter?

Let me end by returning to the personal. One of the things I have heard said about Archie –apart from the tendency to describe his style of writing as ' gladiatorial' – is that he was in the end a bitter man. The same ' Mafeje scholar' would claim that he never transcended his being denied the appointment to the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1968. Archie' s rejection of an honorary doctorate by the university is offered as an illustration of such bitterness and failure to ' get over' the 1968 experience. This was a subject that I explored in an interview I had with Archie in the early hours of 28 October 2007 in Pretoria. I asked him for his sense of the 1968 experience – I made no reference to any characterisation of him regarding that experience; just his own sense of the experience. Specifically, I asked for his understanding of the roles of several individuals and the fact that Michael Whisson was the beneficiary of the post he was denied. What struck me in Archie' s response was his immense generosity of spirit towards the individuals who, in his argument, were ' trapped' in history – in terms of institutional constraints and the limits of ' voluntarism' . If there was any trace of bitterness, I could not detect it. It gave me an insight into a style of his writing that I initially found irritating – the tendency to use third-person pronouns as if he was separate from the processes of history that he was discussing. It is a style that is quite evident in his last works on Anthropology (Mafeje 1997b, 1998, 2001). It was in those early hours of the morning that I realised that it came from his training as a biologist in the 1950s and a style of scholarly writing that separates the ' scientist' from ' the object' of research. Thinking of Archie as dispassionate may be something of an oxymoron, but it is this capacity to see the other side even when he disagrees with them that I detected; it is one that allows him to relent when he thinks you had a better handle on an idea or issue. It could be argued that what I experienced is an instance of the problem of phenomenological research: the research subject as a knowing subject, telling the researcher what s/ he wants to hear; a dissembling key informant.

First, there was no reason for Archie not to express very strong feelings about the subject; he is widely acknowledged as a victim of institutionalised racism. Hours before, we had dined at his preferred restaurant in Arcadia, Pretoria and we had engaged in the usual vigorous discussion of a range of issues. He won a few, but got his white wine wrong! Why would he suddenly go mute on me? The interview was not on record – there were no tapes; there was no reason why this most passionate of intellectuals should suddenly grow reticent. It was one of the ideas that I wanted to explore before we got to the formal, recorded, interviews.

Second, there is independent evidence of such absence of bitterness. A few years after the 1968 incident, Archie collaborated with others in a collection of essays in honour of Monica Wilson (Mafeje 1975). Michael Whisson was a co-editor of the volume. Finally, when in February 2007 he raised the issue of his intellectual isolation over an intimate dinner, at his favourite restaurant in Waterkloof, Pretoria, it was about the disparity in the relative intimacy he enjoyed within the CODESRIA community and his intellectual isolation in South Africa, it was about his returning home to exile, not UCT, and it was expressed more in sadness than bitterness.

What did Archie have to say for his rejection of the honorary degree? The university' s manner of making amends should not be simply about him. In the absence of an acknowledgment of the injustice done to *all* people of colour who went through the university, as staff or students during the period of Apartheid, accepting the honorary degree would be to individualise what is owed a wider collective. At the individual level, an acknowledgment of what is being atoned ought to *precede* the award, rather than an oblique assumption that it was, *ipso facto*, an act of atonement. Rather than bitterness, Archie' s rejection was based on principle; it was a decision that took him long and was hard to reach. A formal apology was sent posthumously to the Mafeje family in South Africa – in a letter dated 5 April 2007 from Professor Njabulo S. Ndebele, the university' s vice chancellor.

Generous and Loyal

Archie was as gentle as he was vigorous in debate. Over dinner, with a glass of red wine and steak in tow, he was a ' master craftsman' , but you need to listen carefully because of his constant reflexivity and the subtlety and nuanced nature of his discourse. Such reflexivity dots his works: a capacity to argue with and dismiss some of his earlier writings (see for instance, Mafeje 1971, 1978a, 2001, 2001). Many of us who have had the privilege of this encounter will attest to how much of his ideas have shaped our scholarship; but that was because he did not expect you to treat him as an oracle. Listen, but engage with equal vigour. The age difference between you and him counted for nothing; he considered you an intellectual colleague, and if you are a comrade, he took you even more seriously and demanded more of you. In his last few years he nibbled at his food rather than ate heartily; the discussions you had seemed to fill him more than the food.

Archie was a man of immense generosity of spirit and loyalty. I would arrive in his apartment outside Pretoria to find that he had neatly made the bed for me in the guest room, with clean towels and toiletries neatly laid out. After a long evening of dining out – and he dined like a Bedouin – he would engage you in discussions into the early hours of the morning; never about trivial matters. He would worry whether you were fine, if you needed coffee or tea. It would be a delight if you shared a glass of red wine, then you got down to serious discussion.

The tragedy for all of us, especially in South Africa, is that Archie did not die of

natural causes – he died of intellectual neglect and isolation. In spite of the enormous love of his family and loyal, lifelong friends, Archie' s oxygen was vigorous intellectual engagement. He lived on serious, rigorous and relevant scholarship. Starved of that, he simply withered. After four decades in exile, he returned home in 2002 to exile. Yet the gradual dissipation of our intangible intellectual heritage in South Africa by our failure to nurture the heritage we have in people like him is not limited to him. The twenty-fifth anniversary of Ruth First' s assassination in Maputo passed in August 2007 with few national acknowledgments. This I find confounding. If Archie' s passing away forces us to rethink how we engage with this heritage we might as yet salvage something for a new generation that desperately needs intellectual role models, not just business tycoons.

Lessons of Mafeje's Scholarship: Concluding Remarks

The lessons that a new generation of African scholars can take from Mafeje' s scholarship are many. I will mention four:

1. Deep familiarity with the literature and subject;
2. writing;
3. Immense theoretical rigour; and
4. An unapologetic and relentless commitment to Africa.

Over time, Mafeje moved from being proto-Trotskyite (in the tradition of South Africa' s Non-European Unity Movement) to being Afrocentric,[14] but these were simply the scaffolding for deep social commitment. Noteworthy is that a rejection of dogmatism did not result in eclecticism in Mafeje' s hands. You cannot walk away from any of his papers without being struck by his voracious intellectual appetite and deep familiarity with his field, even when he moved into new fields. He took the field craft seriously and was ' artisanal' in connecting the dots. But more significantly, his prodigious intellect was immediately grounded in addressing real-life problems; scholarship (however profound) must find its relevance in engagement. Mafeje' s works on agrarian and land issues, development studies, democracy and governance, liberation scholarship, African epistemic standpoints, etc., constantly challenged and prodded a new generation to think large and engage in issues around us. The policy implications are enormous. He was uncompromising in demanding that Africans must insist on their own space; be completely unabashed in rejecting every form of domination. But averting alterity is not about being marooned on the tip of criticism; it must move from negation to affirmation.

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Notes

1. Jimi O. Adesina is Professor of Sociology at Rhodes University, South Africa. He is engaged in a research project that explores the works of Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane, under the rubrics of *Exile, Endogeneity and Modern Sociology in South Africa*.
2. Quoting Mao Zedong via Kwesi K. Prah.
3. The shift from first-name term of endearment to formal academic reference is also because while the earlier part is personal, this and the following sections are more concerned with breaking academic bread with a progenitor.
4. Much of the claims of taking on Mafeje, especially Sally Moore' s, failed to acknowledge this; see further on this later in this paper.

5 J.C., Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance* (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 27, Lusaka, 1956); A.L. Epstein, *Politics in an Urban African Community* (Manchester, 1958).

6 See the comments of the African reviewers to whom Magubane' s paper was sent by the editor of *Current Anthropology*. Onoge, who met Magubane in the US, described him as ' the most exciting African sociologist' of the time (Onoge 1977 [1971]).

7. Cf. http://www.powerset.com/explore/semhtml/Bantoid_langages. Also see http://www.ethnologue.org/.
8. Tiyambe Zeleza has documented his own experience of the silencing of alternative voices to Mbembe' s monologue. The institutional dimensions drove CODESRIA to the precipice of extinction. For the relentless protection of our patrimony, generations of African social scientists will owe Mahmood Mamdani, the CODESRIA President at the time, a world of gratitude.
9. This distinction is, of course, relative. Kathleen Gough was born in 1925 while Raymond Firth in 1901. The distinction is more one of relative accretion to ' classical anthropology' .
10. Retired professor of Organic Chemistry, University of Ibadan (Ibadan, Nigeria).
11. The similarity included the mode of self-appointment, being arbiter and conveyer of public opinion, etc. In this Mafeje registered a disagreement with the claim by the eminent linguist, A.C. Jordan, that the *imbongi* has no ' parallel ... in Western poetry' . In the same breadth Mafeje pointed to the non-hereditary nature of the *imbongi* in contrast with the European bards.
12. See Toyin Falola' s (2000) collection of J.F. Ade Ajayi' s papers for insights into the methodological and epistemological issues that shaped the Ibadan School of History. Onwuka Dike was the founder and inspiration of the school.
13. Volume 37, Number 2, 2007. *Africanus* is a journal of Development Studies published by the UNISA (University of South Africa) Press.
14. My appreciation to Thandika Mkandawire, an enduring *mwalimu*, in this regard.