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'IS EDUCATION THE MAKING MIND FULL,
OR IS IT THE MAKING MIND STRONG?':
REFLECTIONS ON THE 1994 HISTORY WORKSHOP TEACHERS' CONFERENCE

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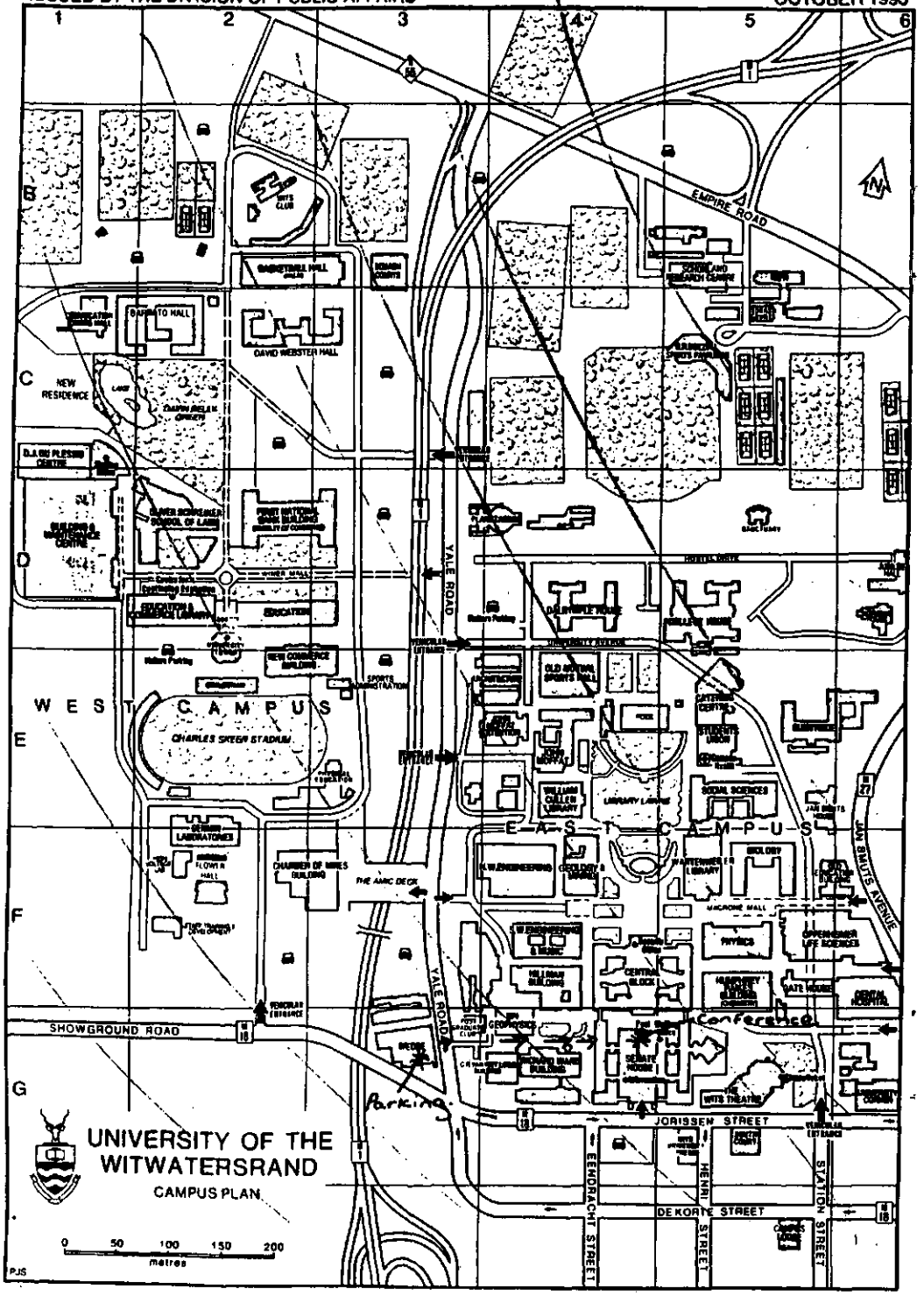

'Is Education the making mind full, or is it the making mind strong?': Reflections on the 1994 History Workshop Teachers' Conference.

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Paper presented to the History Workshop Academic Conference, July 1994.

Introduction:

Half a century ago and well before the official advent of Bantu Education, teacher Nkomo wrote in to his professional association's journal to complain about the prevalence of rote-learning in 'native' schools. The quotation which forms part of the title of this paper is a rhetorical question which Mr Nkomo used in that letter.[1] 'Native' education's susceptibility to rote-learning had already been remarked upon unfavourably by the majority report of the Native Economic Commission (1932), for which some unpalatable remedies had been suggested.[2] Behind these lay assumptions that

[1] WF Nkomo, letter to the editor, The Good Shepherd March 1939, vol xii, no.23, p.7.

[2] For a summary of the Native Economic Commission Report that brings out these details see: D. Rheinallt Jones and AL Saffery in Bantu Studies, 1933, vol viii, pp. 235-255 and in Bantu Studies, 1934 vol viii, pp. 61-193.

rote-learning was ineffectual, failing to assist Africans in learning how to maintain the 'reserves' or to perform appropriately in the social hierarchy. Ironically, Mr Nkomo derived some of his inspiration for challenging the methodology in 'native' schools from the author of Bantu Education, WWM Eiselen, who was Chief Inspector of Native Education in the Transvaal at the time, and who was distressed by its manifold inadequacies.[3] Nkomo's choice of a pedagogical model should caution us against embracing any apparently progressive methodologies, without examining their origins and contexts thoroughly.

Nevertheless, Nkomo's letter, written so long ago, has a pertinent and colourful critique of rote-learning. Without the benefit of the sophisticated politics of knowledge literature published in recent years, he was able to see that his colleagues were possessed by ' ... a mistaken idea of the dictum "Knowledge is power"'. Knowledge, he reflected, had become synonymous with the dictation and memorisation of teachers' notes so that the teachers, he wrote, throwing in an ineffably 1930s metaphor, acted towards their pupils as if they were inflating a 'motor tube'.[4]

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[3] See the TED Reports for the years ended 1936 to 1947 for the period of Eiselen's tenure and his impressions of Native Education. Especially interesting is his outburst of 1941 in TED Report for the Year Ended 1941, Pretoria:Government Printer, 1946, TP no1 - 1946.

[4] See T. Holt, Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination and Understanding, College Board, 1990. Holt addresses the problems of high school history teachers who are oppressed by '...the tyranny of coverage and the enormous pressure to convey a set of basic "facts"', p.1.

Nkomo's personal experience suggested to him that any teacher who dared to proceed without notes would be angrily challenged by disapproving colleagues. One of the points I want to make in the course of this paper is that when we dismiss rote-learning because we do not believe that it makes 'the mind strong', we fail to hear the clamour that has persisted, despite all sorts of epistemological revelations and putative advances in political consciousness, from those teachers who have an investment in content regurgitation. 'We are encouraged in our pappegaai (parrot) work,' said one of the teachers at the History Workshop Teachers Conference this year and her comment generated a rueful, almost self-deprecatory laughter from the audience. There are many teachers who still hold fast to what Nkomo claimed was 'a mistaken idea of the dictum "Knowledge is power"', but we have little understanding of what it is that sustains this enduring obduracy.

This paper is not a comprehensive report of the History Workshop Teachers Conference entitled 'Teaching Democracy in a Diverse Classroom', which took place in May of this year, but it attempts to catch hold of some of the ideas and challenges offered by the extremely accomplished speakers and their interlocutors - the teachers. (Programme attached). The speakers' contributions are not discussed in order of their appearance on the programme, since I am attempting to draw out themes that only became apparent in the course of the conference and were not part of our original organisational blueprint. Speakers were asked to draw on their own

fields of expertise to talk about issues related to the current high school history curriculum which provided some opportunity for exploring concepts of democracy.

All of the speakers referred to their own teaching experiences at tertiary level. I cannot remember Teachers Conference speakers ever consciously reflecting on the reactions of their students in university classrooms before. In previous years they have positioned themselves within the academic debates rather than behind the rostrum. They also all grappled from the front of Senate House 6, in what was an incongruously mundane setting after the euphoria of April, with explaining change. 'History is about the study of processes that give rise to events,' said political studies lecturer Stephen Louw. Every presentation raised important issues about, not only the teaching of, but also the writing of history. Unfortunately, the teachers in the audience did not always recognise that the academics were talking about the same processes that they themselves are engaged in. Behind the university regalia and the language of 'students' and 'professors' and 'lecture theatres' we are all **teaching** and the problems that confront us are essentially the same.

1. Modifying Prejudices?

John Wright: Precolonial Democracy?

John Wright, the first speaker, set out to show the diversity and the range of development that characterised precolonial African societies. Before addressing the content of his paper, he described some of the 'stereotypes' and 'prejudices'[5] first year students bring to his course at the University of Natal. Black students tend to imagine Africa in the days before the white settlers as idyllic and, no doubt perfectly democratic, whereas white students think of precolonial Africa as a barren landscape peopled by barbarians. Wright suggested allowing students to bring their 'prejudices' out into the open and then, seeking through a critical presentation of the course material to 'modify' these 'prejudices'.

He emphasised the themes of process and change and the need to ask 'why?'. His clear and characteristically precise presentation forced the audience to follow the dynamic, interrogative pattern he traced. The strength of Wright's approach is highlighted if one compares it to the older attempts of another extremely skilled historian, Neil Parsons, to explain to high school students how 'the African kingdoms grew up...'[6]. Somehow, despite all Parsons' insight, his account is static and he forecloses on students'

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[5] I have conscientiously put the word 'prejudices' inside quotation marks every time it occurs because I want to draw attention to our own prejudices. How do we allow for students' expression of their own way of seeing the world if we dismiss their ideas as 'prejudices' right away? See below for further discussion of this point.

[6] N.Bhebe et al. Junior Certificate History of Southern Africa Book 1: Southern African Societies Before the Scramble. Oxford:Heinemann, 1979, pp.32-4.

possible answers by providing 'Economic Reasons', 'Social Reasons' and 'Political Reasons' in the same cut and dried formula that has alienated children from history for decades.

Wright also spoke about the capacity of 'evidence' to modify the 'prejudices' that students bring to class and it was a pity that we did not have an opportunity to explore this issue in greater detail as we had planned to do. (See programme for group discussions which were cut due to lack of time). I think that John Wright simplified the issue. Evidence is actually incapable of standing on its own, as we all know in theory. It depends for its life, in the first instance, on the historian turning it into evidence. In the electric atmosphere of the Mfecane colloquium held at the University of the Witwatersrand in September 1992, Norman Etherington took South African historians to task for their failure to grapple with the problems of evidence, which had been dramatically demonstrated by confrontations between Hamilton, Eldredge and Cobbing. Some of his opponents felt that Cobbing and his students dismissed evidence that did not suit the Cobbing case for slavery in southern Africa too easily, or that they were selective about what they believed from sources that they otherwise repudiated as too biased.[7]

In my own work, I have confronted the problem of evidence head-on.

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[7] This point is based on my personal recollection. Also see, C. Saunders. Writing History: South Africa's Urban past and other Essays. Pretoria:HSRC, 1992, pp.81-4.

I desperately wanted JEM Malepe, the president of the Transvaal Teachers Association (TATA) in the mid 1940s, to be a Location toady, who had tried to turn TATA away from radical politics towards an appreciation of choral music. I had a smattering of Sapire[8] that gave me a rough impression of the political factions in Brakpan Location where Malepe lived and worked, one short article from TATA's journal The Good Shepherd, that claimed Malepe's election had been managed by a 'clique' on the East Rand, and a string of angry letters to the editor berating him for giving so many column inches to eisteddfods instead of to teachers' meagre salaries. But was this enough to convict Malepe of accommodationist politics and from there to link him to a core of Location teachers within TATA who welcomed Eiselen's pre-Bantu Education policies?

A more celebrated case is that of Jeff Peires' presentation of Governor Sir George Grey in a chapter of his book on the Xhosa cattle-killing, entitled 'Crooked Like a Snake' - an epithet supposedly applied to Grey by natives of a country where there were no snakes![9] Through a brilliantly seductive style, Peires builds up a portrait of Grey as paranoid and probably addicted to opium. Peires admits that this latter assertion is based on a single, indirect source:

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[8] H. Sapire, African Political Organisations in Brakpan in the 1950s in P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962. Johannesburg:Ravan, 1993, pp. 252-274.

[9] J. Peires. The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7. Johannesburg:Ravan, 1989, pp.45-77.

Grey's advice to a subordinate in New Zealand, "Whenever you feel downhearted in your work, a little medicine would always set you right" Gorst (1908) p. 226. The rest is conjecture, based on Grey's clearly erratic behaviour.[10]

All professionals and students who have attempted independent historical research work have probably experienced the moments of excruciating self-doubt captured by novelist Barbara Raskin in the menopausal confessions of Hot Flashes. Raskin's principal character, now a tenured professor at Columbia is reminiscing about writing up her PHD dissertation:

> Worst of all, I discovered that most of my raw data didn't necessarily substantiate the theory I began to develop about female rites of passage in the Brazilian Amazon Mundurucu tribe ... I had to juggle the data to fit the concepts.[11]

Despite what I have said above, I do not think that our best historians, among whom I would include Peires, do 'juggle the data' very often in the disingenuous way that Raskin describes. But the interplay between 'concepts' and 'data' is complex. The 'facts' are not 'out there floating', as one of the high school students

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[10] Peires, footnote 7, p.74.

[11] B. Raskin. Hot Flashes London, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland:Bantam, 1987.

interviewed by Holt, expressed it. [12] That is precisely why it was so difficult to adjudicate between Cobbing and Hamilton - the sources do not declare themselves unambiguously to historians. Peires' footnote admission to conjecture in itself encourages his readers and students to think about the nature of evidence and what criteria it ought to satisfy. How much of it, from what kinds of sources do we need before we convert George Grey from the benevolent Governor of school text-books to Peires' drug-riddled monster? Most of the history text-books that have attempted to be progressive tell pupils in several clipped sentences about different categories of evidence (oral, documentary, primary and secondary and so on) in the introduction, but purge all traces of evidence from the rest of the text, referring elusively to what 'some people/historians say' - often in the interest of writing simply for non-mother tongue speakers. Some, such as the primary school series by Frances Graves, go a step beyond the inflating the 'motor tube' approach by presenting evidence as part of the chapter content, but tend to use chunks of evidence as comprehension tests from which pupils should derive rather staid, closed answers. Holt argues that it is this method of teaching history which makes its students feel as if it is 'sealed off from the lives of ordinary people'.[11]

Wright also touched on the nature of historical concepts and

[12] Holt, 1990, p. 2.

[11] Holt, p.2.

definitions. For example, he explained why the term 'tribe' is both offensive and imprecise. It fails to capture the dynamism and the diversity of the precolonial societies he was addressing. Perhaps we need to give more careful thought to other concepts that we use so often as abbreviations - revolution, industrialisation, unification and so on - a theme the next speaker Stephen Louw was to pick up on.

Many of us remember the frustration of being stuck in the Apartheid is/is not functional to Capital debate. Every article or paper you wrote had to refer to 'capital accumulation' and the 'crisis in reproduction' (of labour power it meant). Thousands of senior essays and post-graduate dissertations must have been clogged up by these phrases and they prevented their authors from asking either straightforward or more interesting questions. One of my cherished memories is of professor Bonner interrupting a tedious and half-hearted discussion on early radical literature in our Honours class. 'Well,' he said, 'what happened in 1886?' We all laughed and immediately abandoned the jargon that had prevented us from making an obvious connection - and from really understanding what the radical writers were arguing.

11. Stephen Louw: Democracy and Revolution in Europe.

The second speaker, Stephen Louw, also spoke about the 'ideological barriers' with which his students arrive in first year, as well as

their pervasive historical ignorance. On the whole, he found that black students tended to support uncritically what they thought of as communism, while white students were not prepared to concede that there had been anything positive about the socialist experiment. Louw commented that it was easier to break down these barriers than it was to shift the 'prejudices' that students held about South African history. Louw presented two explanatory models to the audience to account for the crumbling of the communist regimes in eastern Europe and, in particular, the ex-Soviet Union.

First he delineated the 'totalitarian model' - distinguishing between an authoritarian and a totalitarian society. He stressed features such as ideology, degree of popular support, Terror and, borrowing a neologism from Solzhenitsyn, the existence of an 'egocrat' at the pinnacle of totalitarian society. Louw demonstrated that this model was a product of a particular stage of the Cold War, suggesting that academic orthodoxies are often intimately associated with dominant institutional or ideological outlooks. While the model captured some of the quintessential features of the pre-1989 societies in east-central Europe and of the Nazi regime, it was too static and represented what might only have been one stage of totalitarian society.

How do we account for the tousle headed party goers from east Berlin who suddenly popped over the rapidly disintegrating Wall in November 1989, or of the extinction of Ceaucescu's seemingly

immortal Orwellian regime over Christmas of that same year? The totalitarian model, with its emphasis on total oppression and random Terror cannot explain why these things became possible in 1989. Drawing on the work of David Lane, Louw then presented what he called the structural functionalist model, in which the impact of industrialisation on social relations is provided for. In the course of sketching this model, Louw stressed the importance of changing generational perceptions - the first generation after the Russian Revolution was impressed by the rapid pace of industrialisation which turned their village 'into a megacity in a hurry', and they were (not universally of course) inclined to be loyal to the system which had produced such a miraculous change. But, in succeeding generations, as the pace slackened and industrialisation failed to deliver consumer goods in sufficient quantity or of quality, the system itself came under fire.

Louw also drew attention to the way women were treated in Soviet society, which did not recognise, once socialism had been instituted, that women had special interests. Women's difficulties and the injustices they suffered were supposed to have been extinguished along with capitalism which socialist theory held responsible for them. But women in Soviet society, continued to bear the double or triple burden of work outside the home, housework and child-care. What happened to the society, Louw asked, when women started having fewer children? The impact on the economy was profound and new strategies had to be considered.

Whereas Wright talked about 'evidence', Louw, a political scientist, presented us with models and then asked us to consider the comparable explanatory force of each one. Like Wright, Louw also asked us to think about change and what makes change possible. He suggested that we might consider this in relation to South Africa too, as well as warning against conflating an oppositional, civil society movement with democracy. A month later, on the evening of June 16, we had the SABC's romanticised version of the Soweto students' uprising played to the soundtrack of 'Sarafina'. The SABC has accepted the new line that Soweto 1976 led to April 1994. But, at the time, the students' revolt seemed like a dismal failure and a terrible waste of life. What exactly were the changes that were set in motion on that bitter winter's day twenty years ago?

111. 'The Ball is into our Court': Teachers' Responses.

The immediate response from the teachers who spoke out during the panel discussion, was guilt. Were they to blame, they asked, for first year university students' inadequate preparation for their academic courses? The first respondent from the floor - the one who referred to 'pappegaai work' (see above) - recognised that rote-learning was a poor foundation for a university education. 'We just hit it (communism) on top,' she said, reflecting on the difference between current classroom practices and Louw's multi-dimensional presentation.

In a few graphic sentences, this speaker summed up the central problem of the curriculum. 'The DET (examination) papers are too shallow,' she said and therefore, she intimated, are incapable of delivering a new generation of critical thinkers. It is not the racism or the Eurocentricism of the material that limits its students to a narrow and distorted perspective of history, but its insistence on superficiality and a single interpretation. As one speaker recognised, the totalitarian model is the one that is embedded in the syllabus, but how to reveal it for what it is - an attempt to explain the omnipotence of a particular kind of society while it still appeared to be omnipotent - before 1989?

The academics, responding to the teachers' observations and questions believed at what they would have once called a 'new conjuncture'. 'The power structures have shifted,' said one, trying to point out that the teachers had an opportunity to change that they should not allow to elude them. The teachers reached out for this opportunity very much more tentatively. 'The ball is into our court,' mused one of them - a case for some anxiety rather than sheer exhilaration.

Perhaps they had imbibed some of the more implicit messages of the presentations which they had just heard - what is the nature of this transition we are witnessing? How close <u>are</u> we to democracy? Beyond the rhetoric of the struggle, where is the new locus of

power?

'We have to disentangle ourselves from this Apartheid syllabus,' urged one of the teachers, pointing out through his choice of words that it is necessary for teachers to extricate themselves from something that until now has exerted great power over them. The Apartheid syllabus remains like a cloying web which it is extremely difficult to destroy. 'Who are we?' the teachers, curtailed, governed and defined by Apartheid for so long, asked of each other.

IV. Is Democracy Good for Africa?

Tom Lodge: Democracy and Decolonisation in Africa

Tom Lodge addressed the question of post colonial authoritarianism in Africa. Lodge, as Louw had done, drew attention to changing 'academic fashions' and their relationship to broader ideologies. In the 1960s the development of authoritarianism in Africa was not denounced by the Africanist scholars, who were inclined to argue that perhaps democracy was not good for Africa.[14] Political rivalries might exacerbate other tensions, Africa could not afford the 'distractions of democracy' and a strong, charismatic leader was likely to more effective than a multi-party state. But after the 1960s, as Africa's developmental problems appeared to grow

[14] Owen Kalinga also drew attention to this line of reasoning.

larger instead of being resolved, analysts began to think that the absence of democracy was a problem. Indeed, argued Lodge, 'academic analysis was turned on its head' and now scholars thought that the lack of development could be ascribed to the lack of democracy.

But what could explain Africa's disinclination on the whole for democracy? As far as British Africa was concerned, many anti-colonial scholars blamed the autocratic nature of imperialism, arguing that democratic institutions came too late in the day, modern elites had been undermined by the colonial powers' preference for 'traditional' rulers and the administration of Native legal codes, and uneven economic development had accentuated tribal and ethnic divisions. Sometimes the policies of African nationalism which required complete loyalty were also held to be culpable for the development of authoritarianism once the British had left.

Lodge argued for the value of a comparative perspective which would show that many of these arguments were unfounded or too simplistic. The most obvious question to ask is: did all ex-British colonies turn authoritarian after independence? - to which the answer is patently negative. Democratic institutions, Lodge argued, often thrived outside of Africa. Why? If one compares two countries which were poor in terms of per capita income after independence such as Malaya and Ghana one is able to observe many structural similarities.

But in Africa the British government had acted paternally, deliberately limiting the 'scope of social change' because it did not want complexity and expense from its African colonies. European metropolitan business ventures were restricted, modernisation and education were limited. As a result no really substantial middle or working classes developed. Botswana, Lodge suggested, with a viable and economically independent class outside the state apparatuses, was an exception. Elsewhere, there was no grouping in society capable of challenging the state. Lodge argued for an understanding of the selective impact of British colonialism on Africa. The extent of military force and bureaucratisation have, he claimed been exaggerated. Ideology was far more important than was the army in legitimating colonial rule. Even though democratic institutions may have been short lived during the colonial period, the elements of representative government that did exist, created durable expectations of what good government should be, which were later to provide a basis for criticising one party states.

V. Owen Kalinga: Democracy and Post colonial Africa

Owen Kalinga offered two case studies of Kenya and Tanzania after independence, showing how far their rulers had strayed from their original intentions to create a just and more equitable society and suggesting some of the reasons for this breach of faith. Kalinga interspersed his account with recollections of the changes that had come over his own home country of Malawi.

But, like the other speakers, Kalinga began by reflecting on his teaching experiences - this time at the University of the Western Cape. One day one of his students had thought fit to inform him that his course on post colonial Africa was not very popular. The reason was that he 'criticised' African heroes. Exactly the same issue was brought to the fore by Julia Wells at the Mfecane Colloquium of September 1992. African students often react angrily when they feel that the teacher is taking away Shaka or Kenyatta from the pantheon of heroes. And there was a feeling of tension among the audience at this conference during Lodge's paper when people felt that Lodge was about to criticise Africans for bringing authoritarianism on themselves. Kalinga had explained to his students that there was a difference between 'criticism' and 'critical thinking'. But did this, I wonder, appease the students which leads us on to a larger and very difficult question: what might some people forfeit by critical thinking?

As Kalinga proceeded to describe 'the trials and tribulations' of democracy, I could imagine some of his students, who heard only the superficial account of the corruptibility of African politicians, feeling very offended and perhaps wounded by Kalinga's apparent betrayal of their Africanism. Of course Kalinga's analysis was really carefully located within the structures of post colonial societies, in which the gulf between poor and rich yawns ever wider and politics is expected to deliver material goods to a network of clients bound to their patron by ethnic or clan loyalties. He

described the rise of the bureaucracy, boosted by foreign aid in Tanzania and the bloating of presidential power in Kenya and the consequent subversion of their respective ideologies of justice and equitable re-distribution. It would have been useful to hear Kalinga and Lodge in dialogue over the army, which Kalinga argued had risen to great prominence in post colonial societies and whose intervention in politics once begun can never be checked.

The subtlety of these two presentations made them hard to respond to immediately. As one of the teachers remarked rather angrily - it was hard to digest them without any prior preparation. I think he felt that he had been caught with his defences down, although I pointed out that it was not possible given our own limited resources, to provide the kind of services he expected. The questions tended to ramble around a bit, looking, I suspect for a place in which uneasiness could be expressed. Perhaps the real question people wanted to ask was: Are you saying that Africans are to blame? This, I think, is part of the rote-learning reflex - the good guys and the bad guys of the totalitarian model that was supposed to prepare us to fight the Cold War. War psychosis is one strand of the Apartheid web from which we are going to have to extricate ourselves.

VI. 'Add Women and Stir'.

Cherryl Walker: Gender and Democracy

Walker's paper was a case study of white women's enfranchisement in South Africa in the early part of the present century, in which she demonstrated how 'the politics of gender' had been compromised by those of Segregation. The burden of her argument was that Hertzog adopted the cause of white female suffrage to strengthen his assault on the Cape African franchise and the suffragists found it impossible to resist the colour limitations imposed by the Nationalists on the extension of the franchise to women.

But Walker managed to insert into her fascinating narrative, some very important general issues, whose implications the audience was not slow to pick up as question time revealed. She pointed out, quite severely, that 'gender' does not mean 'women'. 'Gender', she maintained, is a 'relational concept'. Women are currently defined in opposition to men - as what men are not. Definitions of women and men and of appropriate relations between them are socially constructed and are not inherent genetic distinctions or reflexes. These may vary across societies and over time. Thus, in her written work, Walker opposes the decorative, passive ideal woman of the Victorian drawing room in metropolitan England to the robust and stoic pioneer that the Boer woman in nineteenth century frontier societies was expected to be.[15]

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[15] C. Walker, 'The Women's Suffrage Movement: The Politics of Gender, race and Class' in C. Walker (ed) Women and Gender in South Africa to 1945. Cape Town: David Philip, 1989, pp. 313-345. p.

Walker also asked very challenging questions about how we use gender as a 'category of analysis'. In academic circles this has been a theoretical issue for some time and scholars such as Bozzoli have tackled the relationship of gender to other analytical categories, principally race and class, at a high level of abstraction.[16] Recently, Bozzoli's portraits of the 'Women of Phokeng' have suggested very powerfully how gender 'shapes peoples' lives', to use Walker's phraseology.[17] Bonner's work[18] has also ferreted out the particular imperatives that governed female migrancy from Basutoland in the 1930s and 1940s. Bonner goes on to assess the impact that this great influx of country women, liberated from oppressive patriarchal rural society, but rendered vulnerable to urban privations and the depredations of criminals which he has brought so vividly to life elsewhere[19], had on township life. But, despite the promise of the title of his 1988 article, Bonner has little to say about 'family life' - beyond reducing the inflated statistics of broken marriages compiled by contemporary social reformers.

317..

[16] B. Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies' Journal of Southern African Studies 1983, 9 (2).

[17] B. Bozzoli, Women of Phokeng:Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa 1900-1983, Johannesburg:Ravan, 1993.

[18] P. Bonner, 'Family, Crime and Political Consciousness on the East Rand', Journal of Southern African Studies, 1988, 14.

[19] P. Bonner, 'The Russians on the Reef, 1947-1957: Urbanisation, Gang Warfare and Ethnic Mobilisation' in P. Bonner et al (eds), 1993, pp. 160-194.

As readers we stand very much on the outside, looking in at 'the progression of fathers' described by one of the more sensitive writers of the period, whose work Bonner quotes. There is nothing that quite evokes the life of unremitting hardship and suffering the way some of the interviews quoted by Suzanne Gordon do, in her portrait series on South African servants.[20] Johanna Molutsi, explaining how she was prevented against her better judgement, from marrying out of community of property and on the power her husband is consequently able to exercise over her says:

> He kills me, I don't die. I don't sleep. Worries. Worries. I've got nerves. I can't understand why God let me to this.[21]

But then, a little later she adds, with a flash of unconquerable spirit: 'When I die he'll (her husband) just get my body, he won't catch my soul.' Molutsi based her triumphant prediction on her loyalty to Christian teachings, especially valuable because they gave her immunity against her spouse's enlistment of sorcery against her. What do we know of the strategies and subterfuges in which women have engaged to make sure that, whatever unspeakable things happened to their bodies, their souls escaped unscathed?

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[20] S. Gordon. A Talent for Tomorrow: Life Stories of South African Servants. Johannesburg:Ravan, 1985.

[21] Gordon, 1985, p.44.

Bonner and Glazer[22] are brilliant when they are describing the constitution and activities and the self-image of male gangs and they have given serious consideration as to how women could be included in their accounts. But, in spite of their sensitivity to this issue, they cannot escape representing women in towns merely as an aggravating factor both to the municipal authorities and to gang rivalry. Perhaps this is the result of what Walker called at the conference, to everyone's amusement: 'the add women and stir' principle. You take the standard historical batter - the spectacular growth of secondary industry and the impoverishment of the 'reserves'/Protectorates, straitened by the racial legislation and ideology of Segregation; add a generous measureful of African (male) proletariat and then sprinkle a few 'currants' into the mixture - for example, country women going to town.[23]

Full credit must go to Bonner for noting that there are different mixtures and for accounting for it in his characteristically rigorous and systematic way. He seems in his 1988 article to be about to go further than the 'Add women and stir' principle, but then he falters. His originality strains at the bounds of conventional understandings of secondary industrialisation, family

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[22] C. Glazer, '"When are they going to fight?" Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC' in P. Bonner et al (eds) 1993, pp.296-315.

[23] Sue Krige and I could not resist adding a representative female proletarian figure on the cover of the resource pack which we produced for the History Workshop Teachers' Conference, to stand alongside the male migrant figure, which has been the History Workshop's logo since its establishment. A gesture which we felt to be slightly irreverent!

structure and juvenile delinquency. The standard metaphors also get in his way so that he reduces people to 'streams' and 'floods' when they enter the towns in conspicuous numbers.

There is a need to go further - further than simply adding 'gender' (which most often in this case does mean 'women') to broaden the picture or for more interesting detail.[24] We might think how to take up Bonner's idea of using gender to explain particular forms of African urbanisation and the evolution of state strategies.

Norval, while commending Bozzoli's study of the Women of Phokeng for its many fine features, notes that there is a tension nonetheless in the work because Bozzoli sets up a range of 'social forces' as immutable constraints on her subjects' individual autonomy.[25] Norval is not arguing that the women of Phokeng had untrammelled freedom to make their own choices. As I read her, she is arguing for a more considered and variable study of the

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[24] C.Saunders, 1992, pp. 77-8.. For some reason Saunders' prescription is unconvincing - as if he does not recognise how profoundly the inclusion of gender as a category of analysis could change our understanding of South African history. For an unusual treatment of gender in which 'gender' is not the equivalent of 'women', but is applied to the production of ruling class masculinity see the very interesting work of R. Morell, for example, 'Masculinity and the White Boys' Boarding Schools of Natal, 1880-1930. Perspectives in Education, 1993/4, vol 15, no 1, pp. 27-52. Also, J. Hyslop, 'White Working class Women and the making of Apartheid: "Purified" Afrikaner Nationalists' Agitation for "Mixed Marriages" 1934-1939'. Journal of African History (forthcoming). Also the work of K. Eales.

[25] A. Norval, Book Review, Perspectives in Education 1993/4, pp. 171-178.

relationship between their social context and their changing individual status. It would be an interesting experiment to begin an academic paper on the 1940s without acknowledging the spectacular advance of manufacturing, gold's waning importance and the impoverishment of the 'reserves'.

Perhaps, as Rosalind Miles has so entertainingly demonstrated in her Women's History of the World, the tale would be told quite differently if it were told from the vantage point of women - tone, landmarks, turning points and explanatory factors might all be very different.[26] The film 'Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair' (1978) directed by three women[27], recently shown at the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in Johannesburg, also has some interesting pointers for us. In the re-tellings of the traditional fairy tale of the beautiful girl who was locked up in a tower by a wicked witch and finally rescued by an itinerant prince, several perspectives are offered. From the women's point of view, the themes are: the medieval assault on female sources of power and expertise; the perversion of mother-daughter relationships; incest/forbidden forms of female sexuality; female ageing and single parenthood, fraught but relieved by female solidarity and the free expression connoted

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[26] R. Miles The Women's History of the World, London:Paladin, 1988. Thus one of the examples Miles uses is: how do we explain right hand dominance in the universal population? Women carried their babies on the left side to calm them with their own heart-beats, leaving their right hands free.

[27] Susan Shapiro, Esther Ronay, Francine Winham, 'Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair', UK 1978.

by the phrase 'Let Your Hair Down' - a pun on the traditional refrain of the original fairy tale. From the male point of view - caricatured by the film's directors - the single theme and the one that has made its way into modern versions of the fairy tale, is the heroic rescue of the entrapped maiden. This Rapunzel certainly seems to be imprisoned by the bleak 'social forces' of public housing, the tower block having replaced the dainty fairy tale tower and the busy body social worker standing in for the wicked witch.

Leaving Rapunzel to return to the more sober forms of representation open to social scientists, I conclude that Walker's general points encourage us to explore the way in which 'dominant social theories exclude women's experience'[28]. With reference to race, Jonathan Jansen has made a similar point, urging us to think about how to extend the range of available critical concepts.[29] Walker herself might add that we also need to think about how gender modifies existing concepts and understandings of terminology. The example she alluded to her in her presentation was liberalism. What was a 'Cape liberal' if one of its champions, John X Merriman, could make disparaging analogies between 'women's counsel' and 'brandy'? Some of the limitations of South African

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[28] A. McLennan, '"And Women too will play their Part": The Relevance of Gender to Equal Education in South Africa.' Perspectives in Education , 1993/4, pp. 53-68, p.59.

[29] J. Jansen, Knowledge and Power in South Africa: Critical perspectives Across the Disciplines. Johannesburg:Skotaville, 1991, pp.3-52.

liberalism have been acknowledged by its apologists[10], but there has been no recognition of its accommodation of patriarchal prejudice. How might this alter our understanding of its influence and of the deep entrenchment of sexism in our society?

Walker's presentation came at the end of a long and intellectually demanding day, but she held the audience's attention. During question time, many of the questions were directed to her. One of the men teachers pointed out that, although he was a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand with a history major, he had never heard of the women's suffrage movement in South Africa before. The overall impression was that even a few 'currants' would be better than the genderless (ungendered?) batter most of the audience had been required to work with. The teachers who spoke out were interested, both in the story of the women's suffrage and the wider issues it raised about our society, both then and now.

Conclusions

Like Mr Nkomo in 1939 we probably all favour 'making the mind strong' over 'making the mind full' but how one does that is an extremely difficult matter. The conference exposed some fundamental questions about the teaching and writing of history which are

[10] J. Butler, R. Elphick and D. Welsh (eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect. Middletown, USA, Cape Town and Johannesburg: Wesleyan University Press and David Philip, 1987.

usually washed over by our daily activities and obligations. We were asked to think about the issues of evidence and historical concepts and of analytical categories, particularly gender, anew. The merits of explanatory models and comparative perspectives were suggested to us by various speakers. Many of the teachers found the conference intellectually stimulating and were eager to make a collective effort to reform the teaching of history. Immediately after the Conference the first steps were taken to form a history society. But there was also some understandable anxiety from teachers now that the 'ball has come into their court' and the Apartheid syllabus has still not been eliminated. For the first time in the history of the Teachers' Conferences, there was an awkward
barrier between the academics and the teachers even though they were addressing the same enterprise. The teachers appeared to think that the academics were making demands of them, instead of recognising that they wanted to talk about the activity that binds them, namely teaching.

We know very little about teachers beyond some suggestive historical work by Jonathan Hyslop[31] and Peter Lekgoathi.[32] The

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[31] J. Hyslop, 'Social Conflicts over African Education in South Africa from the 1940s to 1976', PHD, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1990.

[32] SP Lekgoathi, 'African Teachers' Associations of the Transvaal: From Militant Challenge to Moderate Protest, 1950-1976', BA Honours Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1991.

former has suggested the structural ambivalence of the teaching profession in relation to the rest of the community, and the latter some of the complexities of the cleavages than have been present within the teaching profession. How do teachers conceive of themselves - from what sources do they derive their professional identities - what has the impact of Bantu Education or Christian National Education or any of the other variants, been on teachers - what is it going to take for them to be able to 'disentangle' themselves from the old curricula? If we forbid rote-learning what will happen - will it seem to the teachers that we are adopting the same attitude as a Transvaal Education Department (TED) policy document issued in 1993, ironically intended to foster more open ended methodologies, which warned with a certain bureaucratic lack of subtlety: 'the teacher is to guard against talking too much...'?[33]

[1] Endnotes:

[33] Department of Education and Culture Administration, Transvaal Education Department. Subject Policy for History. Primary Schools 1993, p.7.

1. The Teachers' Conference was organised by a committee of the History Workshop composed of: Sue Krige and Cynthia Kros; Peter Lekgoathi and Ismail Vadi, with the indispensable technical assistance of Madhu Kanji.

I would like to thank Shelley Greybe for talking through some of the issues of the paper with me, and Sue Krige for her invaluable insights, especially in connection with students' 'prejudices'.

HISTORY WORKSHOP TEACHERS CONFERENCE

PROGRAMME

TEACHING DEMOCRACY IN A DIVERSE CLASSROOM

14 MAY 1994 - SENATE HOUSE 6

8.30 - 9.00	Registration
9.00 - 9.15	Opening Address
9.15 - 9.45	Professor John Wright **`Precolonial Democracy?'**
9.45 - 10.00	Question and Discussion Time
10.00 - 10.30	**TEA**
10.30 - 11.00	Mr Stephen Louw **`Democracy and Revolution in Europe '**
11.00 - 11.15	Question and Discussion Time
11.15 - 11.45	Professor Tom Lodge **`Decolonisation and Democracy'**
11.45 - 12.00	Question and Discussion Time
12.00 - 12.30	**Integrating the New Insights** Group Discussion on the Curriculum
12.30 - 13.00	**What's new in History?** Publishers' address
13.00 - 14.00	**LUNCH**
14.00 - 14.30	Professor Owen Kalinga **`African Case Studies of Democracy'**
14.30 - 14.45	Question and Discussion Time
14.45 - 15.15	Ms Cherryl Walker **`Gender and Democracy in South Africa'**
15.15 - 15.30	Question and Discussion Time
15.30 - 16.00	**Documents in Democracy:** **Primary Sources and New Methods** Group Discussion
16.00 - 16.30	**TEA AND CLOSURE**

Conference Fee includes lunch, teas and a pack of reading material including copies of original documents for teaching. Latest history publications will be on display and available for purchase.