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Mobility and Metanarrative:
Revisiting South African Social Science through Migration and Displacement

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Let me begin at the beginning. In one of my first Wits-based publications I pondered what it meant to study refugees and migrants from the advantaged yet impotent space of the university. I drew much from Turton's (1996: 96) admonition that research into others' suffering can only be justified if alleviating that suffering is an explicit objective. While we must not define migrants and refugees by their vulnerability, he points to something fundamental in practicing social science in South African Universities: while we may not be an Oxford, Harvard or Sorbonne, we nonetheless gaze on the world around us from a remarkably if relatively privileged position. This applies to almost all scholars, but none more than those from previously (and presently) advantaged backgrounds; a category to which I unequivocally belong. Such positions give rise to something I describe as the 'dual imperative': a recognition that as we live in a dual monarchy, we serve two masters: the demands of academic success on one hand and an obligation to 'do good' on the other (see Jacobsen and Landau 2004).

For the most part it is this dual imperative – the relationship between public engagement and scholarship – that I wish to reflect on here; not in an abstract or generalised sense but in thinking about what it means to be a social scientist in South Africa concerned with more than academic success. As such, tonight's talk is both an inaugural and valedictory affair: having stepped down from my position as ACMS director, I reflect on a decade of managing a publically-engaged research unit from which I hope to draw guidance and warnings for myself and others as we look forward.

This is not a novel theme: Most will remember Max Weber's conflicted lectures on distinctions between science and politics (Weber 2004). Yet at this time and this place, it is worth keeping these themes in mind as we continue defining our role and relevance in this third decade of 'freedom.' It is not for me to say what social scientists should do; I only hope that this lecture can help others – individuals and perhaps institutions – better consider their position.

While I don't feel compelled or qualified to offer prescriptions, let me at least clearly state my position: Our close relationships with politics and policy have long provided a source of vitality and intellectual direction

for those of us seeking to satisfy the dual imperative. Although this is one of the academy's greatest strengths, our sometimes desperate intimacy with socio-political and economic transformations risks engendering solipsism and a kind of intellectual stagnation. Moreover, our close alignment with the teleological narratives of transformation may ultimately hinder our campaign for social justice.

While not disengaging from politics and public debate, we must instead approach it from new tangents. In the process, we need to destabilise the language that informs our deliberations and the often teleological etiologies behind our analysis. It is my hope that doing so can protect social science's autonomy while making our work more relevant to scholars and students who may not share our particular pre-occupation with South Africa's trajectory. Somehow paradoxically, I believe that a social science less firmly framed by dominant narratives of transformation informed by particular visions of law, race and economic justice will create greater opportunities for understanding that can ultimately further our ability to describe, theorise and positively change it.

I used some big words there which and I hope I did so properly. In case I didn't, let me try to say what I mean in another way. Essentially, we risk being played. Or, worse yet, we are co-opting ourselves: as we struggle for legitimacy and relevance – in the academy and beyond it – we replicate ourselves and particular narratives in ways that potentially blinds us to matters of intellectual and practical importance.

I will give you some illustrations and examples just now. First I wish to explicitly recognise that I am speaking here in general terms: praising and prodding as if South African social sciences were one aggregated mass. While I am primarily speaking about the condition of the previously white universities (and particularly about white academics within them), there is nonetheless an irony here given that part of my call is for a more carefully conceptualised and empirically informed scientific endeavour. But if I've learnt anything from reading the *Comaroffs*, we must not be too wary of making grand claims based on impressions or limited observations. More seriously, speaking in broad somewhat polemic terms is a bit more fun. It can also help reveal tidal currents otherwise lost below the surface.

With that caveat, let me take you back again: to one of my first encounters at Wits, with the former head of politics, Professor Tom Lodge. Despite South Africa's politics, economy and social formation being shaped by varied forms of migration, he confidently asserted that after four or five years we might well know all we needed to about human mobility and could close up shop. Were it not for the horrid attacks of 2008, his predictions might have come to pass. I don't agree often with Commissar Andile *(Mngxitama*), but he is right that it was not only those carrying the threatening pangas, tyres and wooden giraffes who benefited from that violence.

Yet what is remarkable now is just how little is being said about them and the nature of that discussion: With a few exceptions, the xenophobic violence of 2008 was treated as an opportunity to make particular types of commentary about South African society in ways that can provide insight into some of the parameters of publically engaged South African social science:

- Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, the xenophobic attacks became an opportunity for scholars to make various ideological critiques about the state of South African society under the guise of explaining the violence. Much of what was said, and an unfortunate amount of what was

published, takes this form. In this we find what I see as one of the unfortunate hallmarks of our academic endeavours: a willingness to let no facts get in the way of the critique we hope to make.

These critiques included:

- The failure of the government to promote the rule of law
- The failure of the government to protect human rights
- The failure of the government to provide housing and jobs for the poor
- The failure of the government to address educational deprivation from the past
- The failure to address questions of inequality
- The failure of the government to control the borders
- The failure of South African society to overcome the self-hatred promoted by the previous (i.e., apartheid) government.

I am sure you are starting to get the picture: it is all about the failure of *government* and, in exceptional instances, society to follow or adhere to the progressive transformation script, a set of ideas and tropes largely crafted in the 1980s which have undergone only limited revisions since then.

I am not saying that any of these critiques are wrong, *per se.* At a personal level I agree whole or partially with many of them. What is important for me is three fold. First, the willingness to use these events – or essentially any event – to make a particular type of argument or analysis without the empirics to back them up. We've seen the same kind of analysis done regarding election results or even the Marikana massacre and subsequent conflict.

Second, it is worth noting how little has, in fact, been said about the xenophobic attacks of 2008 within the academy. We remain too close to events for a final analysis, but a decade from now I suspect the volume of South African-produced literature on the xenophobic massacres will sit deep in the shadow of the literature on the one that occurred at Marikana even if it killed twice as many people and continues, in some form, until today. It is worth asking ourselves, 'Why Marikana has captured sustained attention from across the social sciences in a way that the xenophobia attacks did not?' I shall return to this just now.

Third – and perhaps most importantly for my concern with the dual imperative – is not how little is being said but what is not being said at all. Karl Van Holdt is perhaps one exception, but for the most part few people are examining the questions those attacks raised around the salience of ethnicity *within* South Africa's 'black' population, the violent basis of local authority and movement of the poor and the potentially dangerous language of 'transformation and positive political values'. More fundamentally, I have yet to read someone with the courage to debate whether the very nature of a state-centred social-democratic citizenship might not be as much the cause as the solution to these problems. These are questions with rich scholarly and political relevance, yet they are almost nowhere to be seen within the South African academy.

I am glad that the academy and other civil society partners continue to hold the Marikana massacre in the light. This is a potentially important means of pressing for accountability and redress. But why the difference with in our attention spans?: Why is Marikana so widely hailed, if that's the right word, as a turning point in South African politics while the xenophobic attacks were not. The explanation is partially due to popular sentiment: everyone can condemn Marikana while people are far more ambiguous about violence aimed at clearing out foreigners, squatters, and refugees. But this is not it alone. Is it not that the events of Marikana fit so neatly within the script in which we condemn capitalism, corruption and state coercion? Is it not that our monocle can only valorise people and processes already associated with the grand wave of struggle and transformation or seen as those the transformation has failed?

If we take another example of migration-related intellectual activity we see here too the replication of particular narratives of history and transformation. What we miss is important to the social scientific project of explanation and trying to overcome the injustice we see. Let us consider for a moment the exhibit a few hundred meters from here at the Wits Art Museum entitled, *Ngezinyawo – Migrant Journeys*. I recognise that this is not a social scientific product *per se* but as Ben Anderson (1991) and others tell us (see Macdonald 2012), the museum is an important site in which contemporary (and often official) forms of scientific thinking are consolidated, crystallised and communicated to the public at large. Moreover, it was co-curated by a Wits historian.

Again, there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the exhibit. Or rather, there is nothing factually wrong with the exhibit. It documents particular forms of migration and modernization: largely mobility driven by the racist, extractive capitalism that powered the apartheid regime. The images are all the more powerful since they so strongly resonate with contemporary political discourses surrounding labour exploitation and injustice. One of the few contemporary pictures included is, not surprisingly, of the Marikana protests.

Here too my problem lies less with what is said than with what is excluded. Perhaps most obviously, the exhibit is fundamentally bookmarked by the apartheid period. As Mamdani (1998b) notes, the periodization of South African (and African) history as a before, during and after colonial period tends to freeze the pre-colonial period in a kind of permanent past while defining Africans' current history as products of little other than colonial intervention. If we want to tell a history of migration in this region, it certainly should not start with the gold rush: there are reasons that the term Ndebele means 'stranger'. Apart from its pre-colonial blindness, the exhibit does little to speak of historical legacies at all: it practically ends in 1994, helping give us the impression that we are still confronted with the exact socio-spatial configurations inherited from the apartheid-era migrant labour regime. The Marikana picture only confirms this.

Even within the time period it seeks to explore there are notable and significant silences. Almost absent is any mention of migration that took place outside the highly organised labour regime, for one. There is also little documentation of international migration and the enduring connections between South Africa – the Witwatersrand in particular – and the region. It also ignores Non-black migration in ways that leave me wondering how Johannesburg ended up looking like it does.

These are worrying and possibly annoying for migration scholars, but it doesn't stop there. What we miss in this exhibit is the social transformation of rural life – not just the economy, but of families, values, and cultural forms. More fundamentally, we see little discussion of black agency or aspiration. Rather, the exhibit suggests migration is a damaging component of an exploitative system – which it was – while closing off discussions of how migration may nevertheless opened opportunities for people or helped shape their aspirations. There are vague hints if you read between the lines, but it generally flattens the story. I recognise that an exhibit can not tell all stories, but as we have been repeatedly warned, it is dangerous and dishonest to only tell one. As the Nigerian Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns us (in her 2009 TED talk), "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

So far I've talked about a kind of narrowness of perspective that may seem distinct to the migration story. I have also done little to tie this to other issues in the social sciences or to our position as scholars also seeking recognition and legitimacy in the public sphere. I'm not ready to address all of those just yet. Instead I wish to speak about a form of self-censorship that I see and I have felt as we try to ensure our scholarship is in line with a particular form of political narrative.

There are many examples we could discuss here. I wish to draw first on an example from Darryl Glaser's 2001 book, *Politics and Society in South Africa*. Yes, this is somewhat outdated, but I believe it nevertheless captures part of the challenge we face. As with many scholars, he is wary of the post-modern/post-colonial critique of universal values and epistimologies. While there are certainly grounds to question some of the mumbo-jumbo and the rigour post-modernism offered up – as there are with most schools of scholarship – his reaction comes from a somewhat different location. Let me quote (the emphasis is mine):

> As we have seen, the critics of modernity also appear to consider some of the essential techniques of modern social regulation, such as gathering statistics, to be inherently productive of domination, and certainly incapable of providing valuable information about an external world. They thus cast doubt on whether these techniques ought to have any place in the armoury of governments and other political actors fighting for social welfare, popular empowerment or equality. ***Anti-modern critique makes it more difficult to understand what better kind of order might replace racial domination*** precisely because its practitioners misidentify what is wrong with the present order. The objectionable features of the pre-1994 racial order were not lawfulness, planning, bureaucratic regulation or the professionalization of knowledge, but the institutionalization of a racial hierarchy of wealth, status and power, enforced by repressive, often arbitrary state authority, assisted by bad laws. The order needed to replace it requires more and better law, effectively enforced, and more 'scientific' information about the condition of the people, not less of these 'modern' goods . . .
>
> **What would be problematic is a disavowal of the project of seeking universally agreed rules for mediating antagonisms between cultural communities, or a relativism which sanctions the repression of internal dissidents and minorities by cultural leaders.** Yet indefinite conflict and the subordination of individuals to cultural collectives is precisely what would follow from the victory of a politics of 'difference' that is not anchored in liberal universalism. What should matter to progressives is not whether post-apartheid South Africa is modern, but whether it is liberal, democratic, egalitarian and provides economic and social security to it citizens"
> (Glaser 2001: 68-69).

At the risk of being a bit unfair, I nonetheless see in these quotes a general dismissal of certain analytical perspectives because of their potentially negative political implications. On a political level, I too worry about abandoning universal law and some common sets of values. Nor do I want to paint Daryl as a narrow ideologue of any kind. What I fear is in his fear: that teaching and legitimising particular epistemological perspectives may generate political positions that undermine the implicit (or explicit) political agenda we hope to forward. Pushing aside important theoretical perspectives in this way isolates students and scholars from global engagement and may well prevent us from seeing our own society in its full prismatic composition. And if we can not understand the full reality of our surrounds, how do we expect to achieve progressive change?

It is precisely the kind of analysis that Daryl dismisses that has helped us understand the political violence against outsiders in South Africa. In our work the failures of universal rule of law matter, but what matters more is the multiple, often popularly legitimate systems of justice that co-exist (see Monson 2012; also Landau and Monson 2008). These are social facts that can not be wished away. Unless we open these spaces for critique, values and presumptions will go unchallenged. As Fanon notes, "Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted . . . And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief."

At a more personal level, I see and feel a kind of self-censorship that may also undermine our ability to promote both scholarship and social transformation. The first is a bureaucratic incident regarding the nomination of a post-doctoral fellow who hoped to join the African Centre for Migration & Society (then the Forced Migration Studies Programme). Some of the details of the individual in questions are a bit fuzzy, but there could be little doubt of his academic qualifications: a PhD from Columbia and graduate law degree from Yale, both centring on the ethics and politics of difference in multi-cultural societies. So far so good. The issue, as I remember it, was his background: not only was he an Israeli citizen, but in some of his work he had made a well-reasoned case for a certain kind of cultural or communitarian protectionism. This was a provocative position that could potentially kick-start serious scholarly debate in South Africa. Alas, his application was rejected – not by the University, but by my immediate superior—out of political concerns: namely that we might be seen as either defending Zionist settlement or an implicit kind of white separatism. I didn't fight it then and the critique may well have been right, if unfortunate: given the combination of privilege and precarity, we must be wary of how we speak and whose mouth it comes from.

In terms of my own research, I have felt the pressure to conform to various domestic and international discourses in how I present my findings and the kind of policy or popular changes for which I call. This kind of pressure may be healthy, but I fear it not far from overt censorship and, more worryingly, a kind of insidious self-censorship. Again, allow me to speak of just a few examples by way of illustration:

- As I noted earlier, the ACMS's work on anti-outsider violence has surfaced a number of important aspects of South African life that are intellectually intriguing but personally and politically troubling. The first of these is the degree to which township politics is enmeshed in criminality and violence and how the language of transformation continues to be a cover for criminality. This is not new: analysts noted similar trends with the civics a few decades ago. Yet for my colleagues and me, we

have found it difficult to critique what appear to be forms of 'authentic' protest. When we raise the concerns, we are charged with ignorance of township life. Others hint that we playing into the hands of the DA and opposition. The more moderate critics will hint that these are legacies of apartheid as if that is the alpha and omega.

- A similar process happened when our research revealed the degree to which ethnicity or internal divisions within the 'black' population were shaping not only violence, but other forms of political and economic action. In an informal discussion with the former CEO of the Human Rights Commission, he warned me that if I wanted our research to be heard, I would need to radically tone down or excise that element of our work. As a Sotho speaker who had worked for years in KZN, he was not denying the presence and power of ethnic-chauvinism. Quite the contrary. Rather, he offered what I believe was sound tactical advice: to be 'heard', pale-faced and/or foreign analysts must not challenge black unity or offer critiques that even faintly resonate with apartheid logic and language.

- Lastly, for now, our work on urban migration – domestic and international migration – and urban livelihoods revealed a disturbing trend for humanitarians, human rights activists, and the progressive left (see Landau and Duponchel 2011; Madhavan and Landau 2011). Our work confirmed a number of stereotypes and challenged long-held presumptions. First, it illustrated just how poorly asylum seeker and refugee status mapped with people's actual experiences. Many people with asylum were here purely for work while those needing help had no documents. Moreover, it demonstrated that legal status and formal rights did little to translate into practical protection. The human rights folks were uncomfortable with these findings and a number asked me to be extremely careful in publishing them. I got a similar response, albeit from a different crowing, when our multiple regression analysis we showed that state assistance in the forms of grants and direct aid did little to substantively improve individual or family welfare. And this held across the board, for refugees, domestic migrants, and others. Instead, where someone lived and their social networks made most of the difference.

- I am not saying that we should not find ways to get people legal rights or overtly help the poor, but these empirical results suggest that perhaps we should rethink a number of the presumptions about how we do that. However, when I first started discussing this work, I could see fear in the faces of my colleagues and others: will this mean cuts in funding for the aid agencies and human rights organisations? Or more fundamentally, could these finding legitimize – in whatever small way – a liberal or neo-liberal agenda? Ultimately we published the work but did not publicise it extensively here. Right or wrong, it left me asking if we are prepared to speak about the agency or resilience of the poor or their anti-statist beliefs without feeling as if we are betraying the cause? Moreover, can we publically critique the heroes of transformation – the unions, community leaders, or social movements – as fundamentally anti-poor (if that, indeed, is what we find) without fear? I am not saying that this is the case, only that I worry we would be unable to say it if it were. After all, one need only describe a work as 'liberal' or, worse, 'neo-liberal' to have any of its intellectual merits discredited.

Where we've come from and where we're going

Weber (2004) quotes Tolstoy's critique of the scientific endeavour suggesting that: 'Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: "What shall we do and how shall we live?"' We are probably more familiar with another Russian's famous provocation when he asks, 'What is to be done?' While I don't share Weber's quest for a value free social science, I share with him a belief that 'science might yet be of some use to the one who puts the question correctly.'

And this is the rub: are we asking the right questions and are we prepared to listen to the full range of answers. From my perspective – and I may be wrong -- those interested in contributing to scholarly and policy debates tend to ask questions derived largely from a script set in decades past. Both Webster (2004) and Hendricks (2006) speak of the materialist revolution in South African sociology of the 1980s and how it launched a direct assault on scholarship that implicitly or explicitly justified white oppression. Moreover, it helped align white academics with the UDF / ANC's soft-Marxist (but undeniably materialist) rhetoric of liberation and transformation. Although I am no means an intellectual historian of this period, I believe the legacy of what they describe can be seen across many of the publically engaged social sciences: to be a progressive, white academic of the period, you asked certain questions and revealed particular types of answers. Webster (2004: 30) celebrates the field's politicization in "the dialogue with social movements seems to have provided the impetus for a flowering of original sociological studies.'

Even if "the discipline and profession of political studies finds itself in a tumultuous period of transformation" as Booysens suggests, there remains a kind of stodginess to the tropes we use to inform socio-political analysis intended for public dissemination. For reasons of both time and knowledge, I am not in a position to offer a full explanation for this state of affairs. Beyond inertia– something that catches us all from time to time – the mix of privilege and precarity are key here. For White Universities and, particularly, for an aging generation of white academics (and those following closely in their footsteps), maintaining the standard *modus operandi* helps to protect their positions and authority. They are in a precarious position of a kind; but only in that they risk losing prominence within their respective fields and in the public debates writ large.

The real precarity is for the social sciences and the free thinking, critical scholar who nonetheless wishes to engage in public debate. Already in the late 1990s, Booysens (1998:7)spoke of the need to bring social science in line with 'government directives': 'The profession of political studies is intensely conscious of "transitional" issues and of having to conform to new governmental standards to deliver social science qualifications that can aid in the reconstruction of society.' Later in the same article, she writes that "the practitioners are succumbing to an academic version of political correctness-grovelling in front of politicians who make outrageous claims…and allowing their own best intentions to seep into their assumptions" (Booysens 1998: 20-21). Kamola (2011: 126) notes that from 2001 on, the Department of Higher Education has not pushed for a transformation or democratization agenda, but rather is about competing in a global knowledge economy. While it may be fair to suggest that official policies follow this neo-liberal leaning, it risks confusing official policy from implicit policy and actual practice. Given a government that seems increasingly uncomfortable with public debate over the fundamental language and goals of political discourse, remaining legitimate may well mean falling in line with the 'positive values' outlined by the government.

Those of us working in South African higher education – particularly those of us working at historically white universities – and even more so for those of us who are white, foreign or all of the above – are increasingly being asked to legitimise our voices and critiques. Do not get me wrong, we should be challenged for the logic of what we say, for its positionality, for its methods or even its grammar. Where we should not be critiqued is for our ideological alignment with the government or for making particular commentary on government policy, capitalism, or other public practices.

I am not encouraged by having a Minister of Arts and Culture that, as Minister of Police, labelled us 'prophets of doom' for warning of xenophobic attacks around the 2010 World Cup despite video footage of people who claimed to be organizing violence (see Underhill and Khumalo 2010). I am not sure if that is worse than being called a liberal, but it was clearly not intended as a complement. That senior officials in Home Affairs refuse to meet us because we are effectively 'foreign agents' for receiving European moneys and have some European researchers further illustrates the marginalisation from influence that can easily occur when stepping just a little bit out of line. We need only look at some of the pressures for political alignment that have almost destroyed UKZN to see the potential risks (see Higgins 2014).

Conclusions

I recognise that I have not addressed either Tolstoy or Lenin. Alas, the two Russians must continue being patient. All I know is that we should be more reflexive and aware of the steps we take from here on out. On page nine of *Wits 2022* vision document, the University argues that (emphasis added):

> Wits' mission is to grow its global stature as a leading research-intensive university and a gateway to research engagement and intellectual achievement in Africa. *This it will achieve building on the principles of intellectual excellence, international competitiveness and local relevance.*

For natural scientists this may be easier to achieve: new polymers or mining technologies may satisfy the version of the dual imperative shaping their work. I sense that the demands of global intellectual engagement and local relevance will be far less easily resolved for those of us in the social sciences. At a small scale we have already seen the dangers of trying to align ourselves too closely with government policy in the largely failed project on street trading and xenophobia commissioned by the City of Johannesburg. Whether by intent or fortunate coincidence (fortunate for the City), these projects have effectively co-opted the strong critiques of both themes. And we fell straight into the trap hoping to wangle influence on and funds from the City in exchange for playing by the rules. Their rules.

One obvious option is to simply disengage from explicit interactions in the policy sphere and continue to offer the most fundamental critiques we can muster. We should support such work and I applaud those in the Johannesburg Workshop on Theory and Criticism (JWTC) and elsewhere in the social sciences who are pushing the intellectual boundaries even if I rarely understand what they are on about. While they may help reveal and rethink the societies around us, the terms and techniques of study often translate poorly into the public sphere. Such talk also does little to legitimise us in the public and political space we occupy. Riskier still, inaccessibility and elitism only help to ghettoize the academy in a place where it can be more easily dismissed.

Instead I would propose what might be called a kind of *subversive supplication*. Inspired by Simmel's account of the stranger, we may do well to familiarize with the ways of our hosts – on those who we depend – and become indispensable to their operations. However, we must be wary of becoming, 'radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group." Instead, we should approach "them with the specific attitude of "objectivity." But objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement."

We might also take inspiration from some of the jazz greats. While 'free or experimental' jazz may reflect a kind of genius, its expression is often too far from the mainstream to attract attention of those less accustomed to the medium and its peculiar and discordant voices. These we can perhaps see as the WISERs of the Jazz world. I would suggest that if we hope to address the dual imperative, we need to learn the standards, but not with the thought of replaying them with great fidelity. Rather, the familiarity of their melodies and tunes might get us heard, but we must continue to subtly improvise and diverge until we are able to subvert them. Like the jazz greats, we do this deconstruction and reformulation consciously, always attuned to keeping the listener attentive. Crude critics will charge us with selling out, but selling records means knowing your audience.

Of course individuals may willingly align themselves with the vision of history and the future espoused by our leaders. The question is whether that alignment should dictate our research agenda and, more importantly, how we teach. When I came to Wits I was introduced to the notion of 'growing our own timber.' Coming from a state whose wealth was built on lumber, I've also seen the dangers when we fail to replant and plan for the next generation. However, unless we provide our students with the tools to critique not only politics, but the very way we teach and understand our society, we are unlikely to get the giant redwood (baobabs?) we are after. Will this help us to see South Africa as any less of a deviation – good or bad – from the processes affecting our neighbours or countries in the world? Will it train our students to be able to engage in global academic discussions or do research beyond the Lebombo Mountains, the Limpopo River or the great liminal oceans that surround us? And perhaps most critically, will it ultimately enable us to stay true to what we claim are our progressive principles? Instead, of giants we will get followers who are content to toe the line, play it safe. They may flourish personally, but at a cost to both science and society. Instead we should take a page from Greek and Roman mythology and the stories of the children who ultimately destroyed their parents to bring about a transformed – if not always better – order.

I am bad with conclusions and great calls to arms which is perhaps why I am an academic, not a unionist or politician. As such, I wish to end with comments rather than commands. As I have said repeatedly in the previous paragraphs, we are in a precarious position. But we are also in a privileged one. I feel we have an obligation to the people around us and the academy's future to use that position in a way that ultimately advances our commitment to a more nuanced and robust representation of Africa in global academic debates, the advancement of African scholars and graduates, and a more socially just society. To do this we need a social science that sees our societies in all of their complexity and can communicate that sometimes bewildering reality to decision makers and advocates.

For us to be effective, we must be wary of replicating tropes that will ultimately shackle us. So too we must be careful of speaking in ways that only ease the work of those seeking to marginalise our voice. To do this, we must be students of the grand script of political and social transformation, able to recite its tropes when necessary to gain access and have our voices heard. But then we must use this position to subvert, not only decision makers, but to create the conditions in which scholarship can be internally divided and contentious; but where debates will be settled on terms other than ideological purity and in which people are pushed to deviate from the themes and conclusions that have too long informed our work. Doing this means challenging each other without prejudice, not only on political implications but on approach, method, and broader scientific significance. This must hold whether a paper condemns or celebrates neo-liberalism, speaks in favour or against the ethics of exclusion, or in other ways causes us to reconsider the long planned trajectory of remedying historical injustice. This will take courage and risk destabilising not only concepts and presumptions, but existing hierarchies within our respective fields. This is a dangerous game, but to play any other means becoming an unwitting tool in the preservation of economic inequality, intellectual isolation, and political marginalization.

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Mobility and Metanarrative:

Revisiting South African Social Science through Migration & Displacement

Loren B Landau
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Inaugural Lecture
18 June 2014



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Human Rights Day, Soweto



Ernesto A. Nhamuave



Nadine Hutton


NORTCOAST MACHINI
JOHANNESBURG.



David Goldblatt, 1983

Ernest Cole




Daily Telegraph



Self-censorship in the name of progress?

As we have seen, the critics of modernity also appear to consider some of the essential techniques of modern social regulation, such as gathering statistics, to be inherently productive of domination, and certainly incapable of providing valuable information about an external world. They thus cast doubt on whether these techniques ought to have any place in the armoury of governments and other political actors fighting for social welfare, popular empowerment or equality. ***Anti-modern critique makes it more difficult to understand what better kind of order might replace racial domination… What would be problematic is a disavowal of the project of seeking universally agreed rules for mediating antagonisms between cultural communities, or a relativism which sanctions the repression of internal dissidents and minorities by cultural leaders.***

D. Glaser, 2001. *Politics and Society in South Africa*
London: Sage Publications: 68-69

Falling into line?

‘The profession of political studies is intensely conscious of “transitional” issues and of having to conform to new governmental standards to deliver social science qualifications that can aid in the reconstruction of society . . . practitioners are succumbing to an academic version of political correctness-groveling in front of politicians who make outrageous claims . . . and allowing their own best intentions to seep into their assumptions.’

S. Booysen and A. van Nieuwkerk, 1998, ‘Political Studies in South Africa: An Assessment of the Discipline and the Profession’, *Politikon*, 25(1): 20-21



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J.E. Berendt. 1981. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond*. Lawrence Hill Books: 371.





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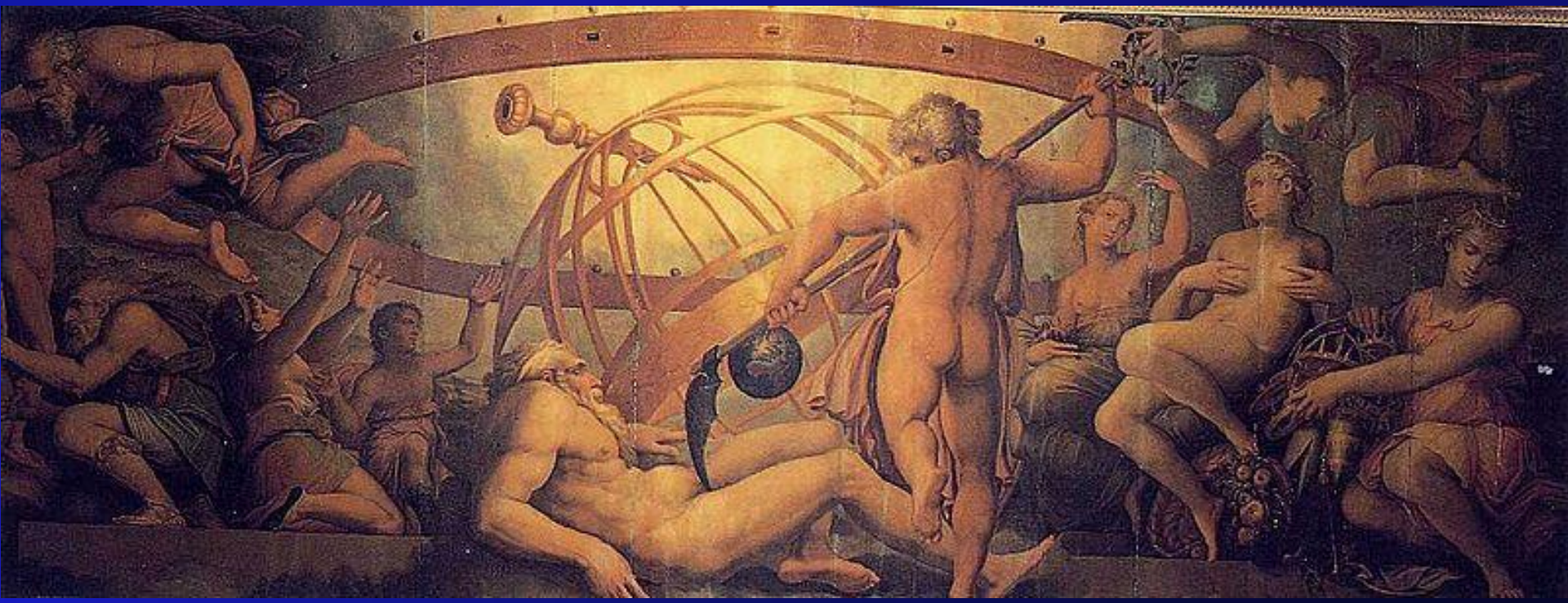






Dolly & Dolly Jr.

Lessons from the gods:



The Mutilation of Uranus by Saturn
- Giorgio Vasari, 1560

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