

https://dspace.org/

Making space: the counterpublics of post-apartheid independent literary publishing activities (1994-2000)

Finlay, Alan William

2009-06-11T11:53:16Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7015

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Making space: The counterpublics of post-apartheid independent literary publishing activities (1994-2004)

Alan William Finlay

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Journalism and Media Studies.

January, 2009

Abstract

This thesis explores how independent literary publishing activities during the period 1994-2004 sought to engage in public debate and deliberation, and thereby moved beyond purely literary concerns. It explores how the publishers understood their publishing activities as acts of public engagement and contestation, and argues that they can usefully be considered counterpublics, a characteristic which feels unique to the post-apartheid period. The mid-1990s saw a surge in literary publishing activity in South Africa that included journals and magazines, books, pamphlets, websites, readings and performances, and recordings. These publishing activities can be considered independent in that they occurred outside the support structures of institutions such as the commercial book publishing industry or universities, and were typically initiated by writers, who relied on their own time, energy and skills to publish. While independent literary publishing was not a new thing in South Africa, the post-apartheid period showed some striking features, including a heightened concern with the act of publishing itself, the emergence of several black-owned publishers, and a new relationship to the state in terms of access to funding. This thesis focuses on the publishing activities of five publishers: Dye Hard Press, Botsotso, Timbila, Kotaz and Chimurenga. It discusses the often complex contribution the publishing activities make to what we consider a post-apartheid public sphere that is central to democracy, and to public deliberation broadly conceptualized. It argues that public sphere theory offers a way of talking about the divergent characteristics of the publishing activities, which can be considered acts of poetic world making that position themselves in contestation with the post-apartheid mainstream. They are counterpublic in that their world making tends to contest the exclusions of the mainstream in publishing and editorial practice. However, it suggests that their relationship to the mainstream is at times ambivalent, and their independence not always assured. This is particularly felt in the reliance of some of the publishers on state and state-aligned arts bodies for funding for their survival, but also in other areas such as their difficult relationship with commercial book dealers, and the mainstream media. This thesis suggests that it is here where the very nature of both their dependence on and independence from the dominant public as publishing activities is in itself a shifting site of contestation. Their proximity to the mainstream

in terms of state funding also suggests the need for a theorization of what we might call “embedded counterpublics” in highly stratified societies such as South Africa.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Journalism and Media Studies in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Alan William Finlay
31st day of January, 2009.

To David and Jonah and Katherine, with love.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the invaluable input to this thesis offered by my supervisors, Lesley Cowling and Professor Carolyn Hamilton. I am equally greatful for the opportunity I had to participate in the Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Research Project run by Professor Hamilton. Participating in the project's workshop discussions and other activities has immeasurably enhanced my research experience. In this regard, I would like to thank the project's core members not already mentioned: Rory Bester, Anthea Garman, Yvette Gresle, Litheko Modisane, and Pascal Mwale. I am also indebted to the feedback offered by Professor Kelwyn Sole (from the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Cape Town) who commented on my proposal to this thesis and on a paper discussing its findings. Finally, I would like to thank the publishers who gave generously of their time for interviews, as well as the poets with whom I have interacted over the years, and whose insights into South African poetry and literary publishing have helped me orientate my work.

Contents

1. Introduction 8
2. Rationale 17
3. Theoretical framework 19
4. Literature review 23
5. Methodology 25
5.1. Overview 25
5.1.1. Selection of publishers 25
5.1.2. Interview process 28
5.2. Definitions 28
6. Background to the publishing activities 33
6.1. Dye Hard Press 33
6.2. Botsotso 37
6.3. Kotaz 42
6.4. Timbila Poetry Project 45
6.5. Chimurenga 50
7. Findings 56
7.1. Editorial practice as positioning 56
7.1.1. Botsotso: Democratic cultural resistance 57
7.1.2. Timbila: Poems of social commentary 65
7.1.3. Kotaz: A voice of dissent 73
7.1.4. Dye Hard Press: Getting poems out there 80
7.1.5. Chimurenga: A space that is not there 85
7.2. Publishing practice 91
7.2.1. Medium 92
7.2.2. Distribution 108
7.3. The publishing activities as counterpublics 118
7.3.1. Groups, tribes, allies and collaborators… 118
7.3.2. The world making of the publishing activities 125
8. Conclusion 135
9. References 146

1. Introduction

The end of apartheid heralded a surge in independent literary publishing activities in South Africa. As Karen Press, writing in the poetry journal *New Coin* in 1994, observed:

> If the pile of new poetry publications I was sent to prepare this article is anything to go by, South African poetry publishing is in a healthier state now than it has been for years…There is also, undeniably, a sense of liberation in these pamphlets and booklets: an air of having given themselves permission to publish on themes that don't have any pedigree of political relevance in the narrowly defined sense that has influenced so many poets during the last decade. For some of these journals, this means more than reclaiming individual artistic freedom: it is part of the process of growing the new cultural energy we've always known must be lying somewhere beneath the layers of our indigenous psychoses and neuroses. (Press 1994, p58)

Amongst the publications founded during the mid-to-late 1990s were: Barefoot Press' *Footprints* pamphlet series (1993-1995); *Imprint* (1993-1995); *Bleksem* (1994-1999); *Something Quarterly* (1994-1997); *Carapace* (1995-);[1] Dye Hard Press's *Atio* (1995-1996); *Herstoria* (1995-1999); *Botsotso* (1995-); *Fidelities* (1995-2007); and *Kotaz* (1998-).[2] Later, *Timbila* (2000-) and *Chimurenga* (2002-) were launched and Dye Hard Press would begin publishing *Green Dragon* (2002-). These publications ranged from the crude and innovative, relying on photostatting machines, small runs and hand-to-hand distribution, to the well-funded and professionally marketed. Most of them were initiated by writers – noticeably poets – who took on a range of tasks such as fundraising, organizing events for readings, editing, layout and design, and marketing and distribution. In the absence of funding, many of the publications were

[1] A successor to the earlier *Slugnews* (originally *Slug Newsletter*, 1989-1994) published by Snailpress.
[2] *Ad hoc* publications from SunBelly Press and the photostatted magazine *Gutter 3* would also appear in 1994 and 1995.

financed by the writers. At the very least, they relied on the writers' voluntary commitment of time, resources and skills. These were all, in this sense, 'non-profit' initiatives[3] that can be considered 'independent' given their voluntary nature, and the extent to which they were published outside of institutional support structures such as universities or commercial publishing houses.

Independent literary publishing in South Africa was not a new thing, and the role some literary journals played prior to 1994 has been documented. In his essay *Time to Talk: Some Literary Magazines in the Pretoria-Johannesburg Region, 1956 to 1978* (Gardiner 2002), Michael Gardiner traces the development of several independent literary magazines during the 1960s and 1970s, such as *The Purple Renoster* (1956), *The Classic* (1963), *Wurm* (1966) and *Izwe* (1971).[4] As Gardiner notes, the magazines he discusses follow "about thirty years after those edited by [the writers Roy] Campbell, [William] Plomer, [Uys] Krige and others" (Gardiner 2002, p23), and are in turn followed by a new period in independent literary publishing marked by the founding of *Staffrider* (1978). Published first by Ravan Press, and then by the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW), *Staffrider* was to become an influential and important publication during the 1980s.[5]

[3] By the end of 2004, at least two of the publishers, Botsotso and Timbila, had formally registered as non-profit organisations.

[4] Other publications discussed by Gardiner include *Ophir* (1967), *Kol* (1968), *Donga* (1976) and *Inspan* (1978). Magazines from the period not discussed by Gardiner include *Contrast* (1960) and *New Classic* (1975).

[5] The *South African Journal* (1824), which poet Thomas Pringle helped to edit (Oliphant 2000) is cited in a number of sources as one of the first independent publications in English. It survived only a few issues because, according to Cope (1980), Pringle would not "compromise our birthright as British subjects by editing any publication under censorship" (Cope 1980, p1). Subsequent literary journals included the short-lived *Voorslag* (1924), edited by Campbell, Plomer and Laurens van der Post, *The Touleier* (1930) and *Vandag* (1946), edited by Krige and Ehrhardt Planje (Cope 1980; Blignaut 1980). While university-based publications such as *New Coin* (founded in the late 1960s) continued publishing – *New Coin* was to grow in prominence during the 1990s under the editorship of the poet Robert Berold – during the 1980s *Staffrider* was published, the UK-based *The South African Review of Books* published critical perspectives on South African literature, and new magazines, such as the *The Bloody Horse* (1980) and Lionel Abraham's *Sesame* (1982), that followed on from *The Purple Renoster*, were founded. While the Johannesburg-based annual *Quarry* (1976), which was established towards the end of the 1970s by the publisher AD Donker, published until 1983, *New Contrast* (1990) – an amalgamation between *Contrast* and *Upstream* – was formed at the end of the decade. The rise of new publications (and the disappearance of the old) appears to follow changes in the political landscape in South Africa. However, it needs to be pointed out that ascribing historical timelines (or 'waves') to the publications can be problematic, especially if one is attempting to establish issues of precedence and influence. For instance, some consider *Drum*, which published in the 1950s, the literary precursor to *Staffrider* (Kirkwood 1980). One also needs to note the point made by Oliphant that "[t]he three literary traditions [black, English and Afrikaans] in South Africa, issuing from three competing but inter-related paradigms…remained separate for much of the 19th century" (Oliphant 2000, p113) and there is a sense in which the magazines reflect this. For instance, although its influences are also

However, the context in which the post-apartheid publishing occurred had shifted dramatically, a change which shaped the tenor of the publications that emerged. For instance, the possibilities and opportunity of the new democracy were reflected in the editorial agenda of *Botsotso*, which set up an editorial collective that ran across race and class lines as a way of capturing something of what it later referred to as the "mixed masala" (Kolski Horwitz 2007) of the new South Africa – a cultural space pluralistic and diverse in voice and concern.

The publishers also now enjoyed a supportive relationship with the state – even when critical of its policies. While the apartheid government had shut down alternative publications such as *Donga* and banned writers from the previous decades,[6] many amongst the new crop of publishers, such as Botsotso, Timbila and Kotaz would benefit from funding opportunities created by the establishment of the government's National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC, in 1997),[7] and other funding bodies such as the Arts and Culture Trust (ACT, in 1994).[8] The new funding opportunities – which reflected state interests in supporting cultural diversity, pluralism and empowering previously disadvantaged communities – encouraged the emergence of what would effectively become small, black-owned literary publishers, in a commercial publishing context which academic Andries Oliphant described as having "regressed, in terms of diversity in ownership, as well as in the variety of its output" (Oliphant 2000, p121). In the case of editorial collectives like Botsotso, poets from economically disadvantaged backgrounds could gain editorial and publishing influence, while in the case of Timbila, with its often strident editorial positioning highly critical of government policies such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, (sometimes radical) political dissent effectively received state sanction.

By espousing a poetry of engagement and "social commentary" (Bila 2005, p10), projects like Timbila served as a response to debates from preceding decades around

found outside of South Africa, *Chimurenga* traces its literary roots back to *Staffrider* and *Drum*, rather than any of the other publications.

[6] Which occurred in the context of the general repression of the alternative press under apartheid.

[7] Which replaced the Foundation of the Creative Arts (www.nac.org.za).

[8] A partnership between the government, the private sector and the arts community.

'quality', 'relevance' and 'standards' in South African literature – debates which were being resuscitated, particularly where poetry was concerned, in the post-apartheid period.[9] For instance, in a letter to *New Coin* in 2005 entitled *The irrelevance of prizes to poetry*, *Timbila's* editor, Vonani Bila writes:

> What are the standards that are set to judge a good poem? As an editor of *Timbila*, a poetry journal, I am attracted by poems that move me, ask of me to think countless times; fresh poems that say something new in a new language, style and structure. I like poets who are prepared to take risks. My taste is certainly different from another editor's; that is, if the Timbila Press [sic] decided to start competitions, most winning poems would be poems of social commentary. (ibid.)

However, many of the publishers in the post-apartheid period were not simply concerned with literature as a niche activity, but sought to push their publishing initiatives into wider fields of circulation – *Botsotso* going as far as to secure a

[9] The publications occur within a context of a critical history of literature in South Africa that has been fraught with disagreements, often defined along lines of race and politics. For instance, the act of anthologizing (and thereby defining a canon of) South African poetry – arguably a highly political act – has met with controversy from the earliest anthology of English poems compiled by Guy Butler, which included no black writers writing in English (Alvarez-Pereyre 1979). Many public exchanges illustrate this tension, which has included notions of literary tradition, euro-centrism, politics and the poem, poetry of commitment and 'relevance', the English language and cultural inheritance, and form, amongst them. One of the most prominent statements concerning struggle literature was an article by Albie Sachs in the then *Weekly Mail* in the mid-1990s. In the article, Sachs, amongst other things, criticised struggle art and called for post-liberation critical and creative practice to take into account a more personal expression of experience. (This was followed by similar positions put forward by the likes of Njabulo Ndebele). By then the debate between the poem as an act of political commitment and the view that literature should be divorced from direct political engagement was already long-running. Some random examples: In 1987 anthologist and academic Michael Chapman expressed the view at an Association of University English Teachers of South Africa (AUESTSA) gathering of English academics that, amongst other things, poetry should move away from private experience and focus on public and social concerns, and that European poetic traditions were inadequate in the political climate of a State of Emergency (Bunyan 1987); several exchanges published in literary journals between Kelwyn Sole and poets such as Douglas Reid Skinner and Stephen Watson on issues of form, content and literary inheritance; an exchange in *New Coin* (June 1998) between Lionel Abrahams and several other poets on the journal's editorial policy; and, more recently, a review published in *New Contrast* of *it all begins* (Berold ed. 2002), a selection from *New Coin* under the ten-year editorship of Berold. The selection showcased exciting new trends in content, language and form in South African poetry, but the reviewer, without any sense of engaging the work at hand, exclaimed that it was "the most astoundingly incoherent and unremittingly weak collection I have read in years" (Johnson 2003). Other positions on this issue were and are frequently made in interviews with writers and poets, as well as in reviews of poetry collections or anthologies, amongst other instances. This body of background material is substantial and fragmented and, as far as I am aware, there is no single, comprehensive source to refer to.

circulation deal with the weekly newspaper the *New Nation* in which several early issues appeared as inserts.

Publishing was also not confined to the literary journal or magazine in print, and a number of the fledgling publishers engaged in lively and diverse publishing *activities* in the broadest sense, as they experimented with ways of growing the local literary culture, reaching fresh audiences, and securing a public space for new writing. Besides publishing books of poetry and prose, there were experiments with photostatting machines, the odd incursions into radio, poetry was recorded, and websites started. Barefoot Press, which went as far as to print poetry on tablecloths, circulated some 20 000 of each of its poetry pamphlets, in its own estimation making it the "biggest free poetry venture in Africa".[10]

Publishing included performance, and while the Botsotso Jesters,[11] a multi-lingual performance poetry group whose members made up the nucleus of the *Botsotso* editorial collective, was formed in the early 1990s, Botsotso, Timbila and Chimurenga also acted as regular convenors of public spaces where poetry and short stories could be read or performed, sometimes interspersed with music and performance art. Venues included schools, galleries, bars, university campuses and community halls, or cafés in cultural precincts such as Newtown in Johannesburg. Some publishers also held writing workshops, in places like Polokwane (then Pietersburg) and Soweto, and across the Eastern Cape.

Publishing was sometimes opportunistic, as publishers tested whatever technology was most readily available in their efforts to "get poetry out there" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.). *Bleksem*, for instance, was laid out on a light box, and photostatted as an A5 booklet, with only some 30-50 copies produced at a time. It was a publishing approach that was both economically expedient and provocative: "Maybe one day we'll all be able to PRINT GLOSS; but for now…let's check out the vibe not the plastic sacking." (*Bleksem* 1994. Editorial)

[10] http://www.pix.co.za/barefoot.press/bareinfo.htm
[11] Its early members were Kolski Horwitz, Anna Varney, Siphiwe ka Ngwenya, Ike Muila, Isabella Motadinyane, and Roy Blumenthal.

The first Dye Hard Press publications were also rudimentary, consisting of little more than A4 photostatted and stapled pamphlets, with a very basic layout. The publisher's logo, an image of an old heating iron, was an evocative symbol that captured something of the kind of marginalized space that publisher and poet Gary Cummiskey felt he – and publications like *Bleksem* – occupied, described variously as "kitchen table publishing", "garage publishing" or, simply, "home publishing" (Cummiskey & Salafranca 2003, p80).

While responding to the limitations (or possibilities) of available resources, these sorts of publishing approaches *inter alia* set up a dialogue with the commercial publishing and distribution industry, which was becoming increasingly consolidated and tailored towards the mass market. While debates about literary 'standards' and 'quality' had been rife in the preceding decades, as another *Bleksem* editorial suggests, a different kind of 'standard' was under assault here, one that could be located in the world of publishing: "The survival of independent (and cheap) literary publications over the past year goes a long way to show that neither the reader nor the writer insists on any form of predetermined WAY of publishing, as far as a set of 'rules and standards' goes." (*Bleksem* undated. Editorial)

The Internet, which became more accessible in South Africa from about the mid-1990s, also offered some writers a relatively easy and cheap way to intervene as publishers.[12] The first forays into cyberspace included *Bleksem* (1995), which published one of its issues online, *Electronic Sesame*[13] (1995) and *Isibongo* (1996).[14] Other online experiments were to follow, including *Litnet.co.za* (1999-) and *donga* (2000-2003).[15] Later, Cummiskey launched the Dye Hard Press e-newsletter, which focused on practical issues facing small publishers.[16] While focusing on writing from

[12] 1994 saw the launch of the first online newspaper in South Africa, the *Daily Mail & Guardian*.
[13] A product of the writer Lionel Abrahams' writing workshops.
[14] Started by poet and academic Peter Horn. The first issue of *Isibongo* served as a publishing platform for the Faultline Conference in Cape Town (June 27 – July 3, 1996), which was attended by a number of international and local writers. The UCT Poetry Web, which included a mailing list allowing poets to interact and critique each others' work, was also started by Horn (eM&G 1998). Both Litnet.co.za and the UCT Poetry Web appeared at first to benefit from institutional (i.e. university) support.
[15] The writer Michael Cope also published *A Virtual Anthology of Some South African Poetry* (www.cope.co.za/Virtual/content.htm) in 2000, Michael Vines, another writer, launched the now defunct *Literary Gymnast*, while an online archive of South African poetry called *South Rain Poetry* (http://www.southernrainpoetry.com/) was launched in 2003 by the poet Joop Bersee.
[16] See: http://dyehard-press.blogspot.com/2007/08/dye-hard-press-newsletter.html

South Africa, websites like *donga* inevitably ended up working in a more global space, linking to writers and writing communities across the world.[17]

In a discussion of alternative publishers in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s – where, amongst others, Ravan Press, Skotaville Publishers, SACHED Books, and magazines like *Staffrider, Work in Progress* and *Speak* are discussed – Dick Cloete writes:

> 'Alternative publishing' is a fairly loose concept. Broadly defined it includes anything outside mainstream commercial publishing, where the market is the final determinant of what is published. In contrast, [in alternative publishing] the publishing mission takes precedence over the business mission. (Cloete 2000, p43)

While the post-apartheid publishing activities can be understood as attempts to contribute to or influence in different ways the shaping of the young democracy, there is also a sense that they are resistant to their incorporation into the emerging post-apartheid mainstream. As this introduction suggests, the expectations of the market is one site of resistance, but I later show that there are many others forms of resistance or opposition – or what can usefully be called contestation – that are explicitly stated in editorials, or implied through editorial and publishing practice, including the kinds of content selected for publication, the look and feel of a publication, and the sites of circulation. These acts of resistance locate the publishers on the 'outside'.

While this may tempt us to call the post-apartheid publishers 'alternative' publishers, this resistance feels different to that of alternative publishing found in the previous decades. At the very least the post-apartheid publishing activities lack the backdrop of oppositional politics that defined and was the lifeblood of the publishers discussed by Cloete. This to the extent that, as Guy Berger puts it: "When the mass movement achieved its basic aims, it lost momentum, and its press did likewise." (Berger 2000, p95)

[17] In the case of *donga*, most notably writers from Kerala in India.

Moreover, a number of the post-apartheid publishing activities might not be considered 'progressive' in any political sense; yet they often behave during the period with a sense of common purpose as publishing activities, allied in motive and sharing a concern as independent literary publishers: whether this common concern is the fate of local literature, or their identities as post-apartheid publishers, amongst others.

How does one understand this commonality, and resistance to the mainstream, in a political context that has shifted and where oppositional publishing has lost its momentum? What kinds of spaces do the publishers seek to fill, and how do those spaces work?

It is the perspective of this thesis that the post-apartheid literary publishing activities can be usefully understood in the context of public sphere theory. In particular, they can be viewed as publishing activities occurring at a time of political and social transition when a shared public sphere was actively being shaped in various ways, including economically, politically, culturally, and even ethically. This can broadly be referred to as the post-apartheid democratic project.

Public sphere theory offers us a way of understanding the sense of contestation that can be felt when the publishers actively position themselves on the margins of the emerging mainstream. It is a positioning that contests the sense of a dominant public sphere, or what Michael Warner calls "*the* public" (Warner 2002, p117). In this regard, the publishing activities can be considered as engaging in acts of resistance against the normative threat of exclusion and closure, a positioning that can usefully be described as counterpublic.

However, as this thesis will show, it is not an easy position to maintain, and the publishers sometimes exhibit an ambivalent relationship with the mainstream; for instance, in their dependence on commercial book retailers for distribution, the media

for reviews, or on state or state-aligned institutions as donor. Cloete writes: “When alternative media is driven to seek inclusion in the mainstream, the process is filled with tension for the publishing mission” (Cloete 2000, p44) – and it is the perspective of this thesis that this tension is implicit in a number of the publishing activities. By considering the publishing activities of Dye Hard Press, Botsotso, Timbila, Kotaz and Chimurenga, this thesis attempts to elucidate these perspectives.

2. Rationale

The post-apartheid decade of independent literary publishing activities described above has not been comprehensively documented. While numerous interviews have been done with some of the publishers over time, and while some have written about their publishing activities, as far as I am aware there has been no attempt to systematically compare, contrast or analyse the publications collectively. As I have tried to suggest, the period, during which a new wave of independent literary publishing activity grappling with the role and purpose of literature in a shifting historical context can be clearly identified, shows some striking characteristics. Documenting this period compliments and builds on work already done in documenting literary journals and magazines in South Africa by the likes of Gardiner, and in publications like English in Africa (1980), amongst others.

South African independent literary publishing activities have also not, as far as I know, been analyzed in terms of theories of publics and counterpublics (while some consideration has been given to related fields, such as hip-hop counterpublics).[18] Yet, as I argue, public sphere theory proves useful in articulating key characteristics of the independent literary publishing activities after 1994 by allowing me to describe how they attempted to call publics into being in different ways, and what sorts of publics these constituted. By considering the publishing activities from the perspective of public engagement, I am able to emphasize the act of publishing itself; in particular, the choice of medium and distribution strategy. These, together with editorial positioning, are important factors that shape the kinds of publics called into being, as well as the possibilities and limitations of the public engagement of any publishing activity. Such a theoretical perspective helps me articulate the extent to which the publishing activities can be said to contest the mainstream, as well as what it is I think independent literary publishing activities actually *do*, besides simply publishing literature.

Finally, my thesis sheds light on something of the characteristics of independent (or alternative) publishing generally, and I hope contributes to a general understanding of

[18] See, for instance, Adam Haupt's *Counterpublics, Noise and Ten Years of Democracy* (Haupt 2004).

the contours of publishing in post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard, my thesis broadens the discussions of alternative publishing offered by Cloete, Oliphant and Berger *et al.*[19]

[19] See: *Alternative Publishing in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s* (Cloete 2000), included in *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa* (Evans & Seeber eds. 2000) or, in the same book, *Publishing for the People: The Alternative Press 1980-1999* (Berger 2000).

3. Theoretical framework

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas discusses the rise of what he calls the bourgeois public sphere during the 17th and 18th Centuries in Europe. Amongst other things,[20] this public sphere was made possible through the circulation of texts (e.g. novels, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, journals of literary criticism) and physically embodied in public (non-state) meeting places, such as the salon or coffee houses or "related private contexts of sociability in which argument and discussion could take place" (Warner 2002, p47). It was a sphere where issues that were considered of public importance or concerned the 'common good' could be debated, discussed and deliberated in a rational-critical way by private individuals. This is considered the birth of a civil society separate from the state, which could articulate and exercise its power in relation to the state and its institutions.

While Habermas theorizes the dissolution of this public sphere, with the resultant loss of its emancipatory potential, several theorists, including Nancy Fraser, have criticized his conception of the public sphere as being inadequate. For instance, it fails to account for the rise of the working class as a public, or for the impact excluded or marginalized groups, such as women's groups, have had on public intellectual life. Similarly, Habermas's idealization of the bourgeois public sphere has been criticized for its awkward distinction between public and private (and what constitutes a 'proper' issue for public discussion), and the belief that rational-critical deliberations, independent of social conditions of place and person, are possible. This Michael Warner calls a "[utopia of] self-abstraction" (ibid. p162).

Using Habermas's conception of the emancipatory potential of public rational-critical debate as a basis, I draw on the work of Warner and Fraser in particular to frame my thesis argument. My understanding of what constitutes a 'public' is influenced by Warner's mapping of publics in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002). For Warner, a public has several key characteristics, amongst them: it is a 'space' that is organised

[20] For instance, this public sphere included ideas of the proper separation of personal and public life and the orientation of the family and domestic architecture in relation to public life. As Warner puts it, an "idea of the family and intimate life as the proper seat of humanity" (Warner 2002, p47) was developed.

by discourse (verbal, textual or symbolic) and exists "by virtue of being addressed" (ibid. p67); it is a relation among strangers (its circulated texts have the possibility of being addressed to an unknown, unforeseeable or unintended reader or audience); its mode of address is both personal and impersonal, in that it is addressed to the individual (the 'me' of the reader or listener) and to strangers simultaneously, and there is some consciousness of this duality of address; it is constituted through "mere attention" (ibid. p87), in that it requires "active uptake" (ibid.) which may be random, fleeting, accidental, or sustained (the constitution of a public is fluid and dynamic); it is a "social space" (ibid. p90) created by the "reflexive circulation of discourse", in that "[n]o single text can create a public…[n]or can a single voice, a single genre, [or] even a single medium" (ibid) – rather it is an "ongoing space of encounter for discourse" (ibid.), and offers an interaction between what has come before and what has come after; its activity is related to its frequency of circulation (Warner suggests that high activity through frequent circulation is closer to political activity); and, finally, it is an act of "poetic world making" (ibid. p114) in that it is propositional and is not purely based on rational-critical exchange in that, for Warner, the "poetic functions of both language and corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics" (ibid. p115) is important.

Some publics dominate others (they are more normalized), and in this sense unequal power relationships are set up in public discourse. For Warner, the dominant public insists on "arbitrary social closure (through language, idiolect, genre, medium and address)" (ibid. p117); is dependent on what he refers to as "institutionalized forms of power" (ibid.) to "realize [its] agency" (ibid.); and is selective in that it relies on a "hierarchy of faculties that allows some activities to count as public or general and others to be merely personal, private, or particular" (ibid.). In this way some publics more readily stand in as *the* public and "frame their address as the universal discussion of the people" (ibid).

In her critique of Habermas, while allowing that "something like Habermas's idea of the public sphere is indispensable to critical social theory and democratic political practice" (Fraser 1992, p111), Fraser argues that public spheres are not only "arenas for the formation of discursive opinion" (ibid. p125), but also arenas for the "formation and enactment of social identities" (ibid.). In particular, an enactment that

allows one to "speak in one's own voice" (ibid. p126), and, in doing so, to "construct and express one's cultural identity through idiom and style" (ibid.).

Like Warner, Fraser allows for the formation of competing public spheres, or counterpublics, that stand in a "contestatory relationship" (ibid. p128) to dominant publics. Counterpublics offer "parallel discursive arenas" (ibid. p123) where "members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (ibid.). Counterpublics "expand discursive space" (ibid. p124), and contest the "exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behaviour and alternative norms of public speech" (ibid. p116).

Fraser[21] suggests how the dominant public can be seen as ideology (and in this sense the exclusionary norms often hidden and masked):

> The official bourgeois public sphere is the institutional vehicle for a major historical transformation in the nature of political domination. This is the shift from a repressive mode of domination to a hegemonic one, from rule based primarily on acquiescence to superior force to rule based primarily on consent supplemented with some measure of repression. (ibid. p117)

By bracketing inequalities and social differences, the bourgeois public sphere does not provide a space for equal interaction, but masks domination in discourse and position. In what Fraser calls "stratified societies"[22] (and South Africa, for the purposes of this thesis, is a stratified society) "unequally empowered social groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles" (ibid. p120).

Fraser also offers a way of locating independent literary publishing activities generally in terms of dominant media circulation (whether the commercial publishing

[21] Referring to Geoff Eley's essay *Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century* (included in *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1993) ed. Craig Calhoun)

[22] As defined by Fraser, a stratified society is a society where the "basic institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination" (Fraser 1992, p122).

industry or the mass media) when she refers to “powerful informal pressures” (ibid.) that marginalize participation and are

> [A]mplified, rather than mitigated, by the peculiar political economy of the bourgeois public sphere. In this public sphere the media that constitute the material support for the circulation of views are privately owned and operated for profit. Consequently, subordinated social groups usually lack equal access to the material means of equal participation. (ibid.)

Fraser offers what we might call a ‘strong’ conception of counterpublics, which are, as I have suggested, constituted by members of subordinated social groups (“women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians” (ibid. p123)). These she calls “subaltern counterpublics”. Warner, in turn, offers a looser conception of counterpublics, which are “defined by their tension with larger publics” (Warner 2002, p56), and can have a “critical relation to power” (ibid.), but are not necessarily “composed of people otherwise dominated as subalterns” (ibid. p57). As he puts it: “Some youth-publics or artistic publics…operate as counterpublics, even though many who participate in them are ‘subalterns’ in no other way.” (ibid.) This thesis will consider which of these conceptions of counterpublics is most appropriate for understanding the post-apartheid independent literary publishing activities.

4. Literature review

While I rely on public sphere theory in this thesis, a number of theorists and the threads of several discussions also shape my thesis argument, which to some extent relies on a polyglot of perspectives in order to unpack and understand the subject matter, and these are therefore worth mentioning here. To understand the historical context of independent literary publishing in South Africa, I have relied on Michael Gardiner's essay, amongst a number of other sources, such as the series of articles and interviews with literary publishers and writers published in English in Africa in the 1980s (Vol. 7 No. 2). While providing an historical context in which the post-1994 small publishing activities occurred, these usefully outline something of the publishers' engagement with the apartheid state, as well as various institutions, such as English universities, and speak to issues such as editorial formation and practice, new black writing and voices, politics and a literature of engagement, and literary value and relevance.[23]

For background material to the post-1994 publishing period I have relied on miscellaneous articles, editorials, essays and interviews published in a variety of places, including the journals and magazines themselves, online and in the print media. For example, besides articles such as Press's published in *New Coin* in 1994, I have referenced an overview of fanzines and journals published in *ThisDay* in December 2003 (*Connecting with the world from the inside out* (Wessels, 2003)) and a similar article on publishing opportunities for writers that appeared in the *Sunday Independent* (*Flourishing literary journals offer vibrant alternative to mainstream publishing industry* (Salafranca, 2006)). Horn has summarized his thinking behind *Isibongo* in *The World from Cape Town: Isibongo* (undated), and Cummiskey (2006) has written an overview of his Dye Hard Press experience, originally published on *donga*. In the editorial to *Botsotso's* tenth-anniversary issue (2004) the history of the journal is discussed. Interviews I have found useful in contextualizing editorial and publishing perspectives include an interview with Cummiskey and writer Arja

[23] Other source material, such as media coverage of an exhibition of the magazines Gardiner discusses at the Warren Siebrits Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery in 2005, has also proved useful (e.g. *Chronicles of a transition foretold* (Greig 2005), published in the Sunday Independent). Oliphant also provides an overview of small literary publishing activities before 1990 in his essay *Forums and Forces: Recent Trends in South African Literary Journals* (Oliphant 1991).

Salafranca published in *New Coin* (2003), various interviews with Bila (e.g. in *Botsotso* (2002), *Bleksem* (undated) and *New Coin* (2000)), a *Litnet.co.za* interview with Bosotso publisher Allan Kolski Horwitz (2006), and numerous interviews with *Chimurenga* founder and editor Ntone Edjabe (and articles about *Chimurenga*) included in publications as diverse as *YMag*, the *Mail & Guardian*, and, electronically, *kush.co.za*, *ctheory.net* and *The Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts* newsletter.

To place the independent literary publishing activities in a broader publishing context in South Africa, I have relied mainly on *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa* (Evans & Seeber eds. 2000). This includes a range of essays on the history and state of publishing in the country by media academics, researchers and publishers, amongst others. Four essays in particular prove useful to my thesis: *The Politics of Book Publishing in South Africa: A Critical Overview* (Mpe & Seeber 2000); *Alternative Publishing in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s* (Cloete 2000); *Publishing for the People: The Alternative Press 1980-1999* (Berger 2000) and *From Colonialism to Democracy: Writers and Publishing in South Africa* (Oliphant 2000). Amongst other things, these articles look at the role and characteristics of alternative publishers during apartheid, and trace the history of publishing in South Africa from a perspective of race and ownership. In particular, I have drawn extensively on Cloete's overview of alternative publishing in the 1970s and 1980s as a comparison to post-apartheid independent literary publishing activities.

Other discussions or publications referred to include the book *The poetry of commitment in South Africa* (Alvarez-Pereyre 1979), which provides an interesting overview of the role of literature in a society undergoing radical transition, and how writers, often divided along race lines, understood their role as writers differently; Press on cultural formation and political struggle (*Building a National Culture in South Africa* (1990)); Adam Haupt (2004), whose account of the rise of hip-hop in Cape Town in the 1990s is instructive; and Olson and Torrance (2001), whose work offers a way to link socio-economic concerns such as literacy with publishing as an act of protest.

5. Methodology

5.1. Overview

This is a qualitative research project that includes a series of interviews with independent literary publishers. The results of the interviews were then placed in the context developed by my literature review and analyzed through the lens of the theoretical framework of public sphere theory. A review of a selection of independent literary publications guided and shaped the interview process, and informed the overall conclusions of this thesis.

This thesis should be considered embedded research in that I founded and edited two of the publications discussed in passing (*Bleksem* and the website *donga*)[24] and have participated as a poet and publisher in the independent literary publishing field in South Africa for over a decade. I have also been published by a number of the independent literary publishers discussed.

5.1.1. Selection of publishers

A list of independent literary publications (magazines, pamphlets, journals, websites etc.) published during the period 1994-2004 was developed through information provided by the publishers themselves, and by the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown. While these publications comprise the general source material to this thesis, my main focus is on five publishers: Dye Hard Press (1993-), Botsotso (1993-), Kotaz (1998-), Timbila (2000-) and Chimurenga (2002-).

These publishers were selected because

a) They can be considered independent literary publishers in line with the framework of this thesis;

[24] Writer and critic Paul Wessels later also edited *donga*.

b) They are amongst those that can be considered the most prominent of the post-apartheid independent literary publishers;

c) They offer an interesting and lively cross-section of different kinds of independent literary publishing activities during the period discussed;

d) There was a level of interaction between the publishers during the period discussed that was likely to yield results given my research question.

The table below lists the informants interviewed for this thesis, and further motivates their inclusion in the study.

Publisher	Name of informant	Position	Reason why selected
Dye Hard Press	Gary Cummiskey	Founding editor; publisher	Cummiskey is a poet and the founder of Dye Hard Press. Dye Hard Press publishes the poetry journal *Green Dragon*, and has, over the years, published dozens of poetry collections in various formats. Cummiskey also published the Dye Hard Press e-newsletter, focusing on small publishing.
Botsotso	Allan Kolski Horwitz, Siphiwe ka Ngwenya	Founding editors; publishers; members of the Botsotso Jesters	Botsotso publishers a magazine by the same name (*Botsotso*), one of the longest running of the independent literary magazines. Kolski Horwitz and ka Ngwenya are both poets and are members of the magazine's editorial collective. They are also part of the performance poetry group the Botsotso Jesters. Besides the magazine, Botsotso has published numerous collections of poetry and prose (anthologies and individual authors) since it was founded. It has also published poetry on CD, arranged public readings, and held poetry workshops.
Timbila	Vonani Bila	Founding editor; publisher	Bila is a poet and the founder of the Limpopo-based non-profit organization the Timbila Poetry Project. The Timbila Poetry Project has been one of the most active of the independent literary publishers. Besides publishing the poetry journal *Timbila* (which Bila edits), it has published numerous individual collections of poetry, held poetry workshops, and acted as a convenor of poetry performances and poetry workshops.
Kotaz	Mxolisi Nyezwa	Founding editor; publisher	Nyezwa is a poet and the founding editor and publisher of the New Brighton-based literary magazine *Kotaz*. *Kotaz* has been published for over 10 years. Kotaz has also arranged writing workshops across the Eastern Cape and published poetry and prose in book form.

Chimurenga	Ntone Edjabe	Founding editor; publisher	Edjabe is the founding editor and publisher of the Cape Town-based magazine *Chimurenga*. Although founded more recently than some of the other publications, *Chimurenga* has quickly made its mark on the local cultural scene. Chimurenga also convenes poetry and music performances.

5.1.2. Interview process

Four out of five of the interviews for this thesis were conducted face-to-face. One (with Nyezwa) was conducted by e-mail due to logistical restrictions. The face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed. Follow-up questions were then e-mailed to the informants if any clarifications were necessary. Although a set of questions for each interview was prepared in order to guide the discussion in terms of my research question, the interviews were open-ended and free ranging.

Interviews are referenced in the form: (Name date. Int.)

5.2. Definitions

Culture

The term ‘culture’ is used practically in this thesis to refer to the artistic output of a society, community or group. This is in line with one of three definitions of culture offered by Raymond Williams: “[T]he works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.” (Hawthorn 1994, p32)

Internet/ World Wide Web

Technically, websites (the World Wide Web) are published on the Internet, which includes e-mail communication. Except where made explicit, the term Internet refers to all forms of online publishing, including websites, blogs and e-mail (e.g. as in an e-mail newsletter).

Languages

The primary language of publication for all of the publishers focused on in this thesis is English. However, publishers like Timbila and Kotaz are concerned with the dearth of literature published in indigenous languages, and take steps to remedy this by publishing work in languages such as isiXhosa and Xitsonga, amongst others. Botsotso accepts work in all of the 11 official South African languages, including *isicamtho* (Tsotsitaal). *Chimurenga* publishes translations of work (e.g. essays) originally written in other African languages such as French.

Literary

The term 'literary' is used loosely in this thesis, partly to reflect the expansive concerns of the independent literary publishers under discussion. A number of them are concerned with 'local literature' (see below), and take as their primary motivation the development and promotion of South African literature (i.e. poetry and prose). As an expression of this concern, Dye Hard Press, Botsotso, Timbila and Kotaz all publish poetry and prose predominantly, while some venture into other genres such as stage and radio plays. However, magazines like *Botsotso* and *Kotaz*, which also publish some artwork (e.g. sketches, illustrations and photographs), bill themselves as 'cultural' publications as if to suggest a wider field of concern.

Chimurenga is different to the other publications, in part due to the fact that it is not concerned with the development of local literature, or supporting local writers (its scope is pan African and includes the African diaspora). It nevertheless draws on the work of local writers, poets and playwrights amongst them. While writing generally,

including poetry and prose, is the basic currency of the publication in that the act of writing is foregrounded in various ways, *Chimurenga* offers a useful contrast to the other publications that are rooted more firmly in the reproduction and promotion of South African literature.

The self-definition of a journal is primary in the context of this thesis, and all of the publishers are comfortable with me referring to them as literary publications (albeit *Chimurenga* felt more tentative about the definition). However, as a result of the differences mentioned here, the word 'literary' is used as a convenience, rather than as a way to limit the freer territory the publishers wish to explore. It collectively reflects, in this regard, a general concern rather than a specific or niche investigation into literariness, even thought this does occur in places.

At the level of content, all of the publishers publish poetry and most publish prose.

Local literature

This refers to poetry and prose written by writers residing in South Africa. It is typically used as an inclusive term, reflecting the literary output of writers of different skills and social backgrounds, working in a range of styles and drawing from divergent historical cultural contexts. It does not refer exclusively to historical or emerging literary canon.

Name of publishing initiative

A number of the publishers are engaged in several initiatives simultaneously, and have different ways of referring to each of these. For instance, *Botsotso*, the magazine, is published by Botsotso Publishing, which also publishes books. Moreover, the Botsotso Jesters, a performance group, forms the editorial nucleus of the magazine. For ease of reference, I have used the name by which each publisher is most commonly known. When the name is italicized, it refers to the name of a magazine, journal or website specifically. If it is not italicized, it refers to the publishing initiative more generally, and includes the range of a publisher's activities, such as performances, book publishing, and writing workshops.

Performance poetry

For convenience, and unless when otherwise made explicit, the term 'performance poetry' is used to refer to the various forms of contemporary oral poetry that are found, including the spoken-word movement, slam poetry[25] and rap. Performance poetry is typically poetry recited from memory or spontaneously, and may or not include body language as part of the performance ritual, so-called "vocal percussion" (e.g. hip-hop 'beatboxing'),[26] as well as instruments, or other technical tools (such as a DJ's turntable or microphone), for effect.

Print

Print is used in this thesis to refer to book, pamphlet, magazine or journal publishing, or any other form of publishing using paper (i.e. it does not refer to online publishing).

Publishing activities

As suggested above, most of the publishers are engaged in more than one kind of publishing activity, often across several mediums. For example, Botsotso publishes a magazine, books, CD recordings, and convenes performance poetry events. Together these can be considered the publisher's 'publishing activities'.

Publishing medium

In *The Media and Modernity* (1995), John Thompson provides a useful entry point for understanding publishing in its broadest sense as a 'continuum', and develops the notion of a "technical medium" (Thompson 1995, p18), which is employed in producing and transmitting symbolic forms. As he suggests, the technical medium in

[25] Rules for slam poetry competitions differ, but usually involve a poet reciting his/her work, either from memory, or spontaneously on stage. The poet then receives a score for his/her performance.
[26] Wikipedia defines beatboxing as: "[A] form of vocal percussion which primarily involves the art of producing drum beats, rhythm, and musical sounds using one's mouth, lips, tongue, voice, and more." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beat_boxing)

speech is the body (vocal cords, larynx etc.). Understanding publishing – or the act of making public – as this sort of continuum, allows one to consider performance or reading as a publishing activity. Therefore, when referring to ‘publishing activities’ in this thesis, poetry performance or readings are included. ‘Performance’ is, for instance, discussed in Chapter 7.2.1, under the heading “Medium”.

6. Background to the publishing activities

6.1. Dye Hard Press

Dye Hard Press was started in 1994 by Johannesburg-based poet Gary Cummiskey, and has been publishing "on and off" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.) ever since. The first Dye Hard Press publications were rudimentary, consisting of little more than A4 photostatted and stapled pamphlets, with a very basic layout (only the fifth pamphlet used an image on the front cover).[27] According to Cummiskey, who worked in the corporate environment at the time of starting the press, most of these were reproduced on an office photostatting machine.

The press was launched following a once-off attempt to start a literary journal called *The Magazine With No Name*. Like the Dye Hard Press publications, the 'magazine' was a simply photostatted and stapled publication. But, Cummiskey argues, the project was a failure, given, ironically, that he was a 'poet with no name': "If [the magazine] had been published by an [Lionel] Abrahams or [Mongane Wally] Serote, it would have probably been an instant success." (Cummiskey 2006a)

Cummiskey's answer was, in effect, to create a name for himself as a poet by self-publishing his own work. Partly as a "reflection of [his] determination not to lay down and die after [his] plans for [the magazine] collapsed" (ibid.), Dye Hard Press was born:

> My solution was to get a small collection of my own poetry in circulation so people would see I was in earnest. I brought together 20 poems, typed them up on my computer at work, produced a simple cover, photocopied about 100 A4-sized copies, stapled them down the side, and there I had my first collection of poems, *The Secret Hour*, ready to hit the streets. (ibid.)

[27] The pamphlet was *Burning Aloes* (Finlay, 1994). It was a trend that was then continued, except for the publication of *The Red Laughter of Guns in Green Summer Rain* (Finlay & Zhuwao) in 2002.

12 Dye Hard Press publications were produced in this way from 1994-1996. Four of these were self-published "samples" (Cummiskey, 2006) of Cummiskey's own poetry. Cummiskey also produced four issues of *Atio*, a journal[28] of poetry, in the same format from 1995-1996.

Up until 1996, Cummiskey's focus was primarily on poetry, with one of his own publications, *Conspiracies of the interior: A surrealist film scenario* (1994), being the exception. Poets who had selections published during this period were, on the whole, considered relatively unknown.[29] However, better-known poets, such as Gus Ferguson and Roy Blumenthal were also published. A number of the poets published were either engaged in small publishing initiatives themselves, or had self-published their work in various ways.[30]

Besides lifting a few images from books such as *Surrealism and Its Popular Accomplices* (1980),[31] *Atio* also included cartoons, sketches, collages and illustrations by the contributors, such as Ferguson (also a cartoonist), Sing, Anderson and Cummiskey himself. These early publications were distributed by hand and post.

In 1998 Cummiskey produced a slim anthology of poems called *Mad Rains*, an A5 photostatted and saddle-stitched booklet. According to Cummiskey, the format made "bookshelf storability a good deal easier" (Cummiskey 2006a). Towards the end of the same year, he collaborated with Blumenthal on *Head* (1998), a joint publication of poetry, which was "printed on better-quality paper with a cardboard cover" (Cummiskey 2006a), and laid out by Blumenthal.[32]

---

[28] Although *Atio* is later described as a poetry journal (Cummiskey 2006. Int.), its first issue is described on the cover as a "Dye Hard Press Anthology" (Atio, 1995), suggesting something of the tentativeness with which new initiatives are often approached by independent publishers.

[29] Such as Michael Anderson, Robert Homem, and Val Sing.

[30] Ferguson, who ran the poetry publisher Snailpress, and had produced some 30 issues of the photostatted *Slugnews* – which Cummiskey describes as the inspiration for his Dye Hard Press initiative – was perhaps the most well-known publisher of all of them. Blumenthal was to produce the popular and much publicized series of Barefoot Press poetry pamphlets, Anderson and Homem launched *Something Quarterly* (Homen later starting up the short-lived SunBelly Press), and I had started *Bleksem* (1993).

[31] The cover of *Atio* No 1. is an untitled ink drawing by Robert Green (1979).

[32] Blumenthal was also to design the cover of *Reigning Gloves* (2001), a later collection of Cummiskey's own poetry. The cover, with its dissected umbrella, mid-20th Century European gentleman wearing a colonial explorer's hat, and sets of boxing falling from the sky, had a distinctly surrealist feel to it.

Blumenthal also designed the Dye Hard Press colophon, which included an image of an old heating iron, a potentially evocative symbol that captured something of the kind of space Cummiskey felt he occupied, described variously as "home publishing", "garage publishing" or "kitchen table publishing" (Cummiskey & Salafranca 2003, p80).

This changed format, clearly considered an improvement by Cummiskey, was to remain the publishing format for Dye Hard Press publications until 2004 and beyond.[33] This with the exception of *Green Dragon*, a journal of new writing, which was launched by Cummiskey in 2002. *Green Dragon #3* (2005), which ran to some 100 pages, was perfect bound.

From 1998-2004, Dye Hard Press published four collections of poems, three of them Cummiskey's (including the collaboration with Blumenthal). Other poets with individual collections published were Arja Salafranca (*The fire in which we burn*, 2000), who had won the Sanlam Literary Award for both prose and poetry, and the collection of 'chain-poems', *The Red Laughter of Guns in Green Summer Rain* (2002), by Zimbabwean poet Phillip Zhuwao and myself.

Dye Hard Press also published two slim anthologies during this period, *Mad Rains* (1998) and *Electric Juice* (1999). Like the early Dye Hard Press publications, the anthologies, with a cover-to-cover count of 12 pages and 28 pages respectively, included poets already published by the press, poems from other independent literary publishers, or poets they had published – by this time, a small, expanding, but also self-referential network of writers and independent publishing activities had begun to emerge.[34]

A first issue of *Green Dragon* (an "annual literary journal of poetry and prose" (Cummiskey 2006a)) was to appear in 2002, and a second in 2004. Issue No. 1, (December 2002) runs to 58 pages. The name of the journal was code for a social

[33] Here I specifically mean the A5 saddle-stitched format. Naturally, things like different quality board for covers, the number of colours on the covers, paper, and fonts were experimented with.

[34] This sense of a growing network of independent literary publications was also reflected in the promotion of each other's publications, for instance, through the inclusion of flyers, or a list of journals and magazines publishing literature with contact details included towards the end of a publication.

trick devised to test if someone was listening to you (perhaps suggesting that local poetry and prose was not being listened to):

> The name originates from a stratagem devised by a friend when a teenager. If she suspected that someone was not listening to her, she would say something like: "The green dragon will be coming to dinner," and if the listener responded with an affirmative: "Ja," or "Uh huh," then the cat – or dragon – was out the bag! (Cummiskey 2002. Editorial)

Calls for contributions included "poetry, fiction, drama, essays and criticism" (ibid.). Later issues of *Green Dragon* were to include diary extracts and an interview.

By this time, Dye Hard Press had secured the services of a freelance distribution agent,[35] and *Green Dragon* was distributed across the country through chain retailers such as Exclusive Books, and was also stocked in supportive independent retailers such as Thorold's[36] in Johannesburg, or Clarke's Bookshop in Cape Town (bookshops that had already been supportive of Dye Hard Press publications over the years). Between 200-300 copies of each Dye Hard Press publication were produced (Cummiskey 2006. Int.).

In June 2004, Cummiskey launched the Dye Hard Press e-newsletter, which had some 300 subscribers. Although most of the newsletters fall outside of the time period circumscribed by this thesis, they are worth mentioning. The newsletters dealt with a range of practical issues facing small publishers, such as marketing and promotion (#8), book cover design (#7), tips for writers on how to submit material to a literary journal (#9), design and layout (#6), fundraising, costing, publishing online, and basic book production; as well as more general enquiries into the nature and identity of small and independent publishers. While many of the newsletters were written by Cummiskey himself, and were based on his experiences as a fledgling publisher, a

[35] Bacchus Books. The agent was also used by other publishers, such as Botsotso and Timbila.
[36] Also Frank Thorold.

number of them were written by experts in a particular field, who had been invited to contribute.[37] Fifteen newsletters were published from 2004 to 2007.

When the interview for this thesis was conducted (2006), Cummiskey showed an interest in exploring the possibility of launching a Dye Hard Press website.[38] At the same time, he indicated that he intended to broaden the scope of Dye Hard Press publications to include prose, as well as other genres, such as a plays. *Full Circle* (2007), a play by Kobus Moolman, a poet, and independent publisher himself,[39] was published soon after; and a Dye Hard Press blog (http://dyehard-press.blogspot.com) was also launched.

Cummiskey's publishing activities have been mostly self-financed, often from personal savings. However, small amounts of funding have been solicited over the years, such as from the relatively obscure The Roy Joseph Cotton Poetry Trust. All Dye Hard Press publications were in English.

6.2. Botsotso

The Botsotso Jesters, a multi-lingual[40] performance poetry collective, was formed in 1994. A number of its early members were practicing poets: Allan Kolski Horwitz, Anna Varney, Siphiwe ka Ngwenya, Ike Muila, Isabella Motadinyane, and Roy Blumenthal. While Kolski Horwitz and Ka Ngwenya had already had selections of their work published by the COSAW,[41] Muila and Motadinyane had been active in

[37] Such as Kerry Swift, then based at Rhodes University, on design and layout. Beside practical advice and information on small publishing, the e-newsletters also tackled issues less directly related to publishing, such as Newsletter #10, by Salafranca, entitled *Creative non-fiction: a new approach to journalism.* Newsletter #3, dealing with vanity publishing, was included in *A rough guide to small-scale and self-publishing* (2005) by Colleen Higgs, published by the Centre for the Book.
[38] The move was perhaps prefigured by Dye Hard Press newsletter #14, which dealt with the pros and cons of web publishing, a form of publishing which Cummiskey shows some reticence towards during the interview conducted for this research.
[39] Moolman published *Fidelities.*
[40] The Jesters worked primarily in English and *isicamtho*.
[41] Kolski Horwitz's second selection of poetry, the first being *Call from the Free State* (Outposts, 1979).

community theatre, and Blumenthal was a well-known presence as a performance poet in Johannesburg.

The group's first performance was at a Wits Open Day, followed by performances at the Sandton Library, during the Arts Alive Festival in Johannesburg, and then at the Chiawelo Community Centre in Soweto and a library in Eldorado Park (Motadinyane *et al* 1998). These diverse cultural settings echoed the cultural make-up of the group, and set the trend for future performances by the Jesters, which would take place at festivals, schools, universities, community centres and libraries, amongst other venues.

Shortly after forming, the Jesters launched *Botsotso*,[42] "an independent magazine of contemporary culture" (*Botsotso* No.1 1994. Editorial), as a four-page monthly tabloid insert in the *New Nation*. The first issue, which published poetry, artwork, and an essay, called for contributions from "southern African" (ibid.) artists, including

> [P]oetry and lyrics, short stories and general prose, children's literature, the visual arts, the dramatic arts, articles relating to the politics/aesthetics of art as well as reviews, interviews and letters relating to any art form or contemporary cultural issue. (ibid.)

A loose editorial collective[43] had been set up for the insert, which consisted of the Jesters (then Varney, Motadinyane, Muila, ka Ngwenya and Kolski Horwitz), as well as American activist Frank Wilderson. The *Botsotso* editorial collective would change over the years. However, Horwitz, Muila, ka Ngwenya, and, until her death, Motadinyane would form the nucleus of the collective. Other members included writer and film maker Zachariah Rapola, and, later, poet Linda Ndlovu.

The sense of a collective approach to the Botsotso project was extended to the layout and design of the first issue, which was done by students at the Johannesburg Art

[42] In October 1994 (Kolski Horwitz *et al* 2004. Editorial).
[43] Also referred to as an "editorial board" (Botsotso No.1, 1994. *Editorial*. p1). I make no distinction between the two in this thesis, given that their operations are the same or similar.

Foundation, assisted by the newspaper.[44] The insert had a jazzy layout style, with poems and artwork littered across the tabloid format; the texts, in different fonts, were both visually foregrounded and recessed through a play with borders and watermark, deep-etched image and background colour. The aesthetic, which was reminiscent of the anti-apartheid community publications produced before 1994, would, with one or two exceptions, become something of a signature look and feel for the publisher, at least insofar as a play between image and text was encouraged. As the publisher put it more recently: "The format of our books is carefully designed and we try as far as possible to incorporate graphics and images to complement the text." (Botsotso 2006, p22)

Botsotso No.1. sports what was to become the Botsotso colophon, designed by Varney, and which was reiterated as printed wall hangings that served as backdrops to the performances of the Botsotso Jesters (one behind each performer). It consisted of the silhouette of an androgynous form jiving or 'jesting', and was also suggestive of the publisher's name: the tight jeans fashionable in Soweto in the 1950s were called 'Botsotsos' (Kolski Horwitz *et al* 2004. Editorial), and the colophon captured something of this street-wise appeal.

The arrangement with the *New Nation* lasted for seven issues, before the newspaper folded in 1997 (Berger 2000). Distribution through the newspaper meant that some 70 000[45] of each of the inserts were printed a month. Financial sponsors for the inserts included Liberty Life Foundation, Southern Life and Ben and Shirley Rabinowitz.

Botsotso No. 8 is the first issue of the magazine to be published independently, with a R4 cover price. Although the format was still tabloid, the magazine ran to 24 pages. Content includes poetry, fiction, scripts, essays,[46] book reviews and illustrations by Varney, amongst others.

[44] *Botsotso* No.1 also contains an invitation for graphic design students to contact the magazine if they wish to help design the next issue. However, Varney would take on much of the future design work for the publisher, even though different designers were used from time to time.
[45] 1992 circulation figures for the paper (Berger 2000). Kolski Horwitz later quotes a readership figure of 75 000 for the paper (Kolski Horwitz *et al*. 2004. Editorial).
[46] Two of the essays highlight the issue of language, one entitled *Isicamtho*, by Muila and another by ka Ngwenya on isiZulu (*Botsotso* No. 8 1997) – this theme is already picked up on in the first issue of the magazine in an essay by James Ogude entitled *The vexed question of language* (1994).

The format for *Botsotso* No's 9-12 changes to an A4 stapled magazine, printed on glossy paper (No's 9-11) and paper with a rougher, matt texture (No. 12). Like the earlier *Botsotso*s, the content ranged from poetry to fiction, articles, essays and reviews. It also included a photo essay, illustrations and other artwork. With the exception of issue No. 12,[47] the layout and design was still by Varney (or Art Studio, which she set up), and maintains the jazzy feel. The magazine kept its association with the Johannesburg Art Foundation, and several students contribute graphics.

At this stage the magazine begins to reflect a growing sense of a community of independent literary publishers, and issues contain adverts and contact details for other forums for publishing literature, both on and off-line. Initiatives such as a call for contributions to an "alternative anthology of South African writing" (Botsotso No. 10 1999),[48] as well as a poetry slam (or *Bekgeveg*), are also prominently supported. While Nedcor and First National Bank are added to a growing list of the magazine's sponsors, Botsotso manages to secure funding from the Arts and Culture Trust of the President,[49] and the Gauteng Arts and Culture Council for issues No. 10 and 11.[50] The issues also run an advert for Exclusive Books.

Botsotso No. 13 (2004) celebrates 10 years of the publishing initiative, and is a bumper issue of the magazine, running to some 229 pages. The format is still A4, printed on glossy paper. However, the cover is full-colour, and, given the size of the publication, the issue is perfect bound. Content includes fiction, essays, poetry (including concrete poetry),[51] reviews, drama and artwork, such as sketches, photographs and other graphics.

While the editorial provides a brief history of the magazine (and the context in which it published), the issue opens with a tribute written by Muila to Motadinyane who had

[47] The once-off design for this issue is by Michael Vines, and shows a distinctly more subdued and tailored aesthetic.
[48] The anthology was edited by Arja Salafranca and myself and published by Jacana in 2003.
[49] In 1999 it became the Arts and Culture Trust (ACT).
[50] Later funders include the NAC, the The Roy Joseph Cotton Poetry Trust, the British Council and the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund.
[51] Here using rudimentary desk-top publishing tools.

died in 2003.[52] Layout, by the poet Nadine Botha and David Lewis, offers something of an industrial feel (for instance, with thick black frames and uniform body-text font used throughout). The issue is "partly funded" (inside cover) by the NAC. Around 1000 of *Botsotso* No. 13 were printed.

The 1998 issue of *Botsotso* (No. 9) was published by Botsotso Publishing, an imprint launched by the Jesters. While the Botsotso Jesters had published a collection of their (collective) poems in 1996 (called *We jive like this* (1996), published in an A4 magazine format), the first book publication bearing the imprint's name was *No Free Sleeping* (1998), which featured the poetry of Donald Parenzee, Vonani Bila, and myself. Some 450 copies of *No Free Sleeping* were printed. (Later, 600-1000 copies of each Botsotso publication were routinely produced).

A number of collections and anthologies of poetry and short fiction would be published by Botsotso Publishing over the years, including two other Botsotso Jester publications, *Dirty Washing* (1999) and *Greetings Emsawawa* (2004), as well as individual collections by the Jesters.

Including the 1996 publication of *We jive like this*, and up to the end of 2004, Botsotso had published 10 titles – six of them poetry, and four collections of short fiction (including *Post-Traumatic*, an anthology of 22 writers edited by Chris van Wyk).[53] Some 13 poets, counting the Jesters, had had selections or full collections of their work published.

Botstosto also experimented with CD recordings, and in 2001, the Jesters, together with poet and artist Lionel Murcott, published *Purple Light Mirror in the Mud* (2001), a collection of sometimes experimental recordings of poetry, music and sound. The recording was done in collaboration with cultural activist James de Villiers, who ran Gallery 111 in Kensington, Johannesburg. Muila's 2004 collection of poems, *Gova* (2004), was also published with a CD recording of the poet reading his work.[54]

[52] The tribute first appeared on www.donga.co.za.
[53] Van Wyk was a writer and also a former editor of *Staffrider*.
[54] In 2007, a CD of the BBC recording of *Soldier Boy* was included with Moolman's collection of radio plays, *Blind Voices* (2007).

The publisher also convened events where writing could be read (or performed), and various cultural issues debated. Besides the publisher's book launches – held, for instance, at Xarra Books in Newtown[55] – performances and readings took place at venues such as schools, universities, and community centres. Writing and publishing workshops were also occasionally held, while in 2000 and 2002, Varney curated two 'manuscript exhibitions' – literally exhibitions of writers manuscripts, or concrete artistic commentaries on manuscripts and manuscript production.[56]

Botsotso only relatively recently launched its own website (www.botsotso.org.za), which explains the history of the project,[57] gives background information on the Jesters and Botsotso Publishers, lists titles, and provides contact details, amongst other information. Content from some issues of the magazine is also archived online. Recently (August 2007), the publisher began a blog (http://botsotso.book.co.za/), with details and write-ups about upcoming and past Botsotso events, amongst other things.

The publisher describes itself as publishing "mainly in English" (Botsotso 2006) – although it welcomes submissions in the 11 official languages of the South Africa, as well as *isicamtho.*

Botsotso was registered as a non-profit organisation (or NGO)[58] in 2004. The publisher was recently exploring the possibility of setting up an office in Johannesburg.

6.3. Kotaz

The first issue of *Kotaz*, a "quarterly arts magazine" (*Kotaz* 2001. Inside cover) started by New Brighton-based poet Mxolisi Nyezwa, who is also the editor, was published in 1998. Twelve issues of the magazine were to appear between then and the end of 2004.

[55] Where the interview with the publisher took place.
[56] Catalogues of these exhibitions were also published by Botsotso.
[57] The editorial from *Botsotso* No.13 is republished.
[58] Non-Governmental Organisation.

Kotaz is published by Imbizo Arts of South Africa, a Section 21 company established by Nyezwa in 1997. Based in Port Elizabeth, Imbizo Arts, described as an "independent non-profit culture and writing group" (Nyezwa 2006, p78), promotes reading, writing and publishing through training workshops and seminars that are held throughout the Eastern Cape. Its focus is on rural and urban disadvantaged communities in the province (ibid.).

Kotaz is an A4 perfect-bound publication, printed on glossy paper. While its front cover carries the strapline "liberating the arts", its submission requirements have a narrower focus, putting the emphasis on "contemporary South African literatures" (*Kotaz* 2001. Inside cover). Despite a stated focus on English and isiXhosa, Nyezwa is sensitive to the "doubts of working in a language that is not necessarily one's own or of immediate preference" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.). As a result, *Kotaz* accepts submissions of work in "any South African language" (*Kotaz* 2001), even ones the publisher is not familiar with to "encourage writing in these languages" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.). Work in several African languages, including Afrikaans, has been published.

By the publisher's own admission, *Kotaz* has been something of a "chaotic and uneven publication" (ibid.). Its mix of poetry, prose, reviews, essays,[59] and interviews[60] in different languages and of different strength filling up the pages, together with the A4 format of the magazine, and sometimes basic design[61] and rudimentary artwork, lends it something of a workbook feel.

[59] For example, *(Black) Writers and the politics of dispossession*, by the poet Mbongeni Khumalo, and *Reawakening: African Languages*, by the poet Ayanda Billie (from *Kotaz* Vol. 3 No. 4 2004).
[60] Such as an interview with poet Mzwandile Matiwana entitled *Living Dead Writer* (from *Kotaz* Vol. 3 No. 4 2004).
[61] There is a sense of relatively inexperienced graphic designers being used in the early issues. Vol. 3 No. 1 is laid out by F. Wynford and A. Todkill, while both Vol 3. No 2. and Vol 3. No. 4 are laid out Luvuyo W.M. Booi. There is a interesting hint of the development of design skills between Vol 3. No's 2 and 3, including the use of drop caps, background images, a play with headlines, and a much clearer balancing of the text on the page. The look and feel changes slightly in 2004, where a different paper texture is used, and the magazine is cut to a squarer size.

Artwork is often sourced from local artists, such as in Vol 3. No. 1., which includes pencil sketches by Andile Poswa, and the linocuts by Shepherd Xego – both from the Eastern Cape.[62]

According to Nyezwa, *Kotaz* is meant to be published quarterly – an ambitious target for a journal of this nature – but that "[l]ack of money to publish is always our biggest problem" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.).[63] About 1000-1500 copies are printed (ibid.),[64] which are distributed in various ways, including through community networks,[65] by post, and through a formal distribution agent, Izambiwa Consulting Services.

The magazine is stocked in some book retailers, such as Fascination Books in Port Elizabeth, and Clarke's Bookshop. It is also distributed for free to non-subscribing schools in the Eastern Cape, and is sent to university libraries at the University of Cape Town, University of the Witwatersrand, and University of South Africa (Unisa), as well as to some public libraries. (ibid.; Nyezwa 2006, p78)

While Imbizo Arts has facilitated the participation of writers from as far as Umthatha and Lusikisiki in "writers indabas" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.) held in Port Elizabeth, it has also undertaken outreach writing workshops. Recently a group of poets, including Nyezwa and Eastern Cape poet Mzi Mahola, organised a string of workshops with the help of local schools.[66] Imbizo Arts has also collaborated with various (local) writers' associations to stage poetry readings during cultural events (ibid.).

While taking as its main focus the development of indigenous African literature, other than *Kotaz*, Imbizo Arts publishes poetry collections and chapbooks, novels and collections of short fiction (Nyezwa 2006, p78). These are published primarily in English and Xhosa (ibid.). One of its most recent publications was a 2005 anthology of essays by Soga Mlandu, a writer from Umthatha. In 2006, a number of poetry and

[62] Here the artwork is stylistically simple, yet evocative, depicting and commenting on rural and urban social life.
[63] 'Volumes' run across years.
[64] Elsewhere Nyezwa states that 3000-5000 copies of each issue are printed (Nyezwa 2006).
[65] Including schools and by writers circulating issues.
[66] Local networks of writers often help with the organisation of the workshops that aim to "convene interested writers and other participants" (Nyezwa 2006. Int). Libraries in Port Elizabeth have also been used for the workshops.

short-fiction collections were planned, and *Kotaz* was recently granted funding to produce a 10-year retrospective of its magazine by ACT (ACT 2006. Media release). Other funders have included Interfund, the Pro Helvetica Arts Council of Switzerland, and Eskom (Accone undated).

Imbizo Arts (and by extension, *Kotaz*)[67] operates from a small office. Although not big enough to act as a gathering point for writers and other interested groups, the office is used to produce the magazine and organise the writing workshops, amongst the other publishing activities undertaken. (Nyezwa 2006. Int.).

6.4. Timbila Poetry Project

The first issue of *Timbila* – with the strapline "a journal of onion skin poetry" (*Timbila* 2000. Cover) – was published in January 2000. The journal was a bold initiative by Polokwane-based[68] poet and activist Vonani Bila. For a new journal, the size of the publication was substantial, Vol. 1 No. 1 running to some 178 pages, A5, perfect bound.[69]

Timbila 2000, which is funded by the NAC, sets out the intention behind the publication, which (at least initially) was to be published twice a year:

> *Timbila* is a new poetry journal (call it an anthology of new poetry if you want) which seeks to encourage writing in [the] Northern Province in the languages appropriate to our needs. Our policy is to attract contributions from the whole country, Africa and abroad, linking the local to the international. (*Timbila* 2000. Submission details)

[67] There is often not a clear distinction made between the two by Nyezwa in discussions.
[68] Then Pietersburg.
[69] In this respect, the journal was reminiscent, at least in size, of *Quarry*, which Lionel Abrahams, amongst others, established in the 1970s. *Timbila* 2000-2003 are A5 book-sized publications. *Timbila* 2005 is in a slightly larger format.

The issue was published by the newly-formed Timbila Poetry Project,[70] and edited by Bila.[71] Over 30 poets are published in it,[72] some with as many as 10-14 poems.[73] The editor's introduction (*Our relationship with the word & the world*) sets out the vision for the journal in a charged cultural-political register. Amongst other things, it proposes the establishment of a South African/Azanian Poets Network, which will "unite poets, [and] urge them to write and defend their legal and moral rights" (Bila 2000a, p15). While most of the poetry is in English, a number of poems, including work from the Uhuru Cultural Group, appear in indigenous languages.[74]

Timbila 2000 also prints a list of local poetry journals and their contact addresses, while the design and layout of all the issues of the journal during the period discussed is done by Varney (Art Studio).

In the introduction to the issue, Bila, referring to *Timbila* as a "book-journal" (Bila 2000, p10), elaborates on the intention behind the initiative:

> I conceived the concept in the early nineties to encourage writing, sparkle [sic] literary dialogue, to propel society to heights and depths of greater social consciousness and ultimately define the development and growth of poetry in all languages, particularly in the Northern Province. (ibid.)

While the emphasis on Limpopo would be relaxed in subsequent issues, the political orientation of the journal is clearly articulated. Bila finds the "state of poetry in South Africa…disheartening" (ibid.), giving *Timbila* the "daunting task" (ibid.) of the "restoration and enhancement of linguistic heritage and cultural dignity of the Africa

[70] Described then as being a "poetry support wing of Nhlalala Publishing" (*Timbila* 2000), a community publishing project set up in 1998 by Bila and other writers (Bruce Ngobeni, George Mongwe, Max Malungana and Barbara Baloyi) to publish exclusively in Xitsonga. (Bila 2006. Int.)
[71] With the help of the editorial collective at Nhlalala Publishing.
[72] Including poems from the Uhuru Cultural Group.
[73] The issue also includes a paper by Saul Molobi entitled *African Renaissance and cultural aesthetics*: *The challenges of national reconstruction and development* (Molobi 2000, p168).
[74] Including Shona, Herero, Sepedi, Xitsonga and even Afrikaans. The focus of *Timbila* remains regional. In the *South African Small Publishers' Catalogue* (2006), Bila describes the primary target group as "emerging black poets in the rural and urban areas of Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Northwest…" (Bila 2006, p125).

people" (ibid. pp10-11). He states: "We must beat the drum until the lost cows, Janbloed & Sivariki come home." (ibid.)

Timbila 2001 appeared the following year, and further two issues were to be published between then and 2004. The project had also opened its office in Hans van Rensburg Street in Polokwane, and a colophon – a graphic of two hands playing a *mbira* – had been developed.

Over 45 poets are published in *Timbila* 2001, which runs to 248 pages (several of them are poets who appeared in *Timbila* 2000). The issue also includes some powerful illustrations by America Mailula,[75] naïve, stylized depictions of social life and sketches suggestive of political commentary, including a shebeen scene, a scene from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a sketch of Chris Hani's lifeless form in a pool of blood, and a rape scene.[76] Besides English, several indigenous languages are published in the issue, including Zulu and Xitsonga. *Timbila* 2001 is also funded by the NAC.

Timbila, 2002, which Bila edits with Wisani Nghalaluma, runs to some 347 pages, and besides poetry, includes an interview (with Don Mattera), a transcript from a writing workshop organized by the Timbila Poetry Project in Polokwane in December 2001 (called *Building literary communities*), essays by the writer Es'kia Mphahlele[77] (*A letter to a beginner*) and Lefifi Tladi (*Aesthetics from an Afrocentrec* (sic) *perspective*), as well as the usual listings and contributor biographies.

The issue also announces the Botsotso CD *Purple Light Mirror in the Mud* and *Dahl Street, Pietersburg* (2002), a music and poetry recording of Bila's own poetry produced by the Timbila Poetry Project. This is one of the few ventures into poetry recordings by the project over the period discussed. America Mailula also illustrates this issue, which is funded by the National Development Agency, Interfund, and individual contributors.

[75] A teacher, artist and a cartoonist for a local newspaper who lived in a village called Makotopong, near Polokwane (*Timbila* 2001, p248).
[76] The cover is an evocative illustration in colour of a poor (rural) woman with a sack, walking stick and a hoe, and a figure sitting beside a tree with distorted foreshortened legs and feet. Both the images, suggestively, are framed in barbed wire.
[77] Mphahlele presented at the workshop in Polokwane.

Besides poetry and essays, *Timbila* 2003 (248 pages), with Transnet now added to the previous list of funders, introduces reviews of poetry, and also publishes a *Timbila Poetry Manifesto* which had been adopted at a Timbila poetry workshop held in Polokwane in 2001. The manifesto is a passionate and public defence of poetry, and politicization of the cause of poets, including a call for their resource and training needs to be met. Instead of artwork, various photographs (such as ones from the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, and the World Social Forum gathering in Brazil in 2003) are reproduced.

About 800-1500 copies of each issue of *Timbila* were printed, and distributed variously by hand to contributors, at poetry readings, political gatherings,[78] and workshops, and through some bookshops, such as Thorold's, Clarke's Bookshop, Protea Boekhuis in Pretoria and Guyo Books in Makhado in Limpopo (the publishing initiative has also used Bacchus Books as a freelance distributing agent).[79]

In 2003, the Timbila Poetry Project published its first book, *apocrypha* (2003) by Mbongeni Khumalo.[80] *apocrypha* was followed by two anthologies of poets in 2003, *Insight* (2003),[81] and *Throbbing Ink* (2003),[82] each including a selection of six poets, both old and new. The two-book project was interesting in that it simultaneously gave an opportunity for poetry editors to ply their craft.[83] These anthologies were followed by a publication of Bila's own work, *In the name of Amandla*, in 2004.

In some ways these books were quite basically produced, with simple layout and design, and almost crude covers. For both Khumalo and Bila's publications, the covers hint at the iconographic, the former featuring a close-up photograph of

[78] Including the World Social Forum gatherings in 2002 and 2003 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in which Bila participated and read his own poetry.
[79] According to Bila, Timbila publications are also available from "Timbila book clubs in townships and villages…" (Bila 2006a, p122).
[80] Khumalo was at the time being fêted as an important new voice on the South African poetry scene, and was a self-described free-thinking radical poet. He had developed something of a following at various Timbila poetry readings held in Johannesburg.
[81] Which included the work of Myesha Jenkins, Alex Mohlabeng, Ayanda Billie, Themba Ka Mathe, Righteous the Common Man and Nosipho Kota.
[82] Which included the work of Mbongeni Khumalo, Linda Ndlovu, Wisani Nghalaluma, Phomelelo Machika, Kolski Horwitz and Vonani Bila.
[83] Myself and Siphiwe ka Ngwenya edited the first, and Gardiner the second.

Khumalo and the latter a graphic of Bila on a bright red background with a near-luminous green frame, reminiscent of the pop art reproductions of Che Guevara commonly found on t-shirts.

Between the end of 2004 and 2007, 10 more books of poetry were published by the Timbila Poetry Project, including a poetry/photographic narration by Myesha Jenksins and photographer Cedric Nunn,[84] poems by well-known Sudanese poet Taban lo Liyong,[85] the well-received *These Hands* (2005) by Makhosazana Xaba, and another self-published book of poems by Bila, *Magicstan Fires* (2006). The publications also include a volume of isiZulu poetry,[86] and two volumes of Xitsonga poetry.[87]

All the books during the period discussed are funded by Interfund,[88] and layout and design is alternatively by Art Studio or Joe Nhlapo, a poet.

Also in 2003, the Timbila Poetry Project was registered as a non-profit organisation – becoming possibly the only poetry NGO in South Africa at the time. Board members included what had loosely emerged as a self-defined group of Timbila Poets, and included those who had or were to be published by the project.[89]

By 2004, Timbila, with the help of poets based in Gauteng, was holding regular poetry readings and performances in Johannesburg. Timbila readings were often colourful affairs, sometimes with musicians playing their part. A number of them, held at venues in Braamfontein and Newtown, were so-called 'open mic'[90] sessions, with a small, dedicated audience of poets and others Bila later referred to as "able listeners" (Bila 2005, p11).

[84] *Breaking the surface* (2005).
[85] *corpse lovers and corpse haters* (2005).
[86] *Impiselo* (2004) by Linda Ndlovu.
[87] While Timbila has been primarily a print publisher, December 15, 2006 sees the first entry in a Timbila blog (http://timbilapoetry.blogspot.com), which later included coverage from World Social Forum events (e.g. the one held in Kenya in 2007).
[88] Like Botsotso, Timbila also secured funding from the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund.
[89] Such as Alex Mohlabeng, Nosipho Kota and Goodenough Mashego.
[90] Sessions where anyone can put their name on a list and read their poems.

Workshops[91] at schools, community centres, and other venues were also organised, and various new initiatives aimed at developing a culture of reading and an appreciation of poetry were attempted. While this included book and reading clubs, a telling (but ill-fated) example of the kind of ambitious task Timbila set itself was the 2006 call for a Republic of Poetry to be established.[92] The initiative sought to "introduce poetry in every village, township, block of city flats and every corner of the country and to unearth as many new voices as possible…" (Bila, 2006. *Media release*). Through a series of writing workshops, and by tapping into local government funds for the arts, a "poet laureate – amongst their own people" (ibid.) would be identified in each of these places, so that they would have a "published poet in [their] midst more capable of raising contemporary matters and able to capture the moment of our democracy" (ibid.).

These kinds of calls to arms, together with Timbila's war cry of "one poet, one book" (Bila 2006. Int.), made the project a particularly energetic and vital one on the South African literary landscape during the years under discussion.

6.5. Chimurenga

Chimurenga magazine – described as a "a pan African publication of writing, art and politics" (www.chimurenga.co.za) – was founded by freelance journalist and DJ Ntone Edjabe. *Chimurenga* is a Shona word that, according to the Chimurenga website (www.chimurenga.co.za), can be "loosely translated as struggle".[93] Edjabe, who is now based in Cape Town, was born in Cameroon.

The first issue of the magazine appeared in March 2002. Six issues were published between then and October 2004, each issue loosely themed, and titled as follows: Vol. 1 *Music Is The Weapon* (April 2002); Vol. 2 *Dis-Covering Home (run nigga run)* (July 2002); Vol. 3 *Biko in Parliament* (November 2002); Vol. 4 *Black Gays &*

[91] The 2001 poetry workshop in Polokwane is a good example of the kind of convening power the project commanded, and the kind of funding it could attract. Some 30 poets attended the workshop from different provinces.
[92] Although it falls outside of the scope of this thesis, it is worth mentioning.
[93] It also refers to the liberation war music of Zimbabwe, a combination of the traditional *mbira* with electric guitar (www.kubatana.net).

Mugabes (May 2003); Vol. 5 *Triptych: Head/Body(&Tools)/Corpses* (April 2004); Vol. 6 *The Orphans Of Fanon* (October, 2004).

While Dye Hard Press productions, as well as those by Timbila and Botsotso, clearly show an evolution of the fledgling presses as publishers, the physical product that is *Chimurenga* appeared to arrive on the scene fully formed. Using different designers for the magazines under discussion,[94] *Chimurenga* was a slick, glossy offering, saddle-stitched[95] and slightly bigger than A5 format, with an energetic, plucky layout. The interplay of bold image and illustration (photographs, deep-etched sketches, computer generated silhouettes and textures), typeface,[96] headline, watermark, border, block colour, and page orientation, often lent an issue a frenetic sense of what we might call a 'splash design' look and feel: a kind of free jazz that pushed beyond the landscape of intention, into a sense of awkward visual anarchy for its own sake. In less settled issues (e.g. Vol. 5) the designers appear to want to test the limits of their skill and the possibilities of desktop packages. The issues run to about 60-70 pages.

Echoing the design, the content from the first six issues is varied, drawing from contemporary writers (such as poets, playwrights, writers of fiction, journalists, academics, cultural and political commentators and activists) and artists (performance artists, DJs and photographers, amongst them) in Africa and abroad, as well as raiding the African archive (Vol 5. focuses on Bessie Head) and that of the diaspora (for instance, photographs from lynchings in the American South from the early 1900s are published (Vol. 5) and the lyrics from the anti-racist protest song *Strange Fruit*[97] by Lewis Allan carried on the cover of Vol. 2). *Chimurenga* includes essays (including photo essays), polemics, e-mail exchanges, interviews, poetry, fiction, lyrics, photographs, illustrations, graphics and letters.

Concerns in a single issue use the central theme as a point of departure only. For example, Vol. 2 (*Dis-covering home*) opens with an essay by Binyavanga Wainaina,

[94] Several designers are listed, for instance: RedhotMoondog Media (www.hotmoon.co.za) (Vol. 2 and Vol. 3), Sedick Sasman (Vol. 5) and Hybridconcept (Vol. 6).
[95] Later issues are perfect bound.
[96] The font is often deliberately awkwardly small (about 9 points), sometimes with several typefaces used in a single issue.
[97] The song was performed by Billie Holiday. It is austere and haunting: "Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze/ Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees".

the winner of the 2002 Caine Prize for African Writing, which deals with his return to his home in Kenya, a narrative which is followed by a photograph from an exhibition by Cape Town freelance journalist Yazeed Kamaldien entitled *Culture and Compassion* and held at the District Six Museum in 2002. In the photograph, a double-page spread, what appears to be a protest by Cape Muslims fills the frame, the crowd's attention focused just beyond the camera lens. In the middle of the photograph a small banner with the words "Amandla Intifada!" is visible, offering a provocative juxtaposition with the quiet attentiveness of the gathered crowd. The photograph offers an alternative lens through which the word "home" can be interrogated. Here it is the 'home' that is born of public engagement and community protest – it is not, for instance, the 'home' Wainaina narrates: "I am at home….Mum looks tired and her eyes are sleepier than usual." (Wainaina 2002, p2)

The photograph is then followed by a poem by Lesego Rampolokeng, whose poetry inevitably offers no easy home for the reader. The poem, entitled *Bavino on the run: Stateside*, shifting in locality and occasion ("jhb to amsterdam…amsterdam to new york re-routed to boston" (Rampolokeng 2002, p13)) is no exception. While the poem offers a sense of 'route/root-lessness', there is also the ubiquitous sense of the tentacles of global power and policing, literal and figurative, invading consciousness (another 'home'). The "FBI is stalking" (ibid. p12) and the speaker is like a fugitive on the run from the law:

> they'd police dreams too if they'd sneak into heads. they've tried
> though. cracking skulls to touch the conscious.
> blue-marshal-led-in. zoned.
>
> (ibid. 'Bavino on the run: Stateside', p12)

This is then followed by a discussion by Mahmood Mamdani, then Director at the Institute of African Studies at Columbia University, that poses the question: "Is African Studies at UCT a new home for Bantu Education?" (Mamdani 1998, p16). Home here is the academy, the institution (a stark juxtaposition of the fugitive encounter in Rampolokeng's poem); yet it is a home that needs to be grappled with politically at the institutional level.

This kind of interrogation of home and homelessness (and identity) continues in different ways throughout the issue.[98] While some content items appear only tentatively linked to the overall theme of the issue, by framing the issue thematically, we are invited to contextualize even a seemingly unrelated content item (such as the interview with drummer Louis Moholo) through the lens of 'home' and 'homelessness' evoked and provoked by the issue.

Several South African contributors in the early issues are well known voices (past and present), and include the rebel and activist poet James Matthews (who writes a letter), Rampolokeng, poet laureate Keorapetse Kgositsile, academic and poet Rustum Kozain, and performance poet Kgafela oa Magogodi.

Chimurenga is edited and published by Edjabe. However, he acknowledges his dependence on an international network of writers, intellectuals and artists, who provide input into each issue, and help with putting the content together. At the same time, the magazine draws on a small administrative staff based at its Long Street office at the Pan African Market (www.panafrican.co.za) in Cape Town.

Edjabe is actively involved in the Pan African Market – Chimurenga as a project is a participant in its social and formal structures. Within this context the driving vision of the market, of "The Kalakuta Republik", is worth mentioning. The Kalakuta Republik, modelled on a commune of the same name set up in Lagos by Nigerian activist and musician Fela Kuti, which he later declared independent from the Nigerian state,[99] is described as the "heart of the Pan African Market" (www.panafrican.co.za). Amongst other things, the Republik consists of the market, where African masks, jewellery, ornaments and other crafts are sold, a Pan African

[98] For instance, later poet Noa Jasmine writes: "and so home will be your/voice//the space between your/breaths" (Jasmine 2002. 'BReaTHING leSSonS', p25), while Zwelethu Mthethwa offers striking photographs of sugercane plantation workers, framed so that their heads are cut off, drawing attention to their bodies, and stained and dirtied work clothes, and lacerated and blistered hands. (In an echo of the photographs of the lynchings, there is a sense in which their home is the home of the plantation slaves of the American South.)

[99] According to Wikipedia, "kalakuta" is a swahili word that means "rascally". The original Republik was a "communal compound that housed [Kuti's] family, band members, and recording studio… The compound burned to the ground on February 18, 1977 after an assault by a thousand armed soldiers." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalakuta_Republic)

book and video café,[100] Thembi's Soul Kitchen (a "constant reminder of the incredible diversity of Africa's food cultures" (ibid.)), and a venue where book launches, art exhibitions, poetry readings and "other activities related to the promotion of Africa's cultures" (ibid) can be held. This includes regular events such as a weekly storytelling session, and the Friday night Kalakuta Sessions where music featuring the "continent's most important political works" (ibid.) were hosted by Edjabe.

Chimurenga also convenes live readings and music events (here called Chimurenga Sessions) at the Pan African Market and elsewhere, such as Newtown in Johannesburg.

The distribution of *Chimurenga* has been aggressive. Around 2 000 copies of each issue are printed. Locally, it is stocked in most bookshops, including second-hand bookshops, and at point of sale counters in a number of Exclusive Books outlets. It has also been distributed at airports. According to Edjabe, *Chimurenga* has been distributed in other African countries, such as Kenya, and in outlets in Germany and the United Kingdom.

Chimurenga does not draw on local funding opportunities in the way that some of the other publishing initiatives do. While *Chimurenga* Vol. 6 is described as "self-funded", the same issue acknowledges the contribution of the French Embassy in South Africa. Other issues show the support of the Kush kollective (www.kush.co.za), and the Pan African Market, while donors for later issues include Prince Claus Fund or Africalia. Vol. 6 is direct regarding the initiative's financial requirements: "Buy this copy to keep it alive." (*Chimurenga* 2004. Back cover)

The *Chimurenga* website (www.chimurenga.co.za), described on the back cover of Vol. 5 as "the sibling", initially ran content that did not appear in the journal. However, this was short-lived, and the website became little more than an online

[100] According to the market's website, the café specializes in the "literary and film and video cultures in contemporary Africa…serves as a reading space where visitors can discover literary works of African writers in all African languages" (www.panafrican.co.za). Moreover: "The café's video library, established with the assistance of the Film Resource Unit in Johannesburg, has the largest pan African film and video catalogue in Cape Town. It features film products from around the continent and the Diaspora." (ibid.)

pamphlet for the magazine, introducing the project, and providing information on back issues and other details.[101]

[101] By 2007, writer Stacy Hardy began to offer links to the site. This was followed more recently (in 2008) with aggressive online projects that included the Chimurenga Library (www.chimurengalibrary.co.za/) and Pan African Space Station (www.panafricanspacestation.org.za).

7. Findings

In the introduction to this thesis I posed the following question: What can be said about the nature of the resistance to what we may loosely – and for the purpose of current argument – call the mainstream, sensed in the post-apartheid independent literary activities?

The interviews suggest that something of an answer can be arrived at if one begins to consider the areas of editorial and publishing practice. Editorial practice includes the act of selecting content, but also refers to the kinds of editorial processes convened, and the implications of these, as well as a more general appreciation of the concerns of the publishers in relation to the mainstream, and how editorial practice is a response to these concerns – a response which feels like active positioning in relation to the mainstream.

Publishing practice refers to choice of medium, layout and design, as well as distribution, all of which, the interviews suggest, are crucial to the kinds of contestations with the mainstream envisaged by the publishers, and shapes the kinds of interventions that the publishing activities entail.

I will discuss editorial and publishing practice in the following sections.

7.1. Editorial practice as positioning[102]

While 'the literary' underpins the five publishing activities discussed here, the publishers are not simply concerned with literature as a niche publishing activity. Rather, the interviews show that editorial practice is driven by a number of key concerns about the mainstream. The inevitability of the mainstream to exclude forms of cultural production is usefully captured by Raymond Williams:

[102] From this point onwards, I introduce the publishing activities in an order most suitable to my thesis argument.

> …*[N]o mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention* [his italics]. This is not merely a negative proposition, allowing us to account for significant things which happen outside or against the dominant mode. On the contrary it is a fact about the modes of domination, that they select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice. What they exclude may often be seen as the personal or the private, or as the natural or even the metaphysical. Indeed it is usually in one or other of these terms that the excluded area is expressed, since what the dominant has effectively seized is indeed the ruling definition of the social. (Williams 1977, p125)

In the post-apartheid period of transition,[103] it is exactly the "ruling definition of the social", however nebulous, which is at stake, and which appears to drive the publishers into public engagement – whether in an effort to remedy exclusions, or to simply contest and challenge the emerging mainstream through editorial positioning in an attempt to at least keep the possibilities of *inclusion* open.

7.1.1. Botsotso: Democratic cultural resistance

Botsotso – which refers to itself as a cultural publication (see Chapter 6) – is concerned with what it sees as the gradual marginalization of "organic" (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.) cultural activity in the post-apartheid period. It is a context that the editors variously describe as being dictated to by "corporate capitalism" (ibid.), a 'culture' of consumerism, and a mainstream media that is more interested in "their dose of hip-hop" (ibid.) than a "new poetry sound in the new South Africa" (ibid.).

The descriptor "organic" is used loosely here. It can be taken to refer to writing that is uniquely and originally South African. This includes various forms of grassroots cultural activity, such as local literature written in rural villages and urban townships,

[103] This period is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.3.

by people 'on the ground'. It is writing that is rooted in the social conditions of the country, but also writing that captures and expresses the richness in the "mixed masala"[104] of the new South Africa – its hybrids of language, extremities of experiences, and spontaneity of cultures and lifestyles. It inevitably stands in juxtaposition to – and in cultural conflict with – the commercialized products of an adopted global culture (the cloned fruits of globalization), even while the local can be a synthesis of the global and the grassroots:

> In the South African context, there is this imitation of another culture, and this is where we have clashed with some people, to say, 'Hey come on, what are we doing? Why should you be aping black Americans, any more than you should be aping white Americans? We're South African.' We should look at ourselves to see our own rhythms come forward. But if you go to a young kid, and say, 'Don't listen to Eminem', or whoever, they will tell you to piss off. So you can't shove it in someone's face. We must wait for those to come with a more organic South African expression, and the kids will pick up on it and say, 'Ja, that does reflect my reality more than Puff Daddy.'…But the media has so much influence. (ibid.)

Rather than "aping…Americans", the space convened by *Botsotso* is concerned with creating a forum for writing (and, to an extent, other arts) which is seen to have cultural integrity – both as individual expression and as an expression of "our society" (Kolski Horwitz *et al* 1994. Editorial). The emphasis is on voice and expression rather than the magazine serving as a cultural arbiter of 'quality' and 'worth' from a narrowly literary standpoint. The editorial to the first issue of *Botsotso* puts it this way:

> BOTSOTSO is independent of any organisation and follows no specific political or aesthetic doctrine. The main criterion for the

[104] A term used by Kolski Horwitz at the Jozi Spoken Word event held at Wits University, and co-organised by Botsotso, in March 2007.

> publication of work is that it has integrity and worth as an expression of individual experience and of our society. (ibid.)

Of all the journals discussed, only *Botsotso* has created an editorial collective[105] – that is, a formal process where content for the publication is decided on by a group as opposed to an individual. This is done as a way of democratising content selection, and as if to best capture the 'mixed masala' of the post-apartheid period. *Botsotso's* editorial collective has, over the years, largely been constituted by the Botsotso Jesters themselves, with one or two additions.

While offering a practical mechanism for avoiding any narrow definition of the literary that is inevitable from a single editor's perspective, and a way of challenging the editorial class interests implicit in mainstream publications, *Botsotso* makes an ideological link with the approaches taken by progressive publications and cultural groupings that were part of the anti-apartheid movement. Besides the various cultural collectives scattered across the country, such as worker theatre groups and writing groups like the Medupe Writers' Group, a magazine like the early *Staffrider* – which Botsotso takes as its literary precursor (Kolski Horwitz 2006, Int.) – was the product of an editorial collective, as it wrestled with exactly how to represent the grassroots cultural output of the time. This is how one of *Staffrider*'s founders Mike Kirkwood put it:

> Obviously the people working in the Ravan office – and I'm one of them – do in a sense function as an editorial collective…We often have arguments about what goes in but have, I think, always been able to arrive at some kind of consensus…But the editorial process is not confined to this collective. We try to spread the decision-making process as much as possible, asking people outside the office for their opinions on work that's up for inclusion, and relying on the part played by the writers' groups. They decide which of their works they want to put forward for the magazine…All of the people who have had anything to do with

[105] Which it refers, quite formally, as an Editorial Board (in, for instance *Botsotso* 13), but later as a "free-floating collective of poets, writers and visual artists" (Kolski Horwitz & Accone, 2008).

> the magazine see it, and would like to continue seeing it, as something for which no particular individual is directly responsible. It comes out of a very broad-based cultural energy. (Kirkwood 1980, pp24-24)

Through its editorial collective, *Botsotso* enacts the kind of democratic cultural practice envisaged in post-apartheid South Africa by cultural activists prior to 1994; one that it sees as being increasingly marginalized by the mainstream in the post-apartheid period. It is this *potential* for democratic cultural engagement – whether or not realized in the final product – which is essential to the Botsotso publishing initiative.

The first issue of *Botsotso* appeared as a four-page tabloid insert in the *New Nation*[106] in October 1994. Although slight,[107] it suggested something of the cultural intervention *Botsotso* was seeking to make, and included poems, an essay – by academic James Ogude, entitled *The vexed question of language* – and artwork.

The poems exhibit several registers and styles; the issue opening with Tatamkhulu Africa's provocative 'Toilet', which graphically tests the boundaries between public and private, an issue which can be said to be germane to the social and political negotiation of the post-apartheid period and beyond.[108] There is the "…thin,/nameless wet of the floor" in the public toilet, as the speaker zips down his fly, the "umbilical flesh" of his penis linking him to the "obscenity of the bowl" where:

> Someone else's turd,
> blackening, bobs,
> aimlessly, round,

[106] The *New Nation*, together with newspapers like the *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekblad*, was one of several progressive newspapers considered part of the "alternative press" (See, for instance, Berger 2000).

[107] It amounted to four tabloid pages, which can be compared, for instance, to the 200 odd pages of later issues.

[108] For instance, it is seen in the distinction between bourgeois privacies and rights (reflected through suburban architecture and services), and the lack of privacies and rights of the disempowered public at large (symbolically reflected in the communal living and impoverished conditions of sprawling shanty towns that existed without basic amenities such as sewerage systems). It is also seen in the tension between privatisation and state ownership, and in the debates around new legal instruments that tested the boundary between the home and the state, and so on.

desolately soaks
in my still warm pee.

(Afrika 1994. 'Toilet', p1)

Juxtaposed to this, and writing in Tshivenda, Ike Muila, who is a member of the *Botsotso* editorial collective, finds in an elegy to a family member that "daybreak is sacred/a back point of a pin"[109] ('In memory of NP Muila'), while Nthuseng Phedi Thlobolo's 'I am alone' offers a surreal expression of alienated subjectivity: "In a dark house/a mouse is feeding on my nails […] I am alone/this mouse is a stranger."

It is not just the subjective (the 'I', or the personal) that is on display. For instance, Peter Horn in his poem 'The poor interred corpses of the Cape Flats', evokes a particularly public anxiety and trepidation, yet sense of hope, felt at the time (1994), where an unsettled past metaphorically becomes the "poor interred corpses [of the Cape Flats]" that, "when the South Easter abates […] sink deeper into the wet sand of the vleis"; and where the "sleepers" who are "restless with undefined fear"

[…] hold their breath for minutes of silence
and know that something new is about to happen,
something good, something which was an absence
in their lives for hundreds of years.

(Horn 1994. 'The poor interred corpses of the Cape Flats', p4)

But by the time Anna Varney, in her poem 'Starting with circumcision' says:

When they make love
to us they breathe: 'my sweet'
'feel my cock in your pussy'
We really think
it's only for us.

[109] The translation of the poem is also included in the issue, as is a translation of another Jester's poem called *Sunset* (by Siphiwe ka Ngwenya).

(Varney 1994. 'Starting with circumcision', p2)

the insert has struck a note that feels extraordinary in a mass circulated newspaper.

Through a mix of assertive exclamations of self/subject and society there is a sense of a willingness to deliberately question, through the literary, what it means for the individual to speak publicly, and what counts as having "integrity and worth" (Kolski Horwitz *et al* 1994. Editorial) in public deliberation. By interjecting *Botsotso* in a vehicle for mass circulation, the literary, as exemplified here, is exclaimed as being essential to a broader negotiation that was happening in many spheres and that entailed the re/construction of a shared public space and the shaping of a new public consciousness.

While *Botsotso* "follows no specific political…doctrine" (Kolski Horwitz *et al* 1994. Editorial), its positioning is, nevertheless, 'political' in the broad sense of the word:

> We came together in the early 90s when the anti-apartheid struggle was obviously bearing fruit, and we went through radical change in that sense. However, underlying social issues continue to haunt us, and in some respects they may be more difficult. So we have a very clear social consciousness. (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.)

It is a social consciousness extending to the performances of the Botsotso Jesters, who, over the years, have moulded themselves into a tightly knit performance troupe that uses (hints of) song, chant, and mime, as well as poetry (collectively and individually written) to forge an often engaging stage presence, concerned mostly with social and political satire.

While seeking to create an ideal of a democratic post-apartheid cultural space – and in this regard Botsotso is, of course, supportive of the kinds of progressive political changes that were beginning to be seen – the publisher is also critical of the "New

South Africa",[110] and the kinds of sacrifices and compromises that this was felt to entail. Included in *Botsotso* 5, for instance, is a poem by the Jesters called 'In the land of plenty'.[111] Published less than a year after the first elections, it is referred to as "A Performance Poem of the New South Africa" and typifies the kind of questions the Jesters asked:

> yesterday is a caricature
> as we gather to celebrate dawn
> is our future a mirage?
> the revolution a pimpernel?
> in the land of plenty
>
> (Motadinyane *et al* 1995. 'In the land of plenty', p3)

In this way, while asserting its (moral) authenticity as a cultural project, Botsotso places itself at a critical distance to the mainstream early in the new democracy's formation; that is, in critical contradistinction to what begins to look like the emerging cultural consensus of the new South Africa.

It may be useful to pause here to elaborate on forms of cultural resistance that are the inheritance of the post-apartheid independent literary publishers, and which inform some of their activities.

In her essay, *Building a National Culture in South Africa* (1990) Press analyses different positions taken by anti-apartheid cultural activists on what this might mean; in particular that of an "indigenized" (Press 1990, p26) national culture, what she calls a national culture that is "anti-ethnic" (ibid. p30), and a socialist perspective on national cultural development.

For the first, essentially Africanist perspective, there is a criticism of the

[110] A descriptive used widely by the media and commentators. When I use the term in quotation marks, I am referring primarily to the politically/economically/socially marketed idea of a 'new' South Africa, which is uncritically celebrated.

[111] The title is taken from 'Songs of Maximus' by the poet Charles Olson, where he writes – here with literally no small relevance to the Jesters as performance poets – "In the land of plenty, have/ nothing to do with it/ take the way of/ the lowest,/ including your legs, go/ contrary, go/ sing."

> American and European cultural styles that predominate within social and cultural experience – the 'disco' music, television soap operas, glossy permed hair...[Instead] black South Africans should be promoting their 'own' indigenous culture, drawing on forms of entertainment and social customs from the past. (ibid. p26)

In contrast, a national culture that is anti-ethnic "[m]ust begin with the raw materials of existing 'popular culture' amongst the masses. This culture is composed of a host of traditions, indigenous and imported…" (ibid. p30).

A socialist perspective on national cultural development involves "promoting values and practices that contribute towards the achievement of a socialist society" (ibid. p32) – here including progressive cultural activities such as cultural co-operatives, and the general marshalling of resources, including "new ways of producing [art]" (ibid.), in order to challenge the capitalist hegemony.

The publishers under discussion draw differently from these perspectives. While Botsotso appears to assert an understanding of progressive cultural activity akin to the anti-ethnic viewpoint, it also echoes a concern with global culture that "predominate[s] within social and cultural experience" (ibid. p30). While a version of the anti-ethnic perspective is being asserted by Chimurenga's "Afrocosmopolitany" (Edjabe 2006. Int.; see below), Timbila feels more strongly rooted in an indiginized cultural programme, with a strong influence of the developmental paradigm offered by the socialist grassroots perspective of people empowerment.

However, that these perspectives on a national culture are forged as alternatives to the apartheid mainstream – where one might argue the economic, as in the post-apartheid democracy, is central, and definitive – is pertinent. That some of the publishers inherit the language and positioning, and adapt the cultural agendas in the post-apartheid period of these ideal perspectives on progressive cultural development, frequently in the language of struggle and opposition, is suggestive of the historical social consciousness of the projects.

7.1.2. Timbila: Poems of social commentary

Timbila has the clearest Africanist agenda of all the publications under consideration:

> A true African society in a quest to reclaim its identity cannot cling to colonial images. It cannot be led by voices far removed from Africa. Local poets are worth [sic] to be heard, to be read. Their contribution to the development of literature, new language and knowledge should make every South African associate with poetry like we do with sport, food, shopping, religion, rave culture and sex. Our education system must be rejuvenated, Africanised and be rehumanised to reflect true African images… (Bila 2000b. *Timbila* back cover)

Its positioning as a regional project based in Limpopo, and the editor's concern with local cultural activities[112] and indigenous heritage[113] sets it somewhat apart from the umbrella multi-culturism that is at the heart of Botsotso's publishing agenda – even while *Timbila* publishes poems from the "whole country, Africa and abroad, linking the local with the international" (*Timbila* 2000. Submission details).

Timbila aims to "promote and publish…work that wouldn't find space in big media houses" (Bila 2006. Int.).[114] He sees independent literary journals as publishing work that "challenge[s] the bourgeois state, [by offering positions which] the bourgeois media wouldn't support." (ibid.) In particular, for Bila, this refers to the "angry…voices of the poor" (ibid.):

[112] The first issue of Timbila says the journal "seeks to encourage writing in Northern Province" (Timbila 2000. Submission details)

[113] As a Tsonga, Bila is concerned with the Xitsonga language and cultural inheritance. He has compiled a Xitsonga/English dictionary.

[114] In line with most of the other publishers discussed here, Bila is also critical of mainstream cultural institutions more broadly, such as universities (and their creative writing programmes), which are seen to reflect a conservative middle-class ideology, as well as their mechanisms for surrogating their power-base, through things like literary prizes: "…[W]hoever starts a literary competition must be scrutinized: we need to know exactly why they're pumping money into the arts." (Bila 2005, p10)

> Daily I see poets hobbling in the streets of inner city Johannesburg, carrying fertile poems, and hoping to earn a living. They are hungry, tired and angry. (Bila 2000a, p12).

For Bila, writing has – in the Marxist sense – social agency as a conscientising and mobilizing force.[115] Quoting the Africanist poet Ingoapele Madingoane in his introduction to *Timbila* 2000,[116] he says that part of the work in reviving poetry in communities involves ensuring that "our writing is informed by conditions, in which we live (and die)" – or, as he puts it in his critique of literary prizes quoted from in the introduction, they are "poems of social commentary" (Bila 2005, p10) that would be winning poems if Timbila ran prizes.

Timbila is also, like *Botsotso*, concerned with the promises of a liberated South Africa compared to the reality of political transition. A register of political disillusionment in a number of the poems published in the first issue of the journal, only a few years after the first democratic elections, is striking. There is an urgency in the call for social change:

> My friend
> you have betrayed the trust
> that I gave you
> and become that
> which you once
> despised
>
> Who would know
> you once sang the truth
> of a black man,

[115] Bila writes: "[I]f we write con[s]ciously, our poetry will be serving an important role of conscientising, mobilizing and organising communities to act against neo-liberalism and other evils of society" (Bila 2000, p14).

[116] One of Timbila's tasks in "reflect[ing] true African images" was to encourage older black writers (such as Mphahlele, and the Sudanese poet Taban lo Liyong) to engage with the younger writers, and thereby both offering them black role models and encouraging an alternative, "Africanised" literary tradition in South Africa. Ingoapele Madingoane can be seen to symbolize this alternative tradition, or take on the South African literary canon.

my friend?

(Jenkins 2000. 'Bitterness', p38)

Mother and father
Look at Azania
The land betrayed
By greedy jackals

…Freedom, hurry up!
Freedom, hurry up!

(Uhuru Cultural Group 2000. 'Mother and father', p51)

These concerns are inevitably combined with a perspective that is critical of the African National Congress's (ANC) economic strategies over the post-apartheid decade, especially GEAR (1996),[117] which Bila has described as one of a basket of the government's "disastrous neo-liberal policies" (Bila 2005, p7). In this regard the journal aligns itself with post-apartheid grassroots social movements such as the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC)[118] and the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), and is circulated during the period at global civil society gatherings in which Bila participates.[119]

While it is difficult to see how some of Timbila's more literal concerns – for instance, with essential services for the poor – could not be raised in more critical mass media fora that do try to encourage open debate (such as the *Mail & Guardian*, or on various

[117] GEAR replaced the more favoured and socialist orientated Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP, 1994). It focused on economic growth, and tried to create a positive climate for foreign investment. Amongst other things, it included often-criticized programmes for the privatization of state assets.

[118] The SECC advocated for affordable (and even free) electricity for the poor, and engaged in protest action that included illegally reconnecting Soweto residents to the electricity grid. (Egan & Wafer, 2004). Egan and Wafer describe it as "almost anarchic in structure; born and sustained out of a 'new left' ideology, it remains pluralist, comprising anarchists, ANC supporters and everyday church-goers." (ibid. p2)

[119] Bila has headed up the Limpopo branch of the leftist South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). He was appointed to edit *Global Fire*, a civil society activist newspaper published at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002, and, as mentioned, participated in the World Social Forum meetings in Porto Alegre in 2002 and 2003.

radio talk shows), Bila points out that although sometimes this is the case, and that while these platforms should be leveraged, they do not offer "guaranteed conditions that when you have a problem, be it unemployment or anything like that, [that you] are published." (Bila 2006. Int)[120]

Moreover, the impact of these issues is such that writers who write about them are not likely to be reasonable – here evoking something of the Habermassian sense of the need for reasonableness in public discourse.[121] Instead, the voices are *angry*, and because of this – because of the idiom of the writing[122] – are rejected by the mass media:

> These are issues the government, for instance, would be a bit offended by; because the people who raise these issues are often angry. It's angry work that for me tells the story of transition in this country. (ibid.)

There is a distinction here that is important to make: firstly, *Timbila* seeks to create a platform for socially engaged poetry, much of which, *inter alia*, addresses issues that affect the poor, such as economic and political inequalities. At the same time, it aims to encourage and publish writing actually *written* by poor people (literally, the voices of the poor), but with more sophistication than an initiative like *Homeless Talk* might show:[123] the craft of poetry is central to the poetry project, even though Bila concedes that not all poems published in *Timbila* might be of high quality from a literary point of view (Bila 2006. Int.). In this sense, the 'voices' *Timbila* publishes, are not disembodied voices, but are concretely contextualized as part of a social, political and economic system.

Bila puts this dynamic in an interesting way:

---

[120] Of interest, immediately prior to the interview, Bila had participated in a workshop discussing how to address a certain community's rights impacted by mining. Indeed, the issue, which involved challenging a large mining concern, had not been reported widely, if at all, in the mainstream media.
[121] It is a 'rational-critical' public sphere that is generally envisaged.
[122] Echoing Fraser's use of the word.
[123] *Homeless Talk* was established to "serve as the voice of the homeless" (www.homelesstalk.org.za) and has often included poetry written by homeless people. The similarities between the perspectives of the newspaper and Timbila are striking: "Founders of Homeless Talk had always held the view that the media was biased when it came to addressing the plight of the homeless…" (ibid.)

> You become a good poet when you write about yourself and the kinds of things you observe, but also by the ability of poetry to go beyond the personal in the South African, or African context. You know, poets, even though most of them may live in isolation, they are able to observe what is happening in society, they participate in the things that are happening in life, they *become part of the unemployment statistics themselves* [my italics]. They are able to raise issues that people can relate to. (Bila 2006. Int.)

For Bila, poets have a social responsibility. Recalling the idea behind the Botstoso Jesters as performance poets (as jesters, they are like Lear's fool, foil to the power of the king, sometimes even speaking in the tongues of poetry-madnesses), and drawing on the traditional role of the *imbongi*,[124] poetry has a social use: "It carries the age old tradition of orality, of reprimanding, commenting on public issues…" (Bila 2006. Int.).

When it gives voice to oppressive socio-economic conditions, poetry has relevance to people's lives – a position echoing debates around art and political relevance, at their height during the anti-apartheid struggle. Poetry is "not just about happy life, celebrations; but also anguish and tribulation that people meet every day, because of society's economic conditions" (ibid.).

Quotes from *Timbila* are easy to come by to illustrate this "anguish and tribulation"[125] (all of these from *Timbila* 2002):

> Neighbours always know

[124] Brown writes: "The function of the praise poet [e.g. in Zulu and Xhosa communities] is to negotiate relations of political power within the society, which means the imbongi is 'licensed' by the poetic form to criticize the kind when this is perceived to be necessary." (Brown 1998, p91)

[125] These poems are, of course, juxtaposed with other registers, many of which are strikingly satirical: such as Khumalo's attempts at social provocation (again, the poet as fool/foil); the textual (or 'texting') play by Masello Motana (as in 'Free uth': "Give the uth some in4mation/ Not in4mercials […] Tell the uth about agriculture/ Not sales or specials/ Tell them about our culture/ Not about potentials" (*Timbila* 2000, p79); or more politically strident exclamations, such as the performance poem by Righteous the Common Man called 'They have landed': "The landless have landed/where?/ the landless have landed/ where?/ the landless have landed//in the land of the landless" (ibid. p95).

What's going on
But on that night
When her body was found
With fourteen knife wounds
Her underwear hanging on her neck,
Her blood painting the wooden floors,

Everybody said they did not hear a thing,

(Kota 2002. 'Neighbours', p30)

or, with a Dickensian descriptive sense of things

In the gutter,
Smothered by foul smoke
Belched by sooty chimneys,
Blinding like the morning mist,
My dad would at dawn
Wake with the crowing cocks
Inside a galvanized hut
With corrugated covers.
And by the candle light,
Wear worn old overalls,
His tattered ID tightly enveloped
In a pocket grim with grease […]
At the close of day […]
Returning to the luminous
Sea of shining shacks,
Our destitute homes, spent […]
He stole for our sake.

(Mohlabeng 2002. 'Not employed', pp37-38)

or, suggestive of the literalism of some of the poetry published by *Timbila*

Here
There is no news at all.
Nothing.
Nothing at all.
Only death.
Physical death.

Cold steel.
Cold cement.
No grass.
Nor soil.
Nor child.
Only death.
Physical death.

(Mapalakanye 2002. ‘Troublemaker’s prison letter’, p16)

At times the grief is distinctly not literary, the writing coming across as simply an act of record, of personal anguish captured on the page, such as Buhle Khumalo’s description of a date rape:

Stripped naked
Legs apart
He tried to thrust his hard penis
Into my vagina
I rejected him
With all my strength.
Only I could not preserve pride [….]
I loath [sic] men
I despise their manhood.

(Khumalo 2002. ‘Dinner Date’, pp64-65).

Bila sees poetry as an instrument of record.[126] It has active archival and news value, and is accessible to ordinary people because it is "quick to generate". As a result, it "easily records the kind of life people are going through" (Bila, 2006. Int.):

> [Poetry] is a very useful tool, not just to fight any system, but for communities to express what society is going through. So for me it is an important measure that can tell where society is at every given time. You don't necessarily need to read a newspaper article to get statistics; [instead] poetry is able to tell you where society is in a very honest way, because a poet doesn't necessarily say, 'Look, I write as an anti-globalisation poet', no: you just write because you are affected by certain things. (Bila 2006. Int.)

Importantly, this means writing in a way that can be understood:

> The way poetry is being written today appears to be less abstract, less ambivalent and ambiguous; so it resonates so much with what people are going through; it resonates with peoples' problems. (ibid.)

Timbila's "languages appropriate to our needs" (*Timbila* 2002 *et al*. Submission details) includes a concern with the omission of indigenous languages in the mainstream – at least as far as literary book publishing goes – and this omission is one of the poetry project's core advocacy areas. As we know, it is integral to the historic social and economic marginalization of black people, and indigenous cultures. It touches on issues such as education, and relates to ongoing social challenges that are the legacy of apartheid, such as illiteracy, which are in turn issues of poverty.[127] All of these are central to Bila's Africanist perspective:

> [*Timbila*] [publishes] non-English languages, which [are] not finding expression in big publishing houses, because they don't

[126] Again, echoing the social use of *isibongo*, that, arguably like the media, "establish cognitive maps within society – of relations between humans and animals, individuals and other individuals, personal identity and communal life, ruler and ruled." (Brown 1998, p87).
[127] Some of which is discussed, for instance, in Maake (2000).

> have regard for other traditions. Also, *Timbila* is trying to close the gap that exists between the urban and the rural, and also between languages. Even in black languages, there are languages that are considered much more prestigious and big and there are languages which, even 12 years down the line, remain very marginal. We create [a] channel to deliberately promote these kinds of things. (Bila 2006. Int.)

7.1.3. Kotaz: A voice of dissent

Kotaz locates itself outside of the mainstream – a mainstream whose "popular media", such as TV and radio, Nyezwa, describes as "vehicle[s] of the highest mischief." (Nyezwa 2006. Int.) Unlike the other publishers, who seek to contest the field through their publishing activities, Nyezwa claims to have little interest in the publishing industry: "I'm not bothered with commerce, with any industry. *What the people inside do*. [my emphasis] I'm not worried about things like those." (ibid.)[128] Instead, *Kotaz* courts the writing of those 'on the outside', those who have, effectively, been left out: the "suffering peoples of the world" (ibid.) who "have the better story to tell" (ibid.).

Here one is reminded of the storytelling that is at the heart of a process like the TRC,[129] insofar as the TRC offered a public platform for ordinary people who had suffered apartheid trauma and violence to share their stories. The openness of the platform, in that anyone who wanted to could present their story, has something in common with the spirit of publishing projects like Timbila and Botsotso, or here, in Nyezwa's terms, with creating a space for the "stories of the suffering peoples" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.). But the objectives of the TRC were ultimately institutional objectives: it aimed to foster healing and reconciliation between people (black and white; victim and abuser etc.) in an effort to build a united South Africa – that is, it

[128] It is a perspective which, in the end, feels more like positioning in opposition to the mainstream, rather than literally held. For instance, many other statements by the publisher show a desire to engage the mainstream directly, and as a poet he is published by a mainstream publisher. Nevertheless, it is indicative of the extent of Nyezwa's sense of alienation from the mainstream, of being 'on the outside'; and of his dislike of the "vehicle[s] of the highest mischief" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.) that are what he calls the "popular media" (ibid.).

[129] Set up in terms of the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*, No. 34 of 1995.

was instrumental to the nation-building agenda of the post-apartheid democratic project.

While *Kotaz* offers a space where the stories (or voices) of the suffering can be represented – through poetry, prose, and art-work – and in this way refracts something of the *zeitgeist* where storytelling is valorized as transcendent, it is a space that can also be felt as one of political dissent from the post-apartheid mainstream. *Kotaz* has – at least from the perspective of editorial narration – the sense of being the result of an alienated subjectivity that is cast as the lot of the impoverished and disempowered (the "suffering peoples" (ibid.)); that is, a place of continued social disengagement and disillusionment – despite institutional processes like the TRC – rather than one of social integration and empowerment:

> Already in the township in the early 90's I was sensing that all human life is a mistake – that there's no reason whatsoever to take things seriously. Reality is a big lie… I had been roaming in the township doing nothing for about a year. A few years before my first sensations of my new revelation I buried all my poems in a hole in our backyard. I was very tired. It was a few years after the 1994 elections. My friends were [in] the national newspapers, some on television, others outside the country on foreign missions for the new government. I was confused with all this. And I was feeling pretty useless and out of place. (ibid.)

In the editorial notes (called *Notes from nowhere*) that preface each issue of *Kotaz* – and which are often powerful evocations of place and subject – the 'suffering' as a personal experience is narrated by Nyezwa. This position circumscribes the editorial conscience of the magazine, and sometimes, more than the selection of material, dominates the sense of the publication:

> For days now I had nothing to think about, nothing to reveal that [sic] could explain my physical need in history, standing at my front gate. My house, which craves white paint on its walls, stands

> just behind me. I'm a worn-out man, made slow by the massive strokes of an oppressive history. (Nyezwa 2001b. Editorial)

Nyezwa's metaphoric language is often rich, and evocative in the context of this thesis:

> There are people in the city who must suffer and whose heaviest defeats must be applauded at the City Square…I have succeeded to be simple, a hunting animal with little to do and little strength to go anywhere…A shroud covers the coffin that the men in this township carry through the streets, and the lies will not end…Today I suffer a bold and calculating sickness. Am I not the warder at St Albans who knows the bewilderment of the dying man in his cell? (Nyezwa 2001a. Editorial)

As editor, Nyezwa is "warder" (ibid.) who "knows the bewilderment of the dying man in his cell" (ibid.); that is, the bewilderment of the outcast, the writer, and the 'suffering peoples'. These are voices that must be "applauded at the City Square" (ibid.) – must, in the theoretical language used here, find recognition in the public sphere.

While political disillusionment might lead to social agitation in the case of *Timbila* or satirical critique in the performances of the Botsotso Jesters, Nyezwa "does not seek to make political statements in [his] selections" (ibid.). Nevertheless, this drive towards public recognition of marginalized voices makes *Kotaz*, although quiet and often unnoticed as a publication,[130] a distinctly political venture in intention.

Overt political points are, of course, inevitably made in *Kotaz* editorials – as they are in a number of poems selected. Nyezwa's perspective is at times closely allied to Timbila's Africanism:

[130] It is not, for instance, widely distributed in bookshops across the country (in comparison to magazines like *Chimurenga*), and Nyezwa is seldom interviewed (again, in comparison to widespread media coverage of *Chimurenga* and interviews with its editor).

> South Africa is an extremely naïve society…Society as a whole has atrophied and turned blindly narcissistic. So much so that what is foreign to our bodies and enticing yet corruptive in our cultural life, must be placated and absorbed. Africans have been weakened, morally, physically, and spiritually to such a point that most people are ready to believe anything they hear, especially when it come from powerful sources in society (Nyezwa 2004. Editorial)

Echoing critiques by *Timbila* ("Freedom, hurry up!") and the Botsotso Jesters ("is…the revolution a pimpernel?"), the new democracy is seen as a betrayal: "Forget the South African government's promises to the poor… The physical pain of betrayal, the reality, is what beats the Africans down." (ibid.)[131]

While Nyezwa does not necessarily have a particular contributor in mind,[132] *Kotaz* can be seen to be a space that is created for what ultimately are felt to be marginalized expressions; what he calls the "the wider voice of the community" (ibid.) that "gullible institutions and individuals" display an "unwillingness to accommodate and accept." (ibid.)[133] This "wider voice" includes "writers who have no outlets for their work, due to a lack of interest in their writing" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.).

Nyezwa's perspective on writing reminds us of Bila's faith in poetry as an instrument of record (here it captures a "history"), and in its ability to speak in a language that ordinary people can understand:[134]

> A poem tries to capture a watery history – a transient memory. What makes the load heavy for many is this seamless vacuity, the emptiness of life – and the ceaseless lies. Literature grounds down this vacuous history to manageable forms. Something that even the

[131] Or in Nyezwa's distinctly personal terms: "I have become a cynic. A shell was left after the false accusations and sad deprivations were completed." (ibid.)
[132] The magazine has, he says, "[n]o demographic considerations." (Nyezwa 2006. Int.)
[133] The editorial (Vol. 3. No. 4) begins: "I asked the people to give money to produce literature,/ real literature, African literature. And they refused." (ibid.)
[134] Like Timbila, this includes a concern with indigenous languages.

> guy on the street can dig and begin to understand. This life full of wretchedness and lies. (Nyezwa 2006. Int.)

Yet it is a "watery" history – a complex and indefinable one in which the literary, as a vehicle for storytelling that can capture what Nyezwa calls the "magic and realism belong[ing] to those that have suffered greatly in life" (ibid.), is central. The poem does not simply record the factual social-economic conditions of existence, in a vulgar Marxist sense. There is, for Nyezwa,

> [t]he sense that something else beside what you see or hear and smell is significant or really taking place. Good writers have this acute awareness, this perception of higher things. Very often you're in conflict with everything that you know. The sensation throws you off-guard completely… All of a sudden you doubt all the stories that everybody told you about yourself, how you fit in with the world. You know that you must begin to grapple with your truth before a bad thing happens. (ibid.)

To trust the literary is to see through the "lies", the deceptions and 'mischievousness' of the mainstream. Through dissent (and withdrawal), a reinvention and reinvigoration (a "clear urgency" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.) is possible through the literary – and in this sense there is something of a belief in literature's transcendence. A subjective copy-tasting is at play, privileging a "life's metaphor" – which is also "organic":

> I focus on the urgency of the work – that the writing is itself an organic form. The writing must be distinct in construction, grounded in life's metaphor. It can be a poem or a story about anything, love, hate, injustice, anger, fantasy, politics. The work must be organic with a distinct form and a clear urgency. (ibid.)

To let literature, and especially poetry, do its work, is to attend to complexity[135] – is to succour constancy and truthtelling. There is, for Nyezwa, a "beautiful and intact relationship between affliction and the ability to speak the truth – to write a good story or poem." (ibid.)

> Poetry will always have some role to play – to create light, to fight for consistency; to discover and make meaning. Poetry has done this wonderfully also in our society in the past. Poetry doesn't even have to triumph over injustices, against a corrupt government. The bigger injustice in my own understanding is to push poetry to be accessible. (ibid.)

Yet it is not writing that is the "product of experts and intellectual gurus" (ibid.). As is the case for all of the publishers discussed here, 'the literary' is *not* elitist practice. For Nyezwa it is

> Writing and language…shaped by the experiences of people. It's not the other way round, where language and writing become the property of experts and elites. I'm trying more and more often to develop my own understanding of this, that the people always come first, in everything. (ibid.)

A review of *Kotaz* shows that the strength of the writing is often mixed, with beginner writers intermingling with those more adept at their craft – a feature to a greater of lesser extent found in most of the independent literary publications discussed here. At times there is little to distinguish what gets published from what one might find at a writing workshop – as suggested, an impression that is encouraged by the look and feel of the publication – albeit that the best of whatever is submitted to *Kotaz* is no doubt selected (i.e. that there is gatekeeping at work here).

[135] "[The kind of writing that Nyezwa as editor prefers is] [e]verything that talks to me and is conscious of life's complexities and absurdities…The narration must not simplify and has to be sensitive to complex/diverse realities. But the writing itself doesn't have to be complex or logical."

For example, in *Kotaz* No. 1 Vol 3, the relatively sophisticated textual play by Mbongeni Khumalo

> A drankensberg of f.rust.rated/hope & i say fuck to the fuckenjuice
> sweetheart, i am your umbrella in the rain of cityviolence
>
> (Khumalo 2001. 'feed the need', p10)

is juxtaposed with the more plainfaced expressions in Ellen Ngesi's 'Where did it go wrong':[136]

> Where did it go wrong
> When a parent was a parent
> A father's word was final
> A child was a child?
>
> Where did it go wrong
> When fathers commanded respect
> When mothers disciplined children
> When boys remain boys?
>
> (Ngesi 2001. 'Where did it go wrong', p33)

However, the workshop feel to the selection is precisely the point. It is the development of South African literature that *Kotaz* is interested in; a project that has an implicit faith in literature as democratic practice. Because of this, "[p]oetry holds a special place in the *true* [my emphasis] development of people." (Nyezwa, 2006. Int.)

[136] Or, I might add, the flatfootedness of my own poems that appear in the issue.

7.1.4. Dye Hard Press: Getting poems out there

Cummiskey is explicit about his intention to "challenge people's mindset, to challenge society" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.) through poetry – even though poetry has been considered a marginalized genre, and publishing poetry might be considered a niche publishing activity.[137]

For Cummiskey, poetry offers a means to contest the "values and status" of a "consumerist corporate-orientated society" (ibid.) in South Africa, as well as the censorship of a powerful set of "cultural gatekeepers" (ibid.) that are found in the mass media, universities, and the publishing field. These gatekeepers are averse to "poetry or groundbreaking prose" (ibid.), suffer from a "colonial mindset" (ibid) and believe that, amongst other things, "African poetry is inferior" (ibid.), a view which Cummiskey feels a responsibility to challenge:

> There is good writing and bad writing everywhere. And people are very against the idea that South Africa produces good or challenging writing… they're looking at it through a very old mindset. Who's at fault here? (ibid.)

Elaborating on this concern in an editorial in *Green Dragon* No. 3 (2005) – and linking it to independent publishing – he writes:

> [I]ndependent publishers are becoming frustrated by the reluctance of many bookshops to stock local publications. A number of us have also questioned the practice of many bookshops to place African literature in separate sections from international literature. While the argument may be that such a separation makes it easier for the buyer to find African literature with ease, at the same time there is a suspicion that there's a colonial mindset at work that

[137] As Snailpress publisher Gus Ferguson is said to have wryly put it, for every reader of poetry there are about 732 poets. (see: http://www.oulitnet.co.za/relax/arthur_attwell.asp)

> regards African literature as different, if not inferior, to international works. (Cummiskey 2004, p2)[138]

While this suspicion can feel reductionist,[139] it is easy to share Cummiskey's concern at a more general level. In a very real way, the gatekeepers are institutions, or individuals who exercise authority within an institutional context, and, who, as a result, have an influence over the dominant cultural conversation in the country.[140] These institutions and individuals have the power and authority to exclude or marginalize – for instance, by refusing to review a book, but setting course work, by judging prizes, or by instituting prizes in the first place – and are seen to actively exercise this power. By drawing on whatever medium was most readily available – in his case, the photostatting machine – Cummiskey attempted to circumvent these restrictions in order to, as he puts it, "get poetry out there" (ibid.).

For Cummiskey, contestation with the mainstream occurs at several levels, including the kind of writing he aims to publish (mainly poetry), and at the level of publishing itself, where legitimacy is sought:

> There is a definite tendency to try marginalize you, not only from the commercial publishers, but also from the more established writers: 'It's not really publishing, so it really doesn't have to be taken seriously.' (Cummiskey 2006. Int.)

As his comments begin to suggest, there is a symbiotic relationship between the struggle faced by independent publishers as publishers, and their struggle for local literature to be heard. A rejection of one (e.g. a publisher's product) implies a rejection of the other (i.e. local literature). A similar fusion of concern is found with most of the publishers discussed here.

---

[138] Cummiskey goes on to say: "It is also worth noting that the most internationally performed playwright in the English language after Shakespeare is Athol Fugard." (ibid.)

[139] For instance, is there *really* a widespread sense that African poetry is inferior? Stocking African literature separately can be said to highlight it as a priority concern, rather than inferior to world literature; and if it were not separated, it might be further cause for the publishers' complaints. While it is likely that many do indeed hold the cultural belief ascribed by Cummiskey, I argue later that this and other forms of reductionism can be considered necessary for the publishers to actively position themselves against the mainstream (for example, see Chapters 7.2 and 7.3).

[140] In media terms, they have the power to set the agenda.

Cummiskey's literary interventions have included writing as a book reviewer in newspapers, and from the perspective of an independent publisher on a commercial books industry website.[141] As a publisher and poet he locates himself on the margins of the mainstream (on the 'outside') – even while his professional work as a sub-editor at a mainstream newspaper allows him ready access to the mainstream, including as a reviewer for a sister newspaper. In this regard, in Nyezwa's terms, he can be located on the 'inside'; and it is in this sometimes contradictory space between the margins and the mainstream that some of the meaning of his publishing intiatives can be derived.[142]

Cummiskey's literary inspiration comes from the Surrealist and Dada movements of the early-mid 1900s in Europe, as well as the Beats and "a lot of the 60s type stuff in terms of the 'happenings'" (ibid.). As editor, and like the Dadaists, although not with the same outrageous exuberance, he has "an attraction to shock value" (ibid.), as well as to the irrational or surreal which can find its natural expression through poetry and art. And like Andre Breton's Surrealists, he believes in the transformative powers of poetry and the unconscious, different to the limitations of "very ugly kitchen-sink realism that a lot of contemporary literature seemed bound by" (Cummiskey, 2006. Int.). Instead: "I was very attracted to the whole notion of the relevance and power of dreams, subjective life…" (ibid.).

While it is a perspective certainly contrasted to the poetry of social commentary espoused by Bila, it feels, interestingly, close to the "magic and realism" Nyezwa finds in the literary – even more so in its faith in the transcendent truthtelling power of the literary.[143] In an echo of Nyezwa's concern in this regard, the name of the journal *Green Dragon* signifies a "celebration of illusion – the illusion of art", one that "explores and reveals truth in whatever forms it takes." (Cummiskey 2002. Editorial).

---

[141] For example, in *The Weekender*, but also, more recently, as an independent publisher on the London-based website *The Bookseller* (www.thebookseller.com), which largely covers the book trade from a commercial perspective.

[142] This is not an uncommon position or tension for a number of the post-apartheid independent literary publishers, many of whom come from middle-class backgrounds, and are economically productive.

[143] For instance, here one thinks of the Surrealist's practice of automatic writing, in an attempt to directly access the unconscious.

Borrowing from debates about the relevance of poetry to political struggle that preceded the decade under discussion, Cummiskey sees poetry as a "weapon" to be used against the cultural conservatism of the post-apartheid mainstream:

> I know it sounds very over-the-top, but poetry's a weapon. People say that's a load of horseshit. [But] look, irrespective of what the quality may have been, poetry was a weapon in apartheid South Africa; it was a way of conveying a message [against] the entire set-up; that whole restrictive set-up of literature, art culture; that whole societal mindset (Cummiskey 2006. Int.).

And

> Poetry's very much like an arrow…because you can get through a book of poetry a small book of poetry in an afternoon. A 600 page novel takes longer, a greater concerted effort over a longer period of time. Poetry can be lighter. It doesn't require as much time, it certainly engages a great level of reflection I think, but it doesn't require a concerted level of effort. (ibid.)

These views can be compared to an account of the role of poetry in the anti-apartheid struggle offered by Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre (Alvarez-Pereyre 1979): "[T]he poem is a hiding place, and a…short-cut to saying what is essential with great economy because it expresses the immediacy of emotion in a concentrated form." (ibid. p38). In the context of mass protest rallies, the poem was incendiary in a way that the short story could not be: "…Unlike the short story, [the poem] can be shared immediately, either by being recited or by being circulated in cyclostyled form" (ibid.). With the intensification of political resistance, and the resulting clampdown of the apartheid state, poetry became, as Es'kia Mphahlele put it, "a fugitive means of expression" (ibid.).

While Cummiskey is attracted to "shock value", what actually ends up shocking people can be surprising – and even disappointing: "One reader I know was shocked

by a poem about a young woman's period. She came back to me and said it was disgusting to write about that." (Cummiskey 2006. Int.) And, in the end, the extent to which Dye Hard Press publications can be considered good examples of Surrealist or post-surrealist or post-dadaist literature is diluted, even while some are.

Nevertheless, it is the Dada/Surrealist/Beat credo as outsiders that drives the publisher intellectually, and, in the case of the surreal, finds expression[144] in poems such as those of Bernat Kruger, Khulile Nxumalo, or in the phantasmagoria and even shotgun surrealism of Lesego Rampolokeng (all published in *Green Dragon* No. 3):

> crooked politician instant shit hit to earn/learn read it in
> Dream police angst-grip
> cops & flops raw beat lunatic head written on love-balls
>
> (Rampolokeng 2004. from 'Libete'. p76)

There are deliberate attempts by the publisher to tease out social tensions through content selection, an editorial agenda that frequently seems aimed at the social conservatism of the middle class:

> Historically that [middle-class consumerism] was the domain of the whites; but now the so-called emerging black middle class [are] also rapidly adopting that culture, this whole 'consumerist in the suburbs' kind of culture – you know, 'fuck the next guy' – that some writers are saying is a betrayal of the revolution, and that others are saying is the nature and process of a society in transition. (ibid.)

Yet while *Timbila* might take a more direct, and politicized approach, Cummiskey says he is "not about to print slogans like 'Death to the bourgeoisie'" because "[no-one] takes that seriously anymore…" (ibid.). Instead, a poem like Goodenough

[144] Besides in the poems of self-proclaimed surrealists writing abroad who contribute to the magazine, such as Philip Hammial and Paul Grillo. (See: *Green Dragon* No. 3) Cummiskey's own poetry can be considered surrealist, and, imitating the cut-ups of the Beats, he has produced the impressive long poem *April in the Moon-Sun* (2006).

Mashego's[145] 'parting shot ii', published in *Green Dragon* (2006), serves as an example of the kind of provocative material he likes to publish – and signaling perhaps a shift a way from the more deliberately surreal positioning of his early publishing efforts. The poem cynically deals with the rise of the black middle class and the subequent paranoia of white suburbia:

> I'm on a 1 way ticket out of the township
> Smiling broadly to my kaffirs still stuck in ghetto bliss […]
>
> Bring the slums to the 'burbs loud music & street bashes
> Menage trios with white chicks call it the rainbow nation […]
>
> We bring weed for all the kindergarten caucasian kids […]
>
> The 'burbs'll never be the same I killed harry potter […]
>
> If I can fail in the 'burbs I only leave in a hearse
> Slit my wrists die in a bathtub cause a mess to my neighbours
>
> (Mashego 2006. 'parting shot ii'. Extracts. pp3-4)

7.1.5. Chimurenga: A space that is not there

Chimurenga is different to the other publications discussed here, in part because its scope is broader (the African diaspora), but also because it is less concerned with creating a public platform for local literature. *Chimurenga* also deliberately sets out to identify omission in the mainstream in order to give structure to the content of an issue, a thematic approach that is in contrast to the more open space offered by the likes of *Botsotso*, and is atypical of the independent literary publications generally.[146]

[145] Interestingly, Mashego is a Timbila Poet and on the Timbila board, suggesting something of the cross-referencing of the publishing initiatives.
[146] There is sometimes a hint of thematisation amongst the other publishers when, for instance, Botsotso publishes an anthology of women poets (as in *Isis X*, 2007). But this is not as directed as in the case of *Chimurenga*.

For Edjabe, dominant cultural institutions, like the publishing industry or the mass media, have a "mainstream take on an issue" (Edjabe 2006. Int.). This "discuss [of the] market" (ibid.) forms the backdrop to *Chimurenga's* editorial perspective, which asks, provocatively: "how do you intervene [if this is the mainstream take]?" (ibid.):

> I certainly do not want to publish something about how commercialism and the economy have messed up things and all that fucking rhetoric, because the *M&G* [Mail & Guardian newspaper] is publishing that, *The Guardian* is publishing that, and *The New York Times*. So you have to take some things for granted. So you say, okay, listen, when the *New York Times* has put it out, clearly you know that is what the discuss is…what's for the market. So how do you intervene if this is the mainstream take on the issue? Where do you intervene?' (ibid.)

While the thematic interventions are loose, they are considered: "We decide on a theme for each issue; it's always very broad-based. We spend a lot of time reading and researching around the theme that we are hoping to debate." (ibid.)

An unusual example of the kind of intervention Edjabe has in mind is illustrated by *Chimurenga* Vol. 10 (2006), called *Futbol, Politricks & Ostentatious Cripples*:

> [W]hen we are about to engage a theme – for example, the forthcoming theme is football – we will be clearly influenced by the writing that is already put out there around football. What are the approaches to football? I mean right now the main thing is nationality, and how football is war – and colonial war – all that bullshit. It is merely FIFA propaganda: how football will solve the world's problems, become the new world healer. And so I speak with some of the collaborators and say, 'Hey, this is bullshit'. But just to comment and talk back to that, we are almost consolidating the bullshit. So what are the spaces we feel are untouched in this football discuss? (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

While the "spaces" that are "untouched" provoke "debate" – with the suggestion of a rational-critical encounter – points of departure are multiple: the theme for an issue could be a "song…a text, written, a poem…an idea" (ibid.). This locates *Chimurenga* in the more open-ended field of the literary, reminding one of Nyezwa seeking writing that "can be a poem or a story about anything, love, hate, injustice, anger, fantasy, politics" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.):

> [M]any of us have a relationship with the game, the business of it, the image of it, and so on; either love, hate, or indifference, but it is quite difficult to remain untouched, you know, it is all over the place. However it is a topic or a subject that seems to have not entered the creative plane. There are few stories, few poems that have been published using the theme ... So let's use that. Let's move that into the creative space, and also have a discussion, a debate around what is it, how is it, and what does it do. (ibid.)

The magazine is concerned with what Edjabe calls a "kind of Afrocosmopolitan notion" that has to be "invented" (ibid.); it is a space, by implication, not catered for in the mainstream:

> I mean in the way we approach content, it is saying that you almost have to invent the space; the space that is not there. To some extent *Drum* magazine did that: it invented the notion of Sophiatown. People began to believe what they read on the pages. (ibid.)

This includes

> [A] language, the tone, the aesthetic for the publication that vaguely qua vaguely says 'rebellion'; Peter Tosh with the machine gun.[147] It's all very vague and blurry, but somehow it says, 'Here, here, here, here, here, here, here'. (ibid.)

[147] On the cover of *Chimurenga* Vol. 1 (2002), reggae artists Peter Tosh is depicted with a 'machine-gun' guitar. The inaugural volume of the magazine, entitled *Music Is The Weapon*, is suggestive of the name of the magazine – the music of struggle and uprising.

While *Timbila* looks to create a "true African society" (Bila, 2000) that reflects "true African images" (ibid.) – a drive towards indigenization that resurrects cultural practice and value – *Chimurenga's* version of (black) identity[148] is post-modern, and global. A 'text' needs to be "assumed" (ibid.). But it is not an apolitical postmodernism, as suggested by Tosh's 'machine-gun' guitar on the front cover of the inaugural volume of the magazine, as well as, most obviously, the name 'Chimurenga'. Founded later (2002-) than the other publishers here, it draws on a sense of self-conscious political and cultural acuity that only feels possible in the second half of the post-apartheid decade under discussion:

> You can't quote Biko today, you have to decode Biko, you have to deconstruct Biko, you have to assume. But that doesn't mean that Biko has died intellectually in this country – shit, we hope not – but when you decide what the common denominator will be, your reader, or your interlocutor, you wouldn't want to think of this person as someone who doesn't know Steve Biko. (ibid.)

The kind of 'space' that *Chimurenga* intends to convene deliberately seeks contestation, politically and culturally, and an identification is made with progressive independent literary publications prior to 1994:

> By 2002 […] *Staffrider* had gone, and so on. It seemed the idea of an artistic or literary space that could also be challenging politically and ideologically seemed to have gone out of fashion. (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

Chimurenga can be said to *instigate* (create, explore, expose, reveal, contrast and juxtapose) black intellectualism across the African diaspora. Under investigation are black icons, musicians, writers, poets, intellectuals, activists, who become expressions and representations of *marginalized* rather than mainstream public voices – even

[148] Edjabe insists the publication is not about 'black' identity, that the notion only makes sense in South Africa with its particular history, and would not make sense in other centres in Africa, such as Lagos.

while *Chimurenga* can be said to be mainstream in publishing practice, through distribution and design. As Edjabe puts it, when the South African media talks about black intellectuals and the Native Club, they are "talking about Njabulo Ndebele" (ibid.)

In his essay discussing the rise of Cape-based hip-hop artists such as Prophets of da City during the country's transition, Adam Haupt explains that socially and politically engaged hip-hop, referred to as "conscious" (Haupt 2004, p76) hip-hop, is "engaged in a struggle over the sign in its attempts to challenge mainstream representations of black subjects" (ibid. p77). Moreover, hip-hop involved the "appropriation of intellectual property via the sampling practices of DJs and producers" (ibid. p76). The metaphor of a hip-hop DJ – Ntone himself is a DJ – mixing and sampling music to create an innovative new sound is textually alluded to in *Chimurenga*, and most immediately felt in its design and layout.[149] By analogy the page becomes the mixing desk and part of a public cultural reconstruction – a creative process that, like conscious hip-hop, draws on (or samples) the 'sounds'[150] of the past ('the archive') and the present, critically and at times almost irreverently, so that something new, vital and relevant to the present can be made. The deconstruction of the magazine's postmodernism comes across as a (re)construction, or a 'remaking'.

A good example of this process of cultural retrieval and deconstruction/reconstruction is *Chimurenga* Vol. 5 (2004), with its thematic focus on Bessie Head, and which is evocatively entitled in terms of this conversation: *Triptych: Head/Body(&Tools)/Corpses.* The issue opens with a correspondence between Head and Tom Calvin (a "fan" (*Chimurenga* 2004, p4)), with the text laid out so that you

---

[149] For instance, the design and layout of issues of the magazine feels like a 'mix', often disrupting linear reading cues by playing with things like font style, colour and size, page orientation, and headlines.

[150] This is suggested by something as simple as the table of contents, which mimics a CD playlist, with the time referring to the page numbers:

> This Land, South of Africa (Don Mattera)…….00:00
> Frank Talk on the wall (Alex Noble)……..00:01
> Love & Fear Past Ginsberg (Kopano Ratele)…….02:04
> (*Chimurenga* Vol. 3. Backcover).

Instead of being edited, the volume is "produced" by Edjabe, "Mixed & Engineered" at RedhotMoondog Media, the designers, and "Mastered" at Shereno Printers. The magazine's name linking it to music is also relevant here.

have to turn the publication sideways to read it, and in various font styles and colours, making it difficult to read easily.[151] The correspondence, published courtesy of the Khama III Memorial Museum in Serowe, Botswana, is an act of accessing public archive. This is followed by a poem from avant-garde poet Wopko Jensma's "initially banned collection" (ibid. p5), *Where White is the Colour/Where Black Is the Number* (1975) – another evocation of archive; then an essay, entitled *thinking through Bessie Head's shattered bits*, that begins:

> It has become most trendy to write about Bessie Head…she is a writer the world loves to read, and publishers like to distribute. funny this. especially the last bit about publishers. Bessie Head struggled financially for most of her life… (Gqola 2004, p6)

These lines effectively (re)locate Head on the margins, in an attempt to retrieve her, if you wish, from the mainstream "publishers [who] like to distribute [her]." Suggestive of the editorial attention to omission, the essay continues, "but i am not going to write about how depressing this is, because others have already done this at great length" (ibid.).

As if to broaden the theme, the essay is followed by a French translation (by Edjabe) of an essay by Haitian writer Jean Claude Fignolé called *poetics of schizophrenia* (Head was said to suffer from schizophrenia), and then by another French translation of an essay by Achille Mbembe, called *African Modes of Self-Writing*, and so on. Besides poems, various explorations of music (including a 'meditation' on Jimi Hendrix), work from Cercle Kapsiki, a Cameroonian arts collective, and a reprint of an article by writer, activist and public intellectual Arundhati Roy, the issue includes disturbing yet striking photographs of lynchings that occurred in the United States between 1910 and 1919 – with the effect of a transboundary raid on archives of the African diaspora, and the provocation of new meanings through the relocation of the photographs in both time and space. There is also an effect of these being visually juxtaposed with a portrait of Bessie Head by George Hallet on the inside back cover, and the words "IF WHITE PEOPLE DIDN'T INVENT AIR WHAT WOULD WE

[151] A deliberate attempt by the publisher to make the act of reading difficult, and to provoke a sense of intellectual engagement (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

BREATHE?" emblazoned on the front cover, over what appears to be a photograph of a black housekeeper from the American South in the early part of the last century. The two pictures are strikingly similar, the visual interchangeability of the anonymity of the housekeeper with the iconicity of Head rich in insinuation.

It is a case of re-appropriation of content,[152] or what one might call a 'cultural retrieval' and reconstruction of a public and an identity – even an opportunistic reconstruction – from the hegemony of the "discuss of the market", which is also History (with a capital H). In terms of Derrida, this identity is endlessly deferred, and *Chimurenga* reflects this. It is also a hegemony against which the resilience and resistance of the conscious hip-hop artist is evoked.

7.2. Publishing practice

I have intimated so far that the publishers are concerned with the marginalization of various forms of what we might call 'social content' from the mainstream. These are ideas, interests, viewpoints, perspectives (political and otherwise), and include a concern with local literature (in particular, poetry), with the voices of young black poets, and with the "angry" voices of the poor. While, in William's terms, the "ruling definition of the social" is under construction in the period covered by this thesis, as evidenced by what can generally be called the post-apartheid democratic project, it is not an emerging mainstream that needs to be uncritically celebrated. Instead, for Timbila, it is "angry work that…tells the story of transition in this country" (Bila 2006. Int.). For Botsotso, too, the social engineering of terms like "New South Africa" and "rainbow nation" should not go unanswered. Rather, it is the freer 'mixed masala' of democratic cultural practice that captures the true spirit of the land of plenty, a spirit that is "organic", culturally savvy, and politically critical. Moreover, it is a spirit that needs to be encouraged, because it is seen to be increasingly marginalized by the conservative and market-bound cultural practices of the mainstream. For *Kotaz*, what is marginalized is a "life's metaphor" – writing that

[152] Edjabe makes the political point that he asks for an artist's permission to re-use texts wherever possible, but never seeks permission from a publishing institution (Edjabe 2006. Int.).

"comes from those who have walked life's harrowing roads and tasted defeat" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.).

I have also suggested that the publishers are not simply concerned with literature as a niche interest activity, but, as Botsotso's distribution deal with the *New Nation* shows, seek to circulate it widely, as if to exclaim it as a critical ingredient of the post-apartheid transition. Both medium and distribution are, of course, integral to publishing practice, and it is here that contestation with the mainstream can also be felt, a contestation which extends to the publishers claiming their identity as *publishers*.

7.2.1. Medium

Bila is articulate about the need for resources for small publishers and writers to access technological means of (re)production, such as computers and the Internet, the skills to use these tools, and the space to better their craft:

> If I had resources…I would accord performance poets space to rehearse and record and perform their work. I would push the government to subsidize the production of books. I would get poets to read on radio…Poets need access to computers, Internet, high technology, typing services, studio facilities. (Bila 2005, p11)

The gradual acquisition of publishing skills over the period, including editing, administration, marketing, and technological skills, is a feature of a number of the publishing initiatives, and is seen in the overall professionalisation of product and practice. The evolution of Dye Hard Press publications, from A4 photostatted and stapled pamphlets[153] to A5 perfect bound and properly laid-out booklets[154] is a case in point. Similarly, some early publications from Timbila are crude in execution, showing basic challenges in the production process, such as with layout, proof

[153] Such as *Burning Aloes* (Finlay, 1994), *Structured Space* (Geldenhuys, 1994) or *Icarus Rising* (Ferguson, 1994), or the publisher's own collections of poetry, such as *The Secret Hour* (1994) and *Lost In A World* (1994), and his surrealist film scenario *Conspiracies Of The Interior* (1994).
[154] For example, *Green Dragon* No. 3 and No. 4.

reading, and even printing.[155] However, these can be compared to later productions, where there is a sense of articulating the book as an aesthetic object, even if in basic ways, by the publisher beginning to experiment with shape, size, and a certain boldness in cover design.[156]

It is not that the production challenges disappear entirely: even relatively recent publications from some of the publishers show an immaturity in product,[157] and problems in the production process. In part this is due to the use of different (sometimes inexperienced) designers, where a fluid working relationship still needs to be built, or to a publisher developing new relationships with start-up printers who themselves are learning the ropes; but also because the publishers, which are not professional concerns, often produce what they do on shoestring budgets, sometimes under adverse, unequal and inconsistent conditions.

As initiatives such as the Centre for the Book have in the past suggested,[158] the small publishing sector needs to be developed and supported, and issues of training and financing attended to. In this regard the medium the publishers publish in – for example, print, Internet or even CD – is inevitably determined by exposure to that medium, skills levels and access to resources and technologies.[159] In the South African context, these have historically followed demographic lines, a feature which is particularly felt in the early 1990s, when many technologies, such as the Internet, were new, and when PCs and home desktop publishing packages – or, indeed,

---

[155] Such as *apocrypha* (Khumalo, 2003), in which the printer printed an extra page at the end of the collection labeled "Notes" to balance the page count, or *insight* (Finlay; Ka Ngwenya, eds. 2003) with its very basic cover design and typos.

[156] Such as *corpse lovers and corpse haters* (lo Liyong, 2005) and *these hands* (Xaba, 2005), amongst other collections published at the time. The change can also be seen in early issues of *Timbila* compared to later ones (such as *Timbila* 2005)

[157] For instances *Blind Voices* (2007), a collection of radio plays by Kobus Moolman, where the aesthetic simplicity of the cover is undermined by an off-set picture and a bulleted list of the three radio plays, power point-style. (The cover for the CD that accompanies the book, for instance, is much more direct and powerful).

[158] See: www.nlsa.ac.za/NLSA/centreforthebook. Once a vibrant, semi-autonomous institution, the centre has now lost something of its original energy.

[159] For instance, exposure and access to the Internet is a necessary prerequisite to actively using the Internet for publishing. Equally, one needs to acquire the skills to publish online (e.g. HTML skills), or at the very least have access to someone with those skills. For book publishing financial resources are necessary, as are access to someone with design and layout skills, and so on. In the absence of these, working in a particular media remains difficult, if not impossible, and does not facilitate proactive, energetic and even spontaneous publishing, of the kind often exercised by the independent publishers.

desktop recording studios, used, for instance, to record Botsotso's first CD[160] – were not ubiquitous to the extent they are today.

It feels a point that is important to emphasize: The first online media website in South Africa was only launched in 1994,[161] and it is fair to say that many were only encountering the Internet in a basic way in a work environment – a far cry from the proliferation across race and class lines of technologies like mobile phones that we have now; some shipped standard with Multimedia Messaging Services, built-in cameras and Internet access.

Dye Hard Press's use of the photostat machine for its early publications is suggestive of the kinds of raw technologies that were felt to be accessible at the time (at least by Cummiskey) – the fact that early titles were run off on an *office* photostatting machine indicative of the opportunistic and Guerilla nature of some of the early publishing activities, but also of the lack of easy access to sophisticated publishing technologies.

Similarly, Nyezwa suggests how deep the access divide could be felt in the early post-apartheid period, and the extent to which simply being exposed to the possibilities of a new technology was fundamental to the birth of *Kotaz*:

> I began *Kotaz* after a lady at this poetry workshop [in Grahamstown] told me about the available fonts on a PC. She sat down on a stoep with me in front of St. Peters Building at Rhodes University and told me about the available fonts, the different shapes of letters. This all fascinated me very much that I immediately decided to do further investigations on my own. After this short session with this white lady I planned my next purpose in life, which was eventually to become *Kotaz*. (Nyezwa 2006. Int.)

[160] *Purple Light Mirror in the Mud* was recorded by artist and curator James De Villiers.
[161] The *Daily Mail & Guardian.*

7.2.1.1. Print

As the confidence and experience of the publishers grows, as well as their exposure to new technologies, their choice of publishing medium also expands. Yet despite this exposure to new publishing opportunities, print remains, for the publishers under discussion, their primary medium for mass publication.

It is the argument of this thesis that this is a striking feature of the publishing activities discussed. For instance, one can ask: in a country where it is commonly held that radio is the most popular medium,[162] and in a period where the development of the community radio sector offers unprecedented access to different publics,[163] why have independent literary publishing activities, some that seek to engage grassroots communities, placed so much emphasis on the printed text – on the book, magazine or journal? In particular, these are communities that lack the resources to buy books,[164] and often have a high level of illiteracy.

The emphasis on print appears to have a number of strands to it that at least concern the felt historical role of print, and its consecrating power in terms of the literary, as well as, given the historical ownership demographics of the publishing industry and book-buying market, a concern with race, class interests and power. The choice of print, in other words, implies not only a desire to access readers, and to be a part of the mainstream, but a willingness to contest the deeper historical contours and characteristics of the publishing field.

Williams discusses the early link between the use of the word 'literature' and the printed book:

---

[162] Radio has long been considered the primary means of mass media communication in South Africa, reaching more people that TV, print or the Internet. According to one source, there are an estimated 10-million radio sets in the country, with all official languages getting airplay (www.southafrica.info).

[163] There are some 120 community radio station projects in South Africa, with at least 75 on air and broadcasting to all nine provinces and reaching deep rural areas in the country (www.ncrf.org.za) Community radio stations were licensed as part of the post-apartheid government's progressive media policy encouraging diversity and pluralism in the broadcast sector, and community access to media. According to the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), which quotes the South African Advertising Research Foundation, in 2004 community radio stations collectively were considered the third largest broadcaster in South Africa, and attracted nearly five million listeners. (http://www.ncrf.org.za/about-us/history-of-the-ncrf)

[164] As Bila puts it, "the reality is that people in townships and villages don't always buy books." (Bila 2006. Int.)

> [In the 18th Century] *literature* was primarily a generalized social concept, expressing a certain (minority) level of educational achievement. This carried with it a potential and eventually realized alternative definition of *literature* as 'printed books': the objects in and through which this achievement was demonstrated. (Williams 1977, p47)

According to Williams, the term then lost its "earliest sense of reading ability and reading experience" and became an "apparently objective category of printed works of a certain quality" (ibid. p48). This, in turn, became linked to notions of a literary tradition, and of a national literature; ideas in which the book played a central role.[165] In the most basic sense, the book makes a national literary canon as we know it possible, and, in a number of respects, the book publishing industry serves as gatekeeper to this canon.

While this symbolic power of the book may be challenged to some degree in the digital age, it remains weighty. It gives the book as symbolic object, supported by formal institutions such as universities and the mass media[166] a certain 'consecrating power' or authority in shaping and defining a national literature, and, by extension, a national culture – both of which are, like other ideas of the "New South Africa", in transition during the period discussed.

While the independent literary publishers attempt to wrestle this consecrating power away from the mainstream, and assert the authority of literary merit elsewhere, it is not merely at the level of the literary that the contestation as print publishers is felt. The authority of the book, or print, in terms of the literary, is linked to a public legitimacy that it historically enjoys generally – in particular regarding its authoritativeness as a legal and formal public instrument of record. Print is, as Habermas suggests, central to our idea of a public sphere and to modernity – and in

[165] For instance, anecdotal evidence suggests that a general distinction (and one that is heavily laden with a symbolic value) is often made between writers who have been published and those who have not – with print publishing being the defining criteria. Literary prizes, for example, sometimes delimit a published text to include only print publishing, and not electronic publishing (the Internet or even broadcast).

[166] For instance, who do not generally review websites or .pdf publications.

South Africa a public sphere that exhibits a particular kind of political economy, drawn along race and economic lines. Indeed, one needs to consider the impetus towards print from a number of perspectives simultaneously, including the struggle for resources and access to technologies in terms of the historically disenfranchised already mentioned; this coupled with socio-economic challenges such as illiteracy.

Finally, the materiality of the book also appears important to a number of the publishers because it can be easily archived. The transformation of the public archives into able instruments of the democractic project that adequately serve the country's multiple histories is a key concern in the post-apartheid period – and in terms of the preservation of a national literature should be no different. The fact that copies of a publication are circulated to libraries and institutions like NELM is important. The archives offer a different kind of cultural battleground for the publishers, one that is historical and which they implicitly engage. As Verne Harris puts it in his book *Archives and Justice* (2007), "[t]he harsh reality is that the shape (and the shaping) of recordmaking is determined by relations of power" (Harris 2007, p5). That print publishing is seen to be vital to this engagement is evidenced in an anxiety around the possibilities of archiving electronic publications: "You get published online, and then it goes offline: now it is gone." (Cummiskey 2006. Int.)

This view of the archive is mirrored by Oliphant, who draws our attention to the ideological underpinning of literary publishing in South Africa, neatly and succinctly linking a number of the issues discussed here: "Writing about the publishing industry from a literary point of view…calls for a perspective which links literature to economic, political, institutional and technological factors involved in publication. All South African literatures have been directly shaped by all these factors." (Oliphant 2000, pp107-108)

Edjabe is explicit that the choice of print for *Chimurenga* is a deliberate act of engagement and contestation with the "politics of it all". For him, print is a "dirty space":

> The Internet is great and I love the space and I love the mobility and all that, but the print space is so fucking fucked up… You get

> to think about the project, about issues, like the space you've entered and how you can enter it. It becomes a social project inevitably; it seizes to be an artistic intervention at some point. Particularly in this country, you can't ignore the environment. The publishing environment is a mess…Too many bad things have been in print. One needs to engage with that shit. I want to engage with what the page can contend and how these things can be presented…the politics of it all. (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

Cummiskey's off-hand "I've just done what everyone else has done for centuries [i.e. publishing in print]" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.) belies the very real struggles and tensions his publishing activities show in engaging his gatekeepers, and his struggle and desire to be recognized as a publisher:

> There is a definite tendency to try marginalize you, not only from the commercial publishers, but also from the more established writers. [It's as if they're saying:] 'It's not really publishing, so it really doesn't have to be taken seriously.' (ibid.)

and

> When you bring a pamphlet to a bookshop that's just been copied at home, stapled down the side or whatever, you're trying to get space in the bookshop. They're going to say: 'This isn't real, this is garbage', because they've got this idea in their mind that they are selling *books* [my italics]…And they'd don't see an opening for this kitchen table publishing or garage literature that's fermenting all around them. (Cummiskey & Salafranca 2003, p82)

Timbila's cry of "one poet, one book", shows that print, or 'The Book' has an important place in its imagined Republic. That it is deliberately reminiscent of anti-

apartheid freedom slogans is suggestive,[167] particularly given statistics such as the ratio of white authors to black authors published in the country.

For Bila, books are sacrosanct: they have the ability to validate a writer with a feeling of self-worth, and, it is implied, mean a text can be archived ("protected"), lending a more general sense of cultural validation:

> There's something sacred about books, even in this age of high technology and Internet. There's something special about *your* book. Books are a treasure: if you have your house you have a bookshelf, and you can always go back to it and pull a book there and say, 'look, this is what I have done.' [Books] help to protect the work beyond. (Bila 2006. Int.)

Similarly, Nyezwa shows a near uncritical affinity for books over other media: "I just love books. I would hate to be linked with anything else, especially the popular media like TVs and radios." (Nyezwa 2006. Int.)

But for Bila this sort of appreciation is not necessarily shared by broader society, suggesting that his publishing activities begin with a sense of dislocation. That is, they enact a struggle to attain an ideal that is not shared by the immediate community in which he finds himself – even the communities which his publishing initiatives by proxy give voice to:

> Society is supposed to value books, but I don't think that kind of appreciation for literature is sufficient in this country. Specifically because the level of illiteracy is just going up; very few people can read and write… (Bila 2006. Int.)

The link here between literacy more generally and Timbila as a publishing activity foregrounds the social activism inherent in the project. In the end Timbila – with its writing and publishing workshops, its advocating for writers' rights, and poetry

[167] That is, the number of white authors published compared to black authors published, as well as the primary languages of publication being English and Afrikaans, as opposed to indigenous languages.

readings late into the night – is as much about political and social empowerment as about a concern for local literature. It is a social advocacy in which print, and the poem, play a central and symbolic role.

7.2.1.2. Internet

Only some of the first attempts at online publishing tried to work with the new possibilities afforded by the medium, such as building online communities. Notable projects were the University of Cape Town's Poetry Web, which included a mailing list allowing poets to interact and critique each others' writing, and, later, *Litnet.co.za*. The publishers discussed here were relatively later-comers to the web. While Chimurenga has had a website for some time (www.chimurenga.co.za), Dye Hard Press launched its newsletter only in 2004, followed later by a publisher's blog. Similary, others, such as Timbila and Botsotso, have launched websites and started publishing blogs relatively recently.[168]

For Edjabe, to engage the possibilities of online publishing properly entailed a whole new publishing approach, which Chimurenga was not ready to take:[169]

> The Internet is a whole other creative space, and we have yet to explore aesthetically what one can do…The entire creative world of publishing is still focused around print. The Internet is still such a new space… (ibid.)

He says it is not a question of print being better than the Internet as a publishing medium, but that the issues he wishes to contest as a publisher reside in the field of print publishing:

[168] All of the publishers, including Nyezwa, have been using e-mail as a practical communications tool more or less since it became easily accessible.

[169] Since conducting this interview, Chimurenga has taken a number of bold steps regarding online publishing, including the Chimurenga Library (2008), "an online archiving project that profiles independent pan African paper periodicals from around the world" (www.chimurengalibrary.co.za) and the Pan African Space Station (www.panafricanspacestation.org.za/) an experiment in cross-media podcasting billed as "a 30-day music intervention from September 12 - October 12, on radio and the Internet, as well as venues across greater Cape Town."

> My interest is political. My choice to use that [print] as a medium is not necessarily related to it being the best. It's more about what I wish to achieve, what I wish to contest. It's more that than saying it's a better space than the Internet. (ibid.)

Other publishers show a deeper anxiety about online publishing, some of which appears to relate to a lack of exposure to the medium and its potential. For instance, there is Bila's belief that "the process of making a book is not as easy as other imagined processes; things like creating stuff on the Internet" (Bila 2006. Int.), and the kind of technophobia that is linked to a moral positioning expressed by Nyezwa when he refers to TV and radio as "vehicle[s] of the highest mischief" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.).

While *most* people were ignorant of online publishing in the mid-90s, it is also true that it has been and remains mostly the economically advantaged that have had access to the Internet, making it a poor publishing medium to reach readers in different economic strata.[170] As a result, it has been historically inaccessible to many of the publishers, as well as their writer constituencies. This, together with the skills gap (e.g. the ability to code in HTML, and upload pages to a website) has made it a generally impractical medium to publish in until recently.[171]

At the same time, Edjabe's contention that "[t]he entire creative world of publishing is still focused around print", despite the massive marketing budgets global technology corporations like Nokia, Microsoft and Google, and the indefatigable evangelizing of technology by the mass media that feeds off these budgets, is precisely the point. Websites are generally not reviewed by books page editors, and, when it comes to literary publishing, electronic publications (such as .pdf or e-mail)

[170] According to the International Telecommunication Union, 3.1-million South Africans had access to the Internet at the end of 2002. Most of these would be from the upper income brackets, accessing the Internet either at work or at home. (http://www.Internetworldstats.com/af/za.htm) Many of the public access initiatives, such as telecentres, launched in the mid-1990s have failed to reach their objectives of providing Internet access to disadvantaged communities. See *Acacia* (http://www.acacia.org.za/), amongst numerous other sources for a perspective on this failure.

[171] A proliferation of online cultural sites now exist in South Africa. Besides the publishers own online efforts, there are blogs such as Mashego's *kasiekulture!* (http://kasiekulture.blogspot.com/)

are mostly not considered 'legitimate' ways of publishing, even if the texts do actively enter into cultural debates and discourses. In this regard, Cummiskey's gatekeepers are geared towards print, and it is here where cultural authority remains vested – even if increasingly tentatively.[172] This much is implied by Cummiskey's anxiety over the archive.

Cummiskey is not alone in this anxiety, and while institutions such as the NELM do print out and archive some online material,[173] the ambivalence around the exact level of cultural credence to afford online publishing remains.[174]

7.2.1.3. Performance

Despite the publishers taking print as their primary medium for mass circulation – and despite there being strong suggestions of historical determinism for this – it remains important to emphasize that the publishers are engaged in publishing *activities.* When one considers the plethora and different kinds of literary publishing activities in the immediate post-apartheid period, including pamphlets, webzines, books, journals, magazines, CDs, readings and performances, and even printing poetry on tablecloths, the period shows a striking level of exploration across various media in ways of circulating new writing.

A number of the publishers – such as Botsotso, Timbila and Chimurenga – convened performance events at schools, universities, libraries, community centres, galleries and and cafés in cultural precincts, such as Newtown. The nature of these events varied from rudimentary 'open mic' sessions at bars, where poets put their name on a list for reading, to school performances by the Jesters, complete with Botsotso banners for backdrops, to marketed performances of billed poets on university

[172] The gradual migration of legal texts to electronic form, and the ability to transact legally electronically is shifting the epicenter of the public sphere to electronic rather than printed texts, or, at the very least, to a space where the two are co-located.
[173] For example, some issues of *donga* were archived in this way.
[174] For example, recently (December 2008), a call for contributions to a publication tentatively titled 'The Best African Poetry 2009' (based on *The Best American Poetry Series*) stipulated that "[n]ominated works must have (originally) appeared in print … as part of a chapbook, single author book, edited collection, newspaper, magazine, or journal," adding "[p]lease do not submit poetry that has only been published online." (http://african-poetry.blogspot.com/)

campuses, to events like the so-called Chimurenga Sessions, which were considered "live" (Edjabe 2006. Int.) versions of the magazine.

Performance poetry, in its rawest form as poetry performed on the streets (e.g. hip-hop), has the ability to by-pass institutionalized cultural gatekeeping practices. It offers a level of direct access to a public, and, like the Internet, a sense of immediate 'publication' that is only inhibited by the editorial control of the conveners of an event, or, as in rap, the stylized rituals of practice. Compared to print publishing, it costs little and few resources are needed; therefore the barriers to entry are low.

Berold puts it this way in his introduction to *it all begins* (2002):

> Poetry is the most low-tech of arts. It doesn't need funding or technology, it hardly even needs pen and paper. It just needs the writer, to put an ear to the poem. Poetry is the resilient human voice, the mind flying, the body speaking. As Lesego Rampolokeng put it, it is democracy beyond the statute book.[175] (Berold 2002. Editor's Note).

However, there is a curious sense in which performance poetry often retains an orientation towards the printed page, even while it tries to subvert print's cultural authority – a sense similar, perhaps, to that felt in online publishing.[176] In the modern, urban setting that is the setting of publics, the identity of performance poetry is at least partly dependent on not being 'poetry on the page' (i.e. it is defined as '*performance* poetry' or '*spoken* word', and is not, in the end, simply called poetry).

In this regard, the medium of performance in itself can be seen as protest on several interrelated levels simultaneously: it implicitly links to the spirit of resistance in oral protest poetry performed at anti-apartheid rallies, student and cultural gatherings, and

[175] From Rampolokeng's poem *for the oral*: "It is DEMOCRACY beyond the statue book/…it is simply/poetry" (Berold ed. 2002, p132)
[176] The website *donga*, for instance, published issues as opposed to constantly updating the site, in a deliberate conversation with print, and to disrupt the expectations of the online medium.

union meetings,[177] amongst them (even while the contemporary idiom may not be political);[178] it consciously links to the pre-colonial praise poetry of indigenous cultures as an act of cultural reclamation and reinvigoration in the contemporary context (in some instances also an act of resistance to the cultural hegemony of the global market); and in the contemporary context it is an act of protest that is self-definitional in relation to print, a protest which has its roots in colonisation (as shown below).

These issues are allied, in many ways, with the publisher's concerns with the fate of indigenous languages and their absence in literary publishing in the country, and to social challenges such as illiteracy, to which Timbila's social activism and developmental paradigm is a response. As Olson and Torrance, in *The Making of Literature Societies* (2001), suggest, the politicization of 'the page', and hence the tension that is developed with (indigenous) orality, is felt in the process of colonization:

> In some cases, such as the Philippines, Africa, and Central America, existing indigenous scripts were summarily replaced by Roman scripts, rendering significant parts of the population illiterate in the new script. At the same time the imposed scripts brought with them bureaucratic structures including organization of knowledge, economy, and law which, while instrumental to nation building, were often detrimental to indigenous culture. (Olson & Torrance 2001, p6)

This can be elaborated into what might be felt as a contemporary tension that exists given that historically determined socio-economic conditions restrict access to

[177] Cronin (1988) captures the spirit of these performances colourfully in his essay '*Even under the Rine of Terror': Insurgent South African Poetry*. Mzwakhe Mbuli is perhaps the most celebrated resistance poet of the time, while other voices from the period include the 'worker poetry' of Alfred Qabula.

[178] Indeed, this apoliticization of much contemporary performance poetry from the so-called 'Nike generation' is a concern for some, as is the too-easy appropriation of American styles (and even accents) such as hip-hop, as Bila states bluntly (and angrily): "[I]f an emergency is not declared against this instant American hip-hop crap that passes as poetry on stage, critical South African poets will forever be overlooked by junkies that have assumed positions of power in the spoken word scene. (Bila 2005, p8)

publishing skills and resources, as well as institutions like the archive, and which Timbila, with its multiple concerns, captures so readily.

Olson and Torrance also make the interesting point, by implication, that poetry begins in the oral in a fundamental way:

> [C]lassical studies of the relation between literacy and orality…and developmental studies of the relation between oral and written language have found that rather than these being categorically different modes, there is a close interaction between the two…[L]iteracy is built upon a strong oral tradition…and thrives only if a living oral culture sustains it. (ibid.)

Edjabe is aware of the potential "predicament of the print project" (Edjabe 2006. Int.) that could be an "elitist thing" (ibid.), and feels the need to "transfer the spirit and approach and content [of *Chimurenga*] to other platforms" (ibid.). For Edjabe, the Chimurenga Sessions "liberate [the magazine] from between the covers and the domain of the literati" (ibid.). In the Sessions, the potentially polarizing effect of the print space is collapsed:

> I mean through music, through performance, you can engage and you can communicate…the same content, but without the barrier; without the thing that says, 'I can't read this'. (ibid.)

The editorial 'mix' of the live event, however, is experienced differently, and the face-to-face encounter of the audience allows them to actively 'write into the space'. They become, effectively, live contributors that shape the public event:

> There is space for them [the audience] to take the stage and become part of the event. It's not just saying, 'Oh that's good, that's bad'. The space has been structured to have open-word platforms. There is space in these events for a DJ to come for a five-minute set, for musicians to join in, for poets to intervene and become part of the whole performance; and these are not people

> we have invited to do this, they are not on our list, they come from the crowd, they say: 'Oh, bye the way.' (ibid.)

Edjabe gives Chimurenga's tribute to Nigerian musician and activist Fela Kuti held in Newtown in Johannesburg[179] as an example of this kind of encounter:

> When we were doing the Fela Kuti thing in Jo'burg, a group of four to five guys approached the MC and explained to him: "Listen we are Nigerians and we have played with Fela Kuti, and we want to actually show you guys how his music should be performed. Because here you're giving your interpretation of Fela Kuti and we want to show what the real thing is." So they get up and take the stage and take the instruments and jam and everybody responds and everyone is now watching them and saying, "Oh my god, now this is the real shit." So, there's that element in those events. (ibid.)

In this way there is a co-creation of the cultural space – a literal *inhabitation* of the stage by outside voices.

That the various cultural, historical and political contestations between orality and the printed page already elucidated are evoked in contemporary performance poetry sessions was evident at a Jozi Spoken Word festival that took place at the Wits Ampitheatre in March 2007. It was organised by Botsotso, Sounds of Edutainment,[180] and the Wits Writing Centre and consisted of daily workshops in the afternoon on topics such as review writing, fiction, teaching literature and poetry, a daily symposium, and then performances and readings late into the night.

The event was well attended, with evening performances and readings taking place in front of packed houses, making for a sometimes raucous and mostly enthusiastic and appreciative audience. There were over 40 performances over the four nights.

[179] At the Shivava Café in December 2005.
[180] A grouping of cultural activists with a social conscience. Amongst other things, they organize cultural events that include poetry readings and music, and have even used art and poetry to tackle social issues such as HIV/AIDS. (see: http://www.aidsconsortium.org.za/affiliatesprofile.htm)

Panelists at the symposia – a number of the them were well-known writers, such as poet laureate Keorapetse Kgositsile, and Dennis Brutus, a poet and public intellectual still active in global social movements[181] – described the challenges faced by the poet in the 1970's and 1980's as a struggle to "find a voice and find a platform". The panelists argued that public gatherings were the most important venues for poets to publish under apartheid. Oral poetry was set in a relationship to political power: poems were not committed to paper, because they could be discovered by the police, reminding one of Mphahlele's description of poetry of the time as a "fugitive means of expression" (Alvarez-Pereyre 1979, p38).

In discussions members of the audience referred to books as a "class thing", with few books "telling our [black, township] stories". As one performer later said: "Where I come from when someone walks past with a newspaper, I know he's going to the toilet."[182] There are "economies of literature" at play, and books are "like an aeroplane to the community".

Kgositsile argued that while "poetry belongs in the community" (Kgositsile 2007), it had been "castrated" (ibid.) from the community. Poets should "go out to the rural areas and listen to the original rappers" (ibid). In contrast to the archiving of the book, as academic Michael Titlestad put it, the "bodies of poets are the archives of history" (Titlestad 2007).

7.2.1.4. Recordings

Producing CD-Roms is a way of anthologizing performance, and also offers new opportunities for creative experimentation with the interface between music (or sound effects) and the text. There is some experimentation with audio recordings over the period, including a website like *donga* publishing MP3 recordings online. While Bila's recordings (see Chapter 6) take a more traditional approach in setting his poetry to music, Botsotso's *Purple Light Mirror in the Mud* CD experiments cleverly with the possibilities of a new medium.

[181] Horn, as well as writers Hugh Lewin, Achmat Dangor and Miriam Tlali also participated.
[182] As I understand it, suggesting that the newspaper would be used as toilet paper.

Radio offers a natural affinity for the broadcast of literature – especially poetry – and DJ's such as YFM's Rudeboy Paul[183] or stations like KayaFM[184] have opened the airwaves to local literature, including allowing listeners to phone in and rap or read poems. However, the independent publishers are confronted with a similar kind of cultural gatekeeping to that found in print publishing when engaging commercial broadcasters.

While *Timbila* has organized the occasional poetry reading on community radio stations,[185] for Edjabe, who has been a DJ on Bush Radio, a community radio in Cape Town, actually owning the means of broadcast, like controlling the means of production in print, is important. Yet the barriers to entry are inevitably higher, making it difficult in the near term for the publishers to engage fruitfully in the medium:

> One of the reasons I joined the project [Pan African Market] is because I wanted a space to start initiatives; a radio project, a publishing project. The first one is this publishing project, along with other projects that I have in mind. [I imagine] a very different radio station; it's going to be a lot more difficult to realize than desktop publishing. That's the relationship with the market. (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

7.2.2. Distribution

There is no set way in which the publishers distribute their publications. Even with a single publisher, distribution patterns may vary from publication to publication, depending on the product (e.g. book or CD or even tablecloth), print run, distribution opportunity, and so on. Print distribution tactics have included striking a deal with a

[183] Rudeboy Paul, described as a "poet, musician, vocalist, emcee, presenter, DJ, actor and editor", created airtime for unrecorded rap artists when working for the Voice of Soweto (a community radio that has now closed down). As a DJ at YFM, he has organised live poetry readings. (http://www.tvsa.co.za/actorprofile.asp?actorid=6512)
[184] See, for instance: *Hisses and whistles* (Open Research 2006).
[185] Radio Bushbuckridge in Mpulmalanga, and Radio Turf campus radio at the University of Limpopo (Bila 2006. Int.)

newspaper to serve as carrier for a publication, as in the case of the early issues of *Botsotso*; selling publications at once-off events, such as a poetry readings, or, more recently, the Cape Town International Book Fair; simply mailing out the latest issue of a journal or magazine to a subscription list; and informal hand-to-hand circulation.

Distribution is proactive, and often opportunistic. It is not unusual for the publishers to carry around a few copies of their latest publication wherever they go, hot off the press, and ready for that chance encounter. Back copies are repeatedly punted until they are 'out of print' – short print runs add to collectability. Contrariwise, an unsold title may be prominently displayed at a poetry reading years after its first publication.

Distribution is local and international. *Chimurenga* distributes in several capitals in Africa, and has secured outlets in Berlin and London. *Timbila* has distributed some of its publications through international book agents like African Books Collective,[186] while copies of its journal were circulated by hand at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2002 and 2003,[187] amongst other global civil society events.

Copies of a publication are often distributed for free, either to writers or on an *ad hoc* basis to those who cannot afford to pay, or to community centres, schools, and university and public libraries.[188] Publications are also typically lodged at the four national libraries,[189] and sometimes at the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown.

Kotaz offers a good example of a local, community-focused distribution strategy for a funded publication:

> *Kotaz* is first given to the writers. We post it and sometimes hand-deliver to local writers and schools all over the Eastern Cape. We

[186] African Books Collective is a non-profit distributor of African publications, based in Oxford. (www.africanbookscollective.com)
[187] Copies are sometimes also put up for sale on Amazon, and distributed to international clients through book dealers like Thorold's.
[188] For instance, *Timbila* is sometimes donated to the University of Limpopo to "encourage their appreciation of South African literature." (Bila 2006. Int.)
[189] According to the National Library of South Africa Act, the National Library of South Africa must "collect and preserve published documents and make them accessible". (www.nlsa.ac.za)

> have a few people, mostly writers, in different areas who are often quite happy to do this. Then *Kotaz* is distributed to subscribers who also include a few community schools. Finally the magazine is distributed freely to non-subscribing schools in the Eastern Cape. (Nyezwa 2007. Int.)

7.2.2.1. Dealing with bookshops

Distribution through book retailers is an important way of distributing print publications for most of the publishers, and these are either approached directly or through an independent distribution agent. However, Cummiskey's concern with "cultural gatekeepers" is located as much in the field of book retail, as in any other. Book retailers – especially chain retailers such as Exclusive Books[190] – can be considered essential sites of circulation for mainstream discourses; and in some instances they have proved difficult for the independent publishers to access.

While the publishers find allies in some booksellers, such as Thorold's[191] in Johannesburg who "buy[s] on faith" (Cummiskey, 2006. Int), others are reluctant to stock their publications:

> I think before you get into publishing you have this naïve view that 'I'm South African and I'm publishing this book and bookshops will support me'. But they're actually won't. You think the smaller bookshops will support you… they're the worst. They only take on sale or return, and then you see they're not displaying them

[190] Exclusive Books (www.exclusivebooks.com) is one of only a few commercial book retail chains in South Africa – another being the much smaller Estoril Books. According to its website, Exclusive Books has 39 stores across the country, located in shopping centres, and even airports. It recently opened a store in Botswana.

[191] "When I send out a forthcoming publication notice, Thorold's immediately says: 'Send eight copies'. They don't even ask how much it is, and haven't see it." (Cummiskey 2006. Int). Clarke's Bookshop is also mentioned by the publishers as being supportive. The publishers' relationship with book retailers – whether or not their publications are willingly stocked in bookshops and, if stocked, prominently displayed – often depends on the attitude of the manager of any particular retail outlet, rather than on whether or not a retailer is a big, commercial chain store such as Exclusive Books, or a small, independent retailer, such as a second-hand book dealer.

> properly, and when you take them back they're dog-eared. (Cummiskey 2006. Int.)

As suggested, Kolski Horwitz attributes this trend to a growing conservatism in South Africa generally (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.), evidenced by a lack of support for a cultural product like *Botsotso*:

> Sales [of Botsotso titles] in the last year or so have been very disappointing. The market *per se* is incredibly small. Exclusives do nothing to assist. Quite the contrary. If you go to Exclusives in Rosebank, their stand for poetry doesn't even have a sign. A new book by Botsotso, you have to pay them to get it onto the new arrivals stand. They will never do it. So we have almost given up on Exclusives. They will have the books there, but we know it will be done in a slipshod way. Bacchus Books [Botsotso's distributing agent] finds in general in the last year or so that journals like *Botsotso*, they're less and less ready to take them. Before they'd take five copies, now they'll take two or three. More and more they want to do it on a sale or return basis. (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.)

Exclusive Books marketing campaigns, such as Homebru,[192] are seen to pay "lip service" (ibid.) to South African literature, rather than offering real support for local publishers:

> [To get into] the Homebru brochure you have to pay for advertorial… And all the books on the display stand are on sale or return. So they are saying: 'We will support local literature on condition it doesn't cost us anything'. (ibid.)

Instead of support, some book sellers have shown an attitude that depreciates local literature – what Cummiskey calls the "colonial mindset" that holds that "'it's local so

[192] Once a year Exclusive Books promotes local publishing through its Homebru campaign, described by the retailer as "a celebration of South African Stories and South African writing" (www.exclusivebooks.com)

it's shit'" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.). It is an attitude that amounts to a cultural cul-de-sac: "The gatekeepers support that view. And they [the book buyers] go on what the gatekeepers say." (ibid.)

At times this sense of things borders on the conspiratorial. Where it exists, the prejudice (which is sometimes felt to extend to a disparaging attitude towards the publishers themselves), is not always stated outright, but is seen to be disguised through various *ad hoc* conditions of trade. While one branch of Exclusives Books insisted that Dye Hard Press open a business bank account before it could pay him,[193] other stated pretexts for being reluctant to stock publications appear pernicious:

> When I was doing Dye Hard Press stapled, the feedback I got was 'they don't sell, they disappear'. They want perfect bound. When you do perfect bound, 'we don't want…'. There's always a problem. There's always a reason why they don't want your book. They're reluctant to stock local productions, especially by small publishers. (ibid.)

Although books shops remain critical for mass circulation, because they offer a way to get books to where "most people will find them" (Bila 2006. Int.), for Cummiskey, book retail chains have become little more than supermarkets selling commodities they care little about:

> The accountants have taken over. I was speaking to [Aryan] Kaganof[194]…who said that bookshops don't sell books, they could be selling underwear or cheese sandwiches; it actually makes no difference. (ibid.)

As suggested (see Chapter 7.2), a similar kind of resistance has been experienced in dealing with commercial radio stations – even amongst those established to support

[193] While this may seem like an ordinary business-like request, one needs to bear in mind the low turnover and sales volumes of some of the publishers, who may only collect a few hundred rand for sales of a publication making a dedicated bank account impractical. One can also feel the publisher's resistance to institutionalisation in not wanting to open a bank account for this purpose.

194 Kaganof, a writer, artists and film-maker, also publishes independently through his label Pine Slopes Press.

local cultural activity – where airplay is constrained by the market, and the impact of global cultural brands inhibits the circulation of "organic" (Kolski Howitz 2006. Int.) cultural production:

> YFM was supposed to be a non-profit radio station, and was started by trade union investment companies… But they just turned it into an American radio station. They pay lip-service to South African music. They claim they sponsored the kwaito[195] revolution. But how far did they take it? What are the other programmes? They have a poetry programme, but it's only for hip-hop. They invited Ike [Muila]. When we brought out the CD, they gave him five minutes. That was it; and they've hardly ever played the CD. (ibid.)

7.2.2.2. Distribution as positioning

Of all the publications under review, *Chimurenga* has had the most visible distribution in commercial outlets. It is often prominently displayed at point of sale at Exclusive Books outlets, and has even been distributed at duty-free bookshops in airports to attract foreign visitors.

The magazine's approach is strategic, and an analogy is drawn with the Internet's ability to reach (and create) niche audiences across the world:

> There's a shop in Berlin, there's a shop in London [where we distribute]; we're working in small pockets across the globe. The consensus almost became that mass distribution is the thing, that you have to do the whole fucking Mr Muscle approach: ship to

[195] Kwaito is the hybrid youth-driven music genre that emerged out of South Africa's townships in the later 1980s and early 1990s. *Wikipedia* offers this useful description: "It is based on house music beats, but typically at a slower tempo and containing melodic and percussive African samples which are looped, deep basslines and often vocals, generally male, shouted or chanted rather than sung or rapped." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwaito). According to Motloi (2007) "kwaito music became a platform for self expression for the black youth…[a] privilege which was previously denied by the apartheid government" (pp5-6).

> India and put Indians on the cover; ship to China and put Chinese on the cover, and so on. But we are almost trying to do [or] express what the Internet brings. We're basically doing for the book what the Internet does. (ibid.)

For Edjabe, a distribution strategy in itself becomes a crucial way of contesting the mainstream, and medium has particular implications for distribution. Distribution is not just about sharing, or 'making available', but about intervention:

> I felt another thing about print is that it would be difficult to create new distribution networks if you didn't have the thing, the physical material, the object. Part of the [*Chimurenga*] project is not only what appears between the covers, but also the publishing approach: How do we intervene in this publishing field? Because [it] needs contestation; it is still incomplete. (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

How this intervention and contestation from the perspective of a distribution strategy is imagined positions the publisher in relation to the mainstream:

> Kenya has [serves] the biggest market community for Khat. [It is] produced in the rural areas of the country and distributed around the world in less than four hours. People come from the field at four or six in the morning. After six or eight hours, by the end of the day, it begins to dry up so it has to be consumed during the same day. But by 10 o'clock in Italy people are chewing Khat that came from Nairobi [that morning]. The distribution system, all of it runs parallel to the official network, the banking system the financial system. None of it enters the official network, because it is an illegal substance. Those things I find very interesting. I think that a lot of what is made, created, invented in the underworld, so to speak, can be imported above the surface for product legitimacy. Like a book, like a film. (ibid.)

Alternative distribution strategies have been attempted by the publishers over the years, in part to relieve the difficulties inherent in approaching mainstream book retailers, but also, as *Chimurenga*'s Khat analogy suggests, as a way of the publishers positioning themselves socially and culturally. Distribution is an opportunity for the publishers to develop collaborative networks alongside the mainstream, to politically align themselves, or to form cultural fronts of like-minded cultural actors. In this way, distribution is linked to the kinds of alternative publics the publishers wish to call into being (or appeal to in the case of already established publics). It is different, it feels, to *contesting* a public space in indifferent mainstream commercial retailers.

An alternative distribution strategy might be as simple as a book launch in a bar, or as elaborate as *Botsotso's* distribution deal with the *New Nation*. For Kolski Horwitz, the *New Nation* was the "ideal medium" (Kolski Horwitz 2007. Int) for distribution. Firstly, it was a vehicle for *mass* distribution[196] – with a circulation of around 70,000 staggering compared to the number of copies typically distributed through bookshops, even by *Chimurenga*'s standards. Then, as one of the progressive alternative weeklies, the newspaper helped reach a potentially sympathetic (but not culturally or politically uncritical) reader, and an untapped pool of urban black writers and would-be writers who could become contributors. It was considered by Kolksi Horwitz a "radical" (ibid.) newspaper, which Botsoto was happy to associate with – an association that was made possible by a "sympathetic editor who was open to the idea [of *Botsotso*]." (ibid.)

In comparison, according to Kolski Horwitz, other newspapers, such as the *Mail & Guardian*, were not prepared to run *Botsotso* as a supplement following the closure of *New Nation* – a position which he finds similar to the cultural gatekeeping of commercial book retailers, and evidence of the growth of a post-apartheid cultural conservatism, closely aligned to class interests and assumptions:

> We then went to the M&G, that was interesting. [They] said, 'No, given the kind of stuff we are publishing, our readership is too sophisticated'. We said: 'Oh, really?' It's like Exclusive Books. I

[196] In 1992, the *New Nation* had a circulation of 70,000. (Berger 2000)

> was very surprised by his attitude. [They weren't] prepared to give it a go at all. (ibid.)

Kolski Horwitz offers an interesting comparative description of two bookshops – Xarra Books in Newtown, Johannesburg (where the interview with the publisher takes place), and Boekehuis in the more affluent suburb of Melville, just over the ridge – regarding a bookshops' ability to serve as a public space that facilitates cultural and (even counter-cultural) activity. Here again, the critique of class interest (linked inevitably in the South African context to race) is evoked:

> Xarra, in terms of the literary scene, is the most exiting thing to happen to Jo'burg in a long time. Every Thursday there is something on here. I used to come almost every week. It's fantastic to see the vitality, and a range of issues. The thing about Boekehuis, is it's a very middle-class, white scene… Here there's an interesting discussion always. The audience is part of it; it's not just about: 'Oh, there is the writer'… This is about people who are interested in books and writing coming together to rap and discuss things. It's a far more open context. Whereas there, the writer presents things, in a more formal, self-conscious way. It's high culture. (Kolski Howitz 2006. Int.)

The identification with Xarra is empathetic: "This is a bold enterprise. Financially they struggle a bit, but it's taking off a bit now. Hopefully they are breaking even." (ibid.).

In my discussion of editorial and publishing practice, I have so far suggested that the publishing activities begin to suggest something more than what can simply be put down to 'editorial taste', or niche-interest publishing. I have shown that they actively contest a felt sense of exclusion from the mainstream of various voices, issues and concerns, and that choice of medium, as well as the act of engaging mainstream sites of circulation, are crucial to the publishing interventions. I have also started to suggest that a degree of self-organisation can be seen in the publishing activities, which begins in things like the formation of an editorial collective for *Botsotso*, but extends

to a more general sense of cultural allies being sought out by the publishers. In the case of Xarra just described, Kolski Horwitz refers to a “far more open context” which is about “people who are interested in books and writing coming together to rap and discuss things”. I will now argue that public sphere theory offers a useful theoretical framework to capture and explore this sense of collective or group activity centered around issues of mutual interest and concern.

7.3. The publishing activities as counterpublics

Public sphere theory offers us a useful way of capturing a phenomenon of what we might begin to call self-organising counterpublics. Fraser notes that:

> [M]embers of subordinated social groups – women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics…[which are] parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinate social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interest, and needs. (Fraser 1992, p123)

Readings, performances, or 'sessions' convened by the publishers, besides serving as an opportunity for book and CD sales, can be thought of as concrete manifestations of these "parallel discursive arenas", realized in space and time, that elsewhere are called into being by the publishers through the circulation of texts.

This section explores what we might call the group nature of the publishing activities more carefully, variously described as collectives, collaborations, networks and even "tribe[s]" (Edjabe 2006. Int.).

7.3.1. Groups, tribes, allies and collaborators…

For Bila, there is a strong sense of *building* an appreciative audience or readership that might not already exist – to, as Fraser puts it, "constitute" an alternative public – a process which has ethical implications, and entails far more than simply creating a market for a product. As this thesis has already suggested, part of this means, at the very least, building a literary (and, I suggest, even literate) community by getting local poetry onto school and university syllabi, holding poetry readings, forming reading clubs, campaigning for government and institutional support for local poetry, and embarking on ambitious projects such as the Republic of Poetry (Bila, 2006. Int.):

> The audience I would like to build is an audience that loves South Africa, that is critical of the rot in society, that is able to promote literature and celebrate new South African poetry; an audience that will not just prostitute itself for material gain, an audience that will not just allow themselves to be corporate imagists, but an audience that will remain human and celebrate poetry for what it is. (Bila 2006. Int.)

Moreover, a strong identification with the Timbila Poetry Project by young, black (largely unpublished) poets called Timbila Poets is evident, some of whom congregate at the project's offices in Polokwane, or spontaneously suggest and implement project ideas[197] and organize readings in centres outside of the province (e.g. in Johannesburg). Like Xarra, the Timbila office serves as a site where people with similar "identities, interest and needs" (in Fraser's terms) "[come] together, to rap, discuss things" (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.):

> Even at our small office, writers come in – you know, we have a small collection of books – they come and read those books. The office is a space of discussion. People debate, they appreciate poetry, have coffee. If we had more computers, people would even write their own poetry in the office; not only poetry – maybe a poet is looking for a job. We used to do that in the past, we allowed people to use our computers. So it becomes a support institution. (ibid.)

It is as if the Timbila Poets seek a sense of belonging as poets, and easier access to a public platform where their concerns – and their poems – can be aired, and their needs as writers met (including finding employment). That Timbila is a black-run project is also important, as is a resistance to what Bila calls the "strict literary standards" (Bila 2006. Int.) of mainstream publishing, whose accumulated rejection slips could effectively negate their sense of being poets. Through publishing, the poetry project allows the poets to claim (and exclaim) their identities as poets publicly:

[197] Such as book projects.

> I think it [the reasons for the sense of belonging] is quite multi-dimensional. One might be that we are opposed to these strict literary standards that may be propagated by some publishers. At another level, they could be saying, 'Look, I have found myself a voice through *Timbila*, so I have to support this kind of movement'. The other could be saying, 'Timbila's home, and it's black-led, so it's fine, it's relevant', and so on. There could be lots of other reasons. (ibid.)

The poets have constituted the project in many senses, which has gone as far as to print Timbila t-shirts:

> If you publish more than fifty poets in a journal, the spin-offs are huge. Especially where the writers come from, then people hold onto the publication and say, 'I am a Timbila Poet'. There are people who say that openly. (Bila 2006. Int.)

Chimurenga is an initiative that exists in multiple folds of collaborations and associations, meta-texts that shift and define it differently, all contributing to what we might consider the post-modernist counterpublic of the project. Its "Afrocosmopolitany" (Edjabe 2006. Int.) is less defined and clear cut than Timbila's Africanism. For this researcher, this makes it challenging to locate the project either in terms of the South African mainstream – or even as having a primary concern with *black* inter-textuality and intellectualism.

The publisher's concern with the African diaspora also suggests that it could more readily be located in a global public sphere (or transnational public sphere), than at the local level. Moreover, there is a sense in which the project emerges as it is felt, on a "gut level" (Edjabe 2006. Int.) and as an "art project" (ibid.) – as all the publishing initiatives discussed here to a greater or lesser extent do.[198] This, at times, leaves the exact linkages that the Chimurenaga project wants to make unclear; or at the very

[198] For instance, for Kolski Horwitz, no two issues of *Botsotso* are the same. (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.)

least, the associations multiple.

Yet Chimurenga insists on being located locally, both because it is an integral part of the Pan African Market in Cape Town, and because of its prominent distribution throughout the country.

In this context, then, it speaks most readily of polymorphic cultural spaces in this country (legal and illegal; hidden and recognized) that are the result of the migration to South Africa of people from across Africa: countries such as Nigeria, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique (Edjabe himself grew up in Cameroon). As a recent newspaper article put it: "On upper Long Street [the Pan African Market is situated in Long Street], speaking Xhosa isn't going to get you as far as a command of French." (Meersman, 2008. p11) Chimurenga, founded in 2002, is very much a product of this cultural infusion felt most prominently in the second half of the decade under discussion.

Something of the multiplicity of the project's reference points is also captured by its co-location with other initiatives[199] in the Pan African Market as part of the Kalakuta Republik (see Chapter 6), the motivating idea at the heart of the market. While the name of the Republik pays homage to Kuti, capturing the socio-political temperament of the market's culture, the Pan African Market itself, as a site for African traders in curios, jewellery, sculptures, instruments, artwork, masks and other artifacts from the continent, is symbolically suggestive of the global trade of pan African identities and cultures; a world-wide flow of commodities that is metonymically suggestive of the African diaspora itself. It is an exchange in which *Chimurenga* participates, post-modern style, at the level of text.

Within this context, audiences at Chimurenga Sessions, sometimes held on a balcony overlooking the busy Long Street in Cape Town in a very public display of the project's multiple significations, are described by Edjabe as a "tribe that comes out of the woodwork" (Edjabe 2006. Int.). Like the Timbila Poets, their identification with

[199] Such as the Pan African book and video café, which, according to the market's website, specializes in the "literary and film and video cultures in contemporary Africa" (www.panafrican.co.za). As already suggested, as a tenant, Chimurenga participates in administrative or organizational meetings at the market.

the publishing initiative can be powerful and even unexpected, lending the project a strong sense of a counterpublic:

> When people come and say, '*Chimurenga* saved my life', you have to check yourself so that you don't take that too seriously. People will make of it what it means to them, or what they wish to see, so this partly makes our public quite broad and wide, because there's a void [in the mainstream]… (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

While the Chimurenga Sessions serve as an opportunity for 'live' co-habitation and co-creation of a public cultural space, the magazine itself serves as an opportunity for cultural collaboration. Unlike *Botsotso*, which is the product of an editorial collective, Edjabe is the sole editor of *Chimurenga*, and makes the final content decisions – a role he insists on.[200] However, the issues are collaboratively conceptualized:

> There are quite a few collaborators that I engage with intellectually, or otherwise around the theme of the issues; and quite frankly, these are the people I respect and I have a lot of admiration for. That is why we are in conversation. (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

The Chimurenga website (www.chimurenga.co.za) offers an "incomplete roll call [sic]" of collaborators in this "conversation",[201] as well as other cultural influences. It is worth quoting in full: it demonstrates that the magazine is understood as being the product of a much wider kind of inter-textuality – other than the 'mix' evoked in its pages – and is a stream of consciousness array of radical and dissident writers and artists, counter-cultural icons, activists and heroes, political philosophers and

[200] "I try to make it clear that I want to take responsibility for what ultimately is printed between the covers. [The editorial decisions are not] [d]emocratic no, I don't have those pretensions. Not that I don't have the spirit, but just the way the magazine started, the place it moved from, the process of realizing and making it happen and moving, and so on, I haven't found the structural space to say, 'Yeah, it's democratic'. That would just be politically correctness." (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

[201] The project later refers to these as "Chimurenga people" in what starts to feel like an overly self-conscious nod in the direction of collaboration. See: http://www.chimurengalibrary.co.za/chimurenga_people.php, where the roll-call is graphically elaborated on in a visual web of associations that collapses into meaninglessness. There is a sense that post-2004, the project unintentionally begins to parody itself.

resistance rhetorics, as well as acquaintances and friends, amongst them. Independent literary publications, such as the Kenyan journal *Kwani?*, *Staffrider* and the website *donga* are also part of this conversation, as are the Botsotso Jesters. The roll-call, in the end, contributes to a strong sense of cultural positioning in counterpoint to the mainstream:

> An incomplete roll call: Ramps, Scratch, Fransch, Frantz, Zimology, Wright, Roy, Tosh, Roach, Shahrzad, Armah, Nortje, Meshell, Lee, Ali, Hani, Busi, Buchi, Kippie, (the cry of) Winnie, Mongezi ("You ain't gonna know me"), (King) Tubby, (Ken) Bugul, BigYouth, Badu-ism, Baldwin, Bili, Brathwaite, (Bra) Willie, (Bra) Wally, Kwani?, Kwaninis, Nina, Kalonji, Dyani, D-Money, Jimi, Djibril, Nkoli, LKJ, PBS, BNB (vol1), BOP, POC, TP OK Jazz, PE, Miles (sometimes), MAW, Matthews, Mazrui, Matigari, Metronome, Mapfumo, Mwalimu, Mongo, Zao, Shado, Ukooflani Maumau, Seithlamo, Chico, Ko-Shun, Okot p', Gil-Scott, Ra, Akomfrah's BAFC, Galeano, (General's) Politburo, (Real) Rozano, Yambo, Yes & No, Neo, Dumile, Dudu, Douleur, Zeke, Zoe, Achille, Mashile, Micere, Okigbo, Biko, Betty D, Bessie H, Bessie S, Olu, Anikulapo, Sobukwe, The Leninist Czar, Wole, Were-Were, Desiree, Sangare, Ray, Lorde, Letta, Vera, Wenge Musica (4x4 bcbg), Mingus, Mos, Fani-Kayode, Onsulade, Seun, Sandile, Neg'Marrons, G-Force Reagon, Tuff Gong, Banton, Kiemute, Liyenkula, Kouakou, Fong Kong Bantu Soundsystem, Skeem, Labou-Tansi, Zackie, Tsitsi, Pakhati and the other 50, The other Dumisane - "If am the other who are you?", (The) Artist, Tate, Taban, Govan, Ousmane, Tabane, (Neogy's) Transition-ers, (Botsotso) Jesters, Staffriders, Glendora, Walker, (the other) Trevor, Themba at the House of Truth, Brenda, Bonga, Donga, Amandla, Almicar, Sedar, Spivak, Lady Saw, Samora, Tchicaya, Fodeba, Makeba, Marechera, Malangatana, Binyavanga, Chimamanda, (the hand of) Maradona, Sankara, Rakim, Rose, Manfila, Nah-ee-lah, Mafika, Fiel dos Santos, Marcos, hooks, Abdullah (no, Dollar), Mboya, Chinua, Gza, Tuma, Lumumba's

> speech, La Guma, Tutuola, Midnight Children, Midnight Marauders, Said, Taiwa, Thandiswa, Appiah, Basquiat, Boukaka, A luta, Kalakuta, Union & Lutte, Ujamaa, Amandla (redux), Intifada, Chimurenga...in no particular order...
>
> (www.chimurenga.co.za/page-1.html)

Most of the publishers show an awareness that they are participating in this sort of creation of an "alternative public", or "parallel discursive [arena]" (Fraser 1992, p123)). In the case of Botsotso, this is already suggested in the formation of an editorial collective, while the sense of the cultural restriction of the mainstream precipitates the need for cultural regrouping with progressive projects and institutions such as Khanya College and the Workers Library,[202] including plans to set up office in a communal space in Johannesburg.

For *Kotaz,* a focus on the development of local literature is what binds the purpose of many of the publishers, which Nyezwa refers to as a "network" (Nyezwa 2006. Int.). While the publishing activities seek to challenge the mainstream cultural constraints imposed on the literary, for some, building a bridge between unpublished writers and a broader public is a key concern:

> Our main focus as small magazines I think is to bring stability to literature development in South Africa. Very little is currently being done formally to enhance the appreciation of local writing publicly and in our schools… Through various publishing attempts small publishers seek to bring into full focus the ability of our writers to tell and to write their stories. (ibid.)

As *Chimurenga's* roll-call also suggests, most of the publishers under discussion, in one way or another, also consider themselves part of a broader grouping of independent literary publishing activities, who share concerns and challenges as small

[202] Khanya College is an NGO formed in 1986.

publishers – and here their activities can also begin to feel from time to time counterpublic in Fraser's strong sense.

It is a publishing culture that is imagined differently by the publishers. And as Botsotso's post-apartheid progressive alignment of organisations,[203] as well as *Chimurnenga*'s roll-call suggest, they sometimes also identify with other publishers selectively.[204] Moreover, while the Dye Hard Press newsletter is a practical sign of the shared conditions of many in the group as *publishers*, the relationship can be competitive, as the publishers compete for recognition and resources.[205]

However, the 'counterpublic*ness*' of the publishers was clearly demonstrated at the first Cape Town International Book Fair in 2006, where they shared an exhibition stand as a group of independent literary publishers.[206] In particular, for Cummiskey, the inaugural book fair created a "sense of togetherness" (ibid.), with the publishers "standing apart [from other publishers]" (ibid.). This lent an air of vivid public contestation to the event:

> On the one hand there was this togetherness, of saying, 'Fuck hey, look at South African publishing; look at how vast it is. See what is happening in South Africa', but at the same time a feeling of being apart. We were a lot less lavish than, say, Heinemann or Exclusive Books. We weren't able to give books away, which Heinemann did. But a sense of togetherness, very much. It took on a very enthusiastic guerilla-political-revolutionary feel. There was almost a feeling of war. (Cummiskey 2006. Int.)

7.3.2. The world making of the publishing activities

I have loosely used the term 'mainstream' in this thesis as a way to refer to the idea of

[203] Timbila is singled out as the publisher that is likely to be a natural 'fit' in this community (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.)
[204] Edjabe also did not feel that it had concerns allied to Kotaz's or even Timbila's.
[205] For Cummiskey, there is "a lot of underlying competitiveness which is not being shown on the surface. I don't think it's a network. It's definitely a culture." (Cummiskey 2006. Int.).
[206] Largely the initiative of the Centre for the Book, who also published a small publishers catalogue in 2006. Some of the publishers also took part in subsequent fairs.

what the publishers might be publishing against. Yet to leave it unexplored is inadequate – and does not properly account for the contexts in which the publishing activities occur. What can be said about the nature of the post-apartheid mainstream?

In his essay on alternative publishing in South Africa, Cloete continues:

> [Alternative publishing] depends on the belief that the market cannot be allowed to determine what is communicated. Where it exists, it is evidence of the energy to explore beyond the views held by the middle class 'centre of gravity' of society [quoting Karen Press, 1999]. (Cloete 2000, pp43-44)

Despite the different class and cultural backgrounds of the publishers, as well as their different political orientations and 'takes' on literature, it is interesting to note that there are distinct similarities between what they consider the mainstream. Stated generally, in the engine room of the mainstream are the profit-driven mass media and publishing institutions that produce what Edjabe calls a "discuss of the market" (Edjabe 2006. Int.). This discuss, it is implied, is generally concerned with the superficial, rather than the intellectual (or 'simplifications' rather than 'complexity'). It also censures the "angry" (Bila 2006. Int.) voices of the poor, and in this regard there is a concern with political economy. Moreover, it inhibits "organic" (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.) cultural activity, as can be seen in the reluctance of bookshops to actively support some of the publishers, or in YFM preferring "this instant American hip-hop crap" (Bila 2005, p8), as Bila puts it, over local poetry.

At times the mainstream begins to look decidedly like the bourgeois, with its historically determined demographics of race in South Africa,[207] and whose "centre of gravity", through the economic, has the power to include, exclude, corroborate, or push aside. The gatekeepers delimit and marshal this centre of gravity: the books editors, publishers, academics, archivists, and writers. Here there is a concern with

[207] Albeit that this starts to shift over the period discussed.

institutional authority more generally, including the media and publishing institutions, but also the activities of other institutions, such as universities and archives, in which the culturally and politically conservative ideology of the middle class is seen to exert historical power and influence.

Linked to this is the emergence of a consumerist culture, particularly in the latter part of the post-apartheid decade – one that accompanies the rise of a materialistic black middle class, and an ultra-rich black 'super class'. This is neatly captured by Christian Ernsten (2005) in his article *Consumerism and South Africa's rainbow unity*, when he argues

> Next to white shopping hedonism, the rapid rise of a black middle class meant an even stronger emphasis on material consumption. And because of that, historian Albert Grundlingh observes, politics and the past have come to matter less. The children of the new black middleclass [sic] have joined the global 'Nike generation' and, as such, share in the same obsession with fashion and popular culture as white teenagers. (Ernsten 2005)

It is also a mainstream that is shaped by the post-apartheid democratic project – that is, where the political is highly visible. This includes state institutional transformation, the development of democratic instruments, policies and laws (including the Constitution), and the symbolic reconstruction of the country, through, for instance, developing Freedom Park and the Constitutional Court as public monuments, or in the story- and truth-telling of the TRC. As we have seen, the publishers' concerns can be at variance with what some considered forced (and even actively marketed) images and ideas of reconciliation, such as a "rainbow nation" "alive with possibility"[208] in the "New South Africa". These are treated cynically, particularly when they amount to a neutering of the social consciousness of the citizen.

But it is *also* true to say that a shared notion of what counts as mainstream feels

[208] As the International Marketing Council would have it.

slippery in the period of transition immediately after the first democratic elections. Arguably, part of the post-apartheid cultural excitement in the early to late nineties was due to the fact that Williams's "ruling definition of the social" was in the *process* of being defined – it was, so to speak, still under construction, or reconstruction. This excitement is captured succinctly by Press's description of post-apartheid poetry journals as showing a "sense of liberation… an air of having given themselves permission… [that is] more than reclaiming individual artistic freedom… [and is] part of the process of growing the new cultural energy we've always known must be lying somewhere beneath the layers of our indigenous psychoses and neuroses" (Press 1994, p58).

In the (fragmented) post-apartheid cultural context, the mainstream can be seen as a proliferation of diverse discourses in contestation with each other, in part suggested by the need to market the concept of a "New South Africa" and a "rainbow nation" back to the population; that is, to frame the democratic project as a collective vision that all could buy into.

It feels that this "new cultural energy" Press refers to is important to remember, and that the social shifts, tensions and possibilities that were characteristic of the period can be easily forgotten in 2008 – partly because there is a sense in which they so quickly were shut down as the ruling definition of the social took hold; but also because the possibilities the period held, in retrospect, feel so fragile.

Warner offers a useful way to understand how the publishing projects became responses to divergent senses of the marginalization and omission of a relatively fluid and emerging mainstream. In *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002) he suggests how counterpublics can be *imagined* spaces that are created through the circulation of discourse: they are potential life-worlds, propositional, rather than necessarily real, yet with a sufficient reference to the real. Publics are, for Warner, cases of "poetic world making" (Warner 2002, p114), allowing us to account for the diverse kinds of 'worlds' the publishers propose – something that feels to be more than merely the result of a marketing concept, or editorial taste.

In different ways, through their project ideas, the publishers appear to propose alternative worlds to the dominant (or a particular sense of the dominant, or 'being dominated') – an idea put forward quite clearly in Edjabe's perspective on *Drum's* Sophiatown (where *Drum* "invented the notion of Sophiatown" (Edjabe 2006. Int.)).

World making is found in *Chimurenga's* "Afrocosmopolitan notion" (Edjabe 2006. Int.) – like the Sophiatown of the *Drum* era, "Afrocosmopolitany" is an invented space, a "space that is not there"; in *Botsotso's* enactment of a democratic cultural space through its editorial collective, which tries to realize an idea about culture, the magazine's conscious link with *Staffrider* from the start offering a clear proposition in terms of the literary and the political; or in Timbila's Republic of Poetry.

Nyezwa is clear about the propositional nature of *Kotaz*. *Kotaz* is

> [s]till an idea. It's not an institution or place. It's an idea about culture, also and especially about the new South African writing that is beginning to make its mark. (Nyezwa 2006. Int.)

At times, the world making is clearly stated in editorials; at others it is implied through things like content selection, editorial processes, medium, layout and design,[209] and scenes of circulation. Often the precise boundaries of the world making can be difficult to pin down or to describe accurately, even for the publishers themselves. As suggested, the publishing initiatives are creative acts: Chimurenga is "an art project in a blurred space which I initiated" (Edjabe 2006. Int.).

It is also true to say that the sense of exactly what is being marginalized is felt differently by the publishers, given their different class, social and cultural backgrounds, and is multivalent. The publishers' responses to the emerging mainstream are diverse, and their world making responds to different senses of omission. As a result, their project ideas, with different concerns and political foci,

[209] For instance, this is seen in Kotaz workbook feel to the publications, or what might be called the struggle aesthetics of the early Timbila book designs. As already mentioned, it is also suggested in the layout and design of Chimurenga, which disrupts the linearity of the reading act. For Edjabe, this is a deliberate attempt to make the reading of Chimurenga difficult. (Edjabe 2006. Int.)

can be read as complex remedial responses to the felt exclusions of the emerging mainstream, some of which are shared and some not; or as acts of insurgency with equally divergent causes.

Warner's emphasis on the circulation of discourse is also particularly useful here, and suggests what we might mean by 'the dominant'. For Warner, some discourses are more dominant than others, and readily stand in for a sense of *the* public (or dominant public). Dominant discourse is discourse that "depends on an arbitrary social closure (through language, idiolect, genre, medium, and address)" and "depends on institutionalized forms of power to realize [its] agency." (Warner 2002, p117). It is this very "arbitrary social closure" that the publishing activities resist – an intervention in which the literary is central.

An open-ended register that can be found in the literary is essential to the public expression of the kinds of issues, ideas and concerns being excluded. While attracted to genres that can be said to be marginalized by the mainstream, such as poetry or the short story, the publishers' world making sets out to accommodate a kind of writing that is variously described as 'new', 'organic', or 'experimental', amongst them (even if it falls short of publishing this kind of writing in the final product). This is not confined to a Habermassian rational-critical public discourse – or as Warner describes it, "rational discussion writ large" (Warner 2002, p115), where "the poetic or textual qualities of any utterance are disregarded in favor of sense" (ibid.). Instead the publishers embrace the irrational, the 'dream state', or the "angry" voices of the poor; they emphasize "poetic or textual qualities", to allow, in Fraser's terms, people to "speak in [their] own voice" (Fraser 1992, p126).

In its ideal, the open-ended register of literature can stand counterpoint to the limitations imposed by the mainstream, including the action-orientated language of business, the deliberative discourses found in universities, or the truncated superficialities often found in advertising or the everyday news. The publishing activities, with the literary at their core, can be said to test, contradict, provoke or even undermine the "arbitary social closure" (Warner 2002, p117) of the mainstream on a number of levels at once. As Fraser puts it, in their "response to exclusions",

counterpublics help “expand discursive space” (Fraser 1992, p124).

A useful point is made by Haupt in his discussion of Cape-based hip-hop artists during the same post-apartheid period. Haupt draws on Dick Hebdige’s study of punk subculture, where, Hebdige says, subcultures represent a kind of “blockage in the system of representation” (Haupt 2004, p77). As Haupt puts it in the context of the “critical consciousness” (ibid. p76) of the hip-hop culture he examines, it “rudely interrupts myths of consensus in the operation of the hegemony” (ibid. p88). Most of the publications during this period, by providing a public voice for what I have called ‘social content’, constitute to different extents the ‘blockage in the system of representation’ Hebdige describes. At times this is expressed through satire, as in the social commentaries offered by the Botsotso Jesters, at others through withdrawal and dissent, as in Nyezwa’s editorials. But it is also found in *Chimurenga*’s post-modernist disruption of the reading act, or the read; and at other times quite obviously, as in the use of the word “Azania” instead of South Africa in early editions of *Timbila* (the use of the term in the post-apartheid period was symbolic of an Africanist resistance to the “New South Africa”, and the political compromises that this negotiated settlement entailed).

The world making of the publishers is not world making for the sake of world making. They are illicit goods that, as Edjabe suggests, “can be imported above the surface for product legitimacy” (Edjabe 2006. Int.). As *Botsotso*’s early distribution deal with the *New Nation* also intimates, it is world making that seeks cultural legitimacy in the mainstream.

Distribution is critical in this regard and the struggle to distribute widely, whether through creating alternative ways of distributing, or infiltrating the sites of circulation of dominant discourse (e.g. book retailers, book reviews in the pages of mainstream newspapers, and even literary prizes), is indicative of the extent to which *publicness* is desired by the publishers. As Warner puts it, for texts that convene publics, reaching strangers is their *primary* orientation.

But, however contradictorily, it is also a world making that embraces the possibilities

of its own marginality. Warner notes that a characteristic of a counterpublic is that it has some awareness of its subordinate status. That this is the case is suggested, in part, by the publishers' identification with counter-cultural or 'underground' activity, and what appears to be at times an active positioning on the margins.

Edjabe's example of the distribution of Khat as an effective distribution strategy, for instance, is not just a convenient analogy: it is, arguably, intrinsic to his self-understanding of his publishing activity. Similarly, when Botsotso describes itself as being seen as "[marginalized] lunatics on the side" (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.) it comes across as an exaggeration that does not feel like one simply for effect; what begins to emerge is the active positioning of the publisher in relation to the mainstream, in order to understand, contextualize, and more readily give meaning to its own publishing activities, even at the expense of over simplification of what it and the mainstream it all about.

Similary, for Cummiskey to set out to publish new South African writing with a pervasive sense (even if it is not true) that his cultural gatekeepers believe that it is substandard is to be acutely aware of the subordinate status of one's publishing activity. And at times it is to be invigorated by this understanding. For instance, even an invitation to be a part of a mainstream event like the Cape Town book fair – which can be appreciated as an invitation to participate as 'part of' the mainstream – Cummiskey imagines as a "war" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.).

This sense of subordinate status can extend to mode of address. While poetry can be a "fugitive means of expression" (Alvarez-Pereyre 1979, p38), and appears particularly suited to the incendiary world-making potential of counterpublics, it remains one of the more marginalized writing genres, with poetry collections generally attracting poor sales in bookshops, and often little review space. That publishers like Timbila, Dye Hard Press, and Botsotso emphasized poetry is telling; and the fact that most of the publishers discussed started out as poets themselves – as writers practicing a relatively marginalized craft – suggestive. That they still insist on publishing poetry in book form when it is commonly held that there is no market for poetry in South

Africa would be remarkable under different circumstances.

Instead it encapsulates the notion that the publishers are more concerned with their act of (poetic) world making than responding to what is marketable – a notion that can apply to their publishing projects generally. That is, while reaching strangers is crucial, the orientation of most of the publishers also seems to be towards writers rather than towards any reader or market need: the contributors shape the publication, and then the publisher seeks or creates sites of circulation for the publication. If sites of circulation are refused, this may be a cause for advocacy, not product change. In other words, it is a counterpublic of writers that the publishers aspire to create. The act of convening counterpublics of writers, rather than attending to what readers may or may not want, can be considered their focus; and it is the job of the reader or audience to learn to become, in Bila's terms, "able listeners" (Bila 2005, p11).

While the publishers do express a practical sense or marketing and distribution which entails understanding 'the market' and publishing in a market-savvy way,[210] and while a kind of audience and readership is (however vaguely) assumed, the interviews suggest that this editorial agenda does not work in the way that, for instance, a commercial magazine might have a clear, and even perfunctory idea of copy-tasting in terms of a delineated target readership or even a niche market. Instead, as Cummiskey, suggests: "Overall my readers are anybody and everybody. I want to get anybody and everybody to read it." (Cummiskey 2006. Int.)

For Kotaz "what kills our readership – and the impetus to write…[is] the fear that one's literary states are poor or not classy or fashionable."(Nyezwa 2006. Int.) *Kotaz* publishes "for readers who are not afraid to hear other voices, who've not been cowered down by established trends and given standards of literary works". This he calls the "big spirit of adventure for our literature" (ibid.).

But it is not a mainstream adventure, even though the mainstream might accommodate it from time to time. The relative lack of attention to what the 'market

[210] The Barefoot press pamphlets were a good example of that, while *Chimurenga's* uncanny ability to have its publications stocked at point of sale in a number of Exclusive Books outlets, despite their sometimes provocative covers, shows some shrewd marketing.

wants', means that the publishers are vulnerable; their world making can be tentative, exacerbated by continuingly needing to marshal resources – the time, energy and funds – to publish. Yet it is a vulnerability that feels essential. To have it otherwise, arguably, would be for the publishers to forfeit the world-making possibilities – the independence – of their liminality.

8. Conclusion

I began this thesis by observing that there is a sense in which the publishing activities resist inclusion in the emerging post-apartheid mainstream, even while they engage the mainstream. During the course of this thesis, I have developed this idea to suggest that the publishers 'make space' on the margins of the mainstream for omitted or marginalized voices and concerns, and, effectively, agitate for inclusion of these concerns in the mainstream, or plan various kinds of interventions through their publishing activities, some of which have a sense of guerilla type incursions into the fields of circulation of the dominant public. To differing degrees, these interventions are rejected or incorporated into the mainstream by its gatekeepers.

I have also intimated that framing the publishing activities in the general field of alternative publishing, as described by Cloete, *has* value. For instance, in his essay on progressive alternative publishing in South Africa Cloete writes:

> Alternative media provides the space to represent voices that are not heard in the mainstream or have such limited exposure that they hardly impact on public consciousness. There are two strands: the first is made up of marginalized communities, groups and individuals, and the second comprises marginalized ideas, issues and viewpoints. Their lack of representation may be due to their seeming insignificance or threat to the mainstream, or simply to the fact that there is no money to be made of them. (Cloete 2000, p44)

It is clear that the post-apartheid publishers discussed here are concerned with the marginalization from the mainstream of voices that express various "ideas, issues and viewpoints". As I have shown, these voices – or discourses – might be called 'local literature' in one instance, and the voices of young, black poets in another; but they also include poetry more generally, writing in indigenous languages, and political perspectives that are not necessarily rationally argued, such as the "angry" voices of the poor – in the latter case, amongst others, the publishing activities allowing for a

representation of these voices in the mainstream.

Writing that deals with (or represents) complexity is also felt to be largely absent by the likes of *Chimurenga*; it is a complexity which appears to be constrained in the mainstream by limitations on mode of address and idiom, a restriction which *Chimurenga* implodes through its surfacing of intertextual associations that cluster around points of reference and departure to play with a sense of identity and voice that is continually deferred. This stands in sharp contrast to the linearity of meaning produced in the "discuss of the market" – the 'objective' news reporting of the mass media, and the rational-critical discourse of political analysis amongst them – which valorizes clarity while often masking ideology.

For *Botsotso* democratic cultural practice *in practice* is marginalised – that is, there is a lack of a recognition of the cultural conversations that emerged during the anti-apartheid struggle, and the promises these entailed (discussed in Chapter 7.1), which *Botsotso* tries to enact in part by forming an editorial collective.

As publishing activities like Timbila and Chimurenga most clearly suggest, there is also at times little distinction between these marginalized concerns and Cloete's "marginalized communities, groups and individuals" or, in the politically more forcefully terms offered by Fraser, "[m]embers of subordinated social groups" (Fraser, 1992. p123). As we have seen in Chapter 7.3, it is mostly unpublished young, black poets themselves who congregate around Timbila, and who constitute, at least in part, what the poetry project is all about. Similarly, the members of the audience who become collaborators in the Chimurenga Sessions have more than a casual cultural interest in the publishing venture; it is clear some of them have a social stake in the project. At the extreme, as Edjabe puts it, Chimurenga has saved their lives – without it, it is as if they feel they would not exist.

Self-publishing is an interesting feature of the post-apartheid publishing activities discussed, and I here suggest that in many instances it is the publishers' sense of their own exclusion as writers (Cloete's "individuals") that is being contested first and around which the publishing activities are instictively born. That is, the publishers'

identities as writers as much as publishers is being exclaimed through their publishing activities.

Yet while many of the attributes of alternative publishing Cloete (quoting Press *et al*) describes are attributes of the publishing activities under discussion – they are, of course, essentially alternative publishing activities themselves – it is also true to say that the word "alternative" carries with it an embedded sense that feels in the South African context to be particular to the period he discusses. That is, the term "alternative" has been typically used to refer to the group of progressive publications and publishers that broadly fell under the anti-apartheid umbrella – such as *Work in Progress*, *Speak*, *Learn and Teach*, and Ravan Press and Skotaville Publishers – including newspapers such as *New Nation*, *Vrye Weekblad*, and *Weekly Mail* (the "alternative press").[211] As I also suggest in the introduction, the spirit of resistance of the post-apartheid publishers – which at times carries something of the *zeitgeist* of oppositional activism from the anti-apartheid struggle – is different to the collective politics of the anti-apartheid movement, at least insofar as it lacks its collective political agenda as a background. As a result, the transportability of the term "alternative" to the post-apartheid period feels questionable in this context.

It is the argument of this thesis that the post-apartheid publishing activities can be usefully considered counter-public activities. In particular, their counterpublicness, as opposed to 'alternativeness', is a result of a post-apartheid period where the specificities of struggles to be heard by diverse groups or individuals who seek a public platform for expression, has superseded collective political action against a common enemy: the apartheid state. This reading is fueled by the relative political stability of the period, where the idea of a commonly accepted public sphere begins to emerge.

So much is suggested by *Botsotso*'s founding editorial. While Botsotso consciously identifies with publications like *Staffrider*, and institutions like the Workers Library or Khanya College, and while it has a "very clear social consciousness" (Kolski Horwitz 2006. Int.), it "follows no specific political or aesthetic doctrine" (Kolski

[211] See Cloete (2000) and Berger (2000).

Horwitz *et al* 2004. Editorial). Rather, phrases like "integrity and worth as an expression of individual experience" (ibid) in "our society" (ibid.) – evoke a sense of citizenry, value and belonging which feel unique to the post-apartheid period. Botsotso is "independent" (ibid.), rather than 'oppositional', and is concerned with the expressions of "individual experience" (ibid.) in a (comparatively) stable society.

It is a counterpublicness that seems to be both a symptom and a reflex of the post-apartheid period. It is made possible through the popularization of technology, such as desk-top publishing and the Internet, as well as state and other funding opportunities that encouraged diversity and pluralism, with a specific focus on funding writers from previously disadvantaged contexts. The gradual commercialization of cultural spaces that became geared more towards becoming financially profitable than sustaining broad-based cultural activity in the early and mid-1990s,[212] as well as the conglomeration of the media and publishing industry, which resulted in the closure of many of the alternative publications of the preceding decade, also played their part.

The publishing activities are counterpublic insofar as they position themselves in relation to the mainstream (they have, in Warner's terms, a "critical relation to power" (Warner 2002, p56)), attend to omission of voice and concern, and have an awareness of their own subordinate status. They also, importantly, can be said to be counterpublic in terms of how they understand, imagine, and enact their publishing activities, explicitly and implicitly through publishing practice. This, following Warner, I have called the world making of the publishing activities.

It is a world making in which print is central, and it is of interest that most of the publishers elect to contest the cultural power of print. Warner suggests the link between the act of reading and power in modernity:

> [T]he development of the social imaginary of publics, as a

[212] See, for instance: *Hisses and whistles* (Open Research, 2006).

> relation among strangers projected from private readings of circulating texts, has exerted for the past three centuries a powerful gravity on the conception of the human, elevating what are understood to be the faculties of the private reader as the essential (rational-critical) faculties of man…The highly conventional understanding of readerly activity…has now been institutionalized. (Warner 2002, p116)

As I have argued, experiments in medium, which also facilitate alternative ways of distribution, are noticeable in that they are orientated towards print or 'The Book', and seek to contest the historical cultural power of the book, or of what it means to be published. In Fraser's terms, the publishers have a concern with the political economy of the mainstream, where the media "constitute[s] the material support for the circulation of views [that] are privately owned and operated for profit" (Fraser 1992, p120). Recalling too, as Warner does, something of the importance of the circulation of print in the Habermassian model of the bourgeois public sphere, print publishing remains foundational to our idea of the dominant public sphere today, and the independent publishers seek to claim a space in the field.

Thinking of the publishing activities as counterpublic encourages a different kind of grouping of the publishers than one purely drawn along political lines in the manner we might do when we refer to alternative publishing or the alternative press. Lines of intersection amongst the publishers include publishing practice (their identity as publishers, and struggle to be recognized as publishers), a concern with the development of local literature, the war cry of the poem, or their positioning in relation to the market restrictions and conservatism of the mainstream.

Inevitably, limited resources means that it is by association that the strength of the publishing activities as counterpublics can sometimes be felt. Through recognising each other as publishers (what Cummiskey calls a "sense of togetherness" (Cummiskey 2006. Int.)), a sense of their own achievement is amplified, as is the potential of their world making. Similarly, as Nyezwa suggests, the publishers together comprise what we call 'local literature', which becomes the sum of the

collective output of all the publishers discussed here, as well as other publishing avenues, such as the Internet, radio, the numerous performance poetry events, mainstream publishing, institutional literary journals, and so on – even if a contestation is set up with the latter. As Warner puts it: "No single text can create a public" (Warner 2002, p90) and, on their own, none of these publishing vehicles and avenues can account for this thing we call local literature.

The publishers are, in the end, also part of broader cultural and political developments, some of which are global, and their movement through and participation in different spheres and contexts should be seen as relatively fluid, as they negotiate a felt sense of the mainstream and its omissions. Timbila's political agenda finds a broader context, motivation and social space in its alignment with grassroots social movements like the SECC and APF, as well as its circulation at global social movement events. Chimurenga locates itself as part of a transnational publishing counterpublic sphere by identifying with publishers and publications such as *Kwani?*[213] in Nairobi, *Farafina*[214] in Lagos, Cassava Republic Press[215] in Abuja, and alternative bookshops such as *People Tree* in New Delhi (Edjabe 2006. Int.). Similarly, Botsotso's enactment of democratic cultural practice is not the sum total of democratic cultural practice, which obviously entails a much broader movement of activities. As such *Botsotso's* democratic cultural space – the practice of which is limited by time and resources – is as much gestured towards as a generalizable notion as realized, sometimes unevenly, in the pages of the magazine itself.

An appreciation of the publishing activities as counterpublic also suggests that a purely literary review of the publishing activities, in which one might pose questions about 'good' or 'bad' prose or poetry according to some kind of measure of literary

[213] *Kwani?* was founded in 2003 by up-and-coming Kenyan writers. It considers itself the country's first literary journal.
[214] *Farafina* magazine was started in 2005 (following the launch of its website in 2004), and describes itself as being "dedicated to the best in contemporary ideas; intelligent without being pompous, well researched without being academic and opinionated without being pedantic". (http://farafinamagazine.com) It publishes "everything from photo essays to cartoons, art interviews to political exposes, narrative essays to short stories". (ibid.)
[215] Cassava Republic Press is a new literary press that describes its objective as making "quality contemporary literature available to the West African market at an affordable price". (http://cassavarepublic.biz/)

'quality' or 'worth', is inadequate, because it does not address the world-making function of the publishers as counterpublics. It is not that the publishers lack a conception of good literature, or criteria for strong or weak writing, nor that their publications cannot be valued on literary terms alone, but that the epicentre of their publishing projects can be found elsewhere, even while the publishing initiatives operate in the literary field. One might go as far as to say that in many instances editorial selection is in the service of the world making of a publishing project, and that a weak poem that expresses the temperament of that world making would be preferred over a strong poem that contradicts it. In this regard the literariness of the publishing activities can at times be said to be propositional in that what amounts to a strong literature in terms of a publisher's world making may not yet exist in the way that it is imagined by the publisher. That is, for some, selection gestures towards an ideal of literary activity that may not be already realized or found 'out there' (for example, the ideal of Bila's "poems of social commentary" (Bila 2006. Int.) or Cummiskey's surrealism).

However, the extent to which the publishing activities *always* behave like counterpublics, or the extent to which they can be considered *strong* counterpublics comprised of subordinated social groups with clearly articulated political objectives in the Fraser sense, is also mixed. As in Timbila, only at times do some seem to touch on the political temperament and concrete engagement of Fraser's women's or gay and lesbian counterpublics.

Ironically, while the literary allows the publishing activities to contest the exclusionary norms of the mainstream, it is by most of them identifying themselves as literary publications, and operating primarily as literary publications, that something of their political agency and even political potential is obscured. It is when they manage to wrestle themselves free from this mandate, and seek non-literary sites for circulation (like the World Social Forum gatherings) that a sense of their real agency as political counterpublics begins intuitively to be felt. While Bila is politically outspoken in *Timbila* editorials, Timbila's political purchase is amplified by its association with grassroots political groupings and global social movements.

On its own, the publishers' world making is vulnerable, and is often notional, or

incomplete. From time to time the publics the publishers attempt to call into being simply fail to materialize. This is seen in Timbila's Republic of Poetry project, which didn't get off the ground, but is also the case when unsold copies of a journal end up in the boot of a publisher's car, or stockpiled in a backroom, as is sometimes the case. As Warner puts it, in their acts of world making, the "circulatory fate [of publics] is the realization of that world" (Warner 2002, p114). A lack of resources that limits the frequency and circulation of publications, crucial, as Warner contends, for political agency, can further lend the publishing activities a sense of being weak publics. This vulnerability is only mitigated in part by the collective action of the publishers, who do not always behave co-operatively, as they jockey for cultural space, legitimacy and resources, and, as suggested, express different and even contradictory political and ideological perspectives.

It is also true to say that the publishing activities do not always agitate, conspire to infiltrate, overthrow, or undermine the dominant. In some cases, the publishers even appear to stand in for the mainstream. For instance, in a context where poetry is not published widely by commercial publishers, how does one understand the sometimes prolific poetry publishing activities of the Timbila Poetry Project? As counterpublic activity? Or is Timbila one of *the* main poetry publishers in South Africa? Bila himself is aware of the dual nature of his publishing activities when he says that, despite the "multi-dimensional" (Bila 2006. Int.) nature of belonging experienced by the Timbila Poets, in the end, their participation is also quite ordinary; sometimes, he reminds us, it is just about getting together to enjoy poetry: "I think people just tend to celebrate the growth of literature and poetry in the country." (Bila 2006. Int.)

Attention also needs to be paid to the role of the state in cultural production in the post-apartheid period. Fraser asks: "What institutional arrangements will best help narrow the gap in participatory parity between dominant and subordinate groups?" (Fraser 1998, p122). That many of the publishing activities are sustained through state or other institutional funding is noteworthy; especially given that some (again, such as Timbila) at times propose a radical disruption of the dominant. That these publishing activities exist at all can be seen as a result of policy processes fueled by progressive conceptions of a post-apartheid South Africa, which included notions of pluralism and

diversity, and freedom of expression, and were aimed at redressing historical inequities. However, bodies like the NAC are not neutral and have funding mandates[216] that can direct and restrict the world-making potential of a publishing initiative, or exclude others from funding eligibility.

Chimurenga appears to evade the funding dilemma by securing financial support from institutions outside of South Africa, with, one supposes, the possibility of a more neutral donor at play. Similarly, Cummiskey mostly self-funds his Dye Hard Press publications, avoiding a constriction of publishing project in terms of donor requirements – and ensuring something of the publisher's independence.

Nevertheless, I suggest here that the relationship to the state as donor suggests an interesting new dynamic to counterpublicness in post-apartheid South Africa, and the extent to which counterpublicness is possible *in the form that it has taken here*, depends on the extent of the state's commitment to progressive values such as transparency, and freedom of association and expression, as well as their interpretation of these ideals. (It may also depend, from time to time, on the state turning a blind eye).

Such commitment can at times feel tentative. Certainly, a real test of the mettle of some of the publishers as counterpublics might be found should funding be withdrawn. Would this usher in a strategic retreat into cheaper avenues for publishing, such as the Internet or performance, or forge new alliances with like-minded managers of community radios? Or will they, like many in the previous generation of alternative publishers who had funding withdrawn, fade away?

In the end, rather than Fraser's version of strong counterpublics, a counterpublicness that is closely associated to the mainstream, even while it rejects and challenges its primary discourses, is found – something Warner's theorizing of counterpublics appears to accommodate. As in the case of state funding, at times this association is

[216] Such as, in the case of the NAC, "[t]o foster the expression of a national identity and consciousness by means of the arts" and to "give the historically disadvantaged such additional help and resources as are required to give them greater access to the arts" (www.nac.org.za).

dependent, and in this regard, we may want to talk about "embedded counterpublics" that exist in highly stratified societies, and which benefit from institutional arrangements that have been set up to mitigate inequalities. This is especially the case when considering state funding, but is also suggested by the publisher's dependence on mainstream sites of circulation, like chain book retailers and the commercial media. On the one hand, by entering these sites of circulation, a contestation with the mainstream is set up; but, equally, a desire to be recognized and affirmed by the mainstream is suggested.

Cloete contends that alternative publishing is "always defined in relation to mainstream publishing. In some cases it is driven by the desire for incorporation into the mainstream" (Cloete 2000, p44), and something of this tendency can be felt in the gradual professionalisation of the publishers over the period discussed. A cursory glance at new glossy cultural publications to hit the shelves, such as *one small seed* (2005)[217] and the more literary *A Look Away Quarterly* (2006), which appear to tap into a mainstream consumerist cultural dynamic, with a sub-cultural ethos and aesthetic – they are trendy, glossy, and sell advertising space – as well as new writing magazines such as *wordsetc* (2007) which also manages to attract advertisers, suggests a new relationship to the economic, already present in the distribution strategies of a magazine like *Chimurenga*. Counterpoint to this is the newly launched *Baobab* (2008), the overly glossy and state-supported[218] literary journal. The former may present new opportunities, and the potential of a stimulating conversation between capital and art; the latter, perhaps an attempt by the state to corral a national literature, although it is early days.

They do however suggest that the rawness of the publishing spirit felt in the immediate aftermath of apartheid, as Press put it, "a sense of liberation [that was] part of the process of growing a new cultural energy" (Press 1994, p58), may have been symptomatic of a particular period in our country's history; that is, the transitional hiatus between two kinds of mainstreams: that of the apartheid state, and

[217] Which defines itself as a "South African pop culture magazine" (http://www.onesmallseed.com).
[218] It is funded by the Department of Arts and Culture.

the economic and political ‘centre of gravity’ we now recognize as the new South Africa.

9. References

Abrams, M. (1988) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.

Accone, D. (undated). *Usable Culture*. www.nedbank.co.za. Accessed January 2009.

Afrika, T. (1994) *Toilet.* Poem. *Botsotso* No. 1, October 1994. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Allan, L. (1936) *Strange Fruit.* Publisher unknown.

Alexander, P. (1980) Campbell, Plomer, Van der Post and Voorslag. *English in Africa*, Vol. 7, No. 2. 50-59. Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA), Grahamstown.

Alvarez-Péreyre, J. (1984) *The poetry of commitment in South Africa* (translated from the French by Clive Wake). Heinemann, London.

Arts and Culture Trust (2006) *ACT Announces R1 Million Support for 33 Projects*. Media release. 25 May 2006. ACT, Johannesburg.

Berger, G. (2000) Publishing for the People: The Alternative Press 1980-1999. *In*: Evans, N. & Seeber, M. eds., *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa.* Holger Ehling Publishing, London.

Berold, R. ed. (2002). Editor's Note. *It all begins*: *Poems from postliberation South Africa.* Gecko Poetry, Scottsville.

Berold, R. ed. (2003) *South African Poets on Poetry*: *Interviews from New Coin 1992-2001*. Gecko Poetry, Scottsville.

Bila, V. (undated) Interview. *Bleksem 7*. 7-12. Bleksem, Johannesburg.

Bila, V. (2000) Our relationship with the word & the world. Editorial. *Timbila* Vol. 1 No. 1, January 2000. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Bila, V. (2000). Back cover. *Timbila* Vol. 1 No. 1, January 2000. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Bila, V. (2002) Globalisation/Domination and South Africa: An interview with Vonani Bila. *Botsotso* No. 12. 36-39. Botsotso Publishers, Johannesburg.

Bila, V. (2004) *In the name of Amandla.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Bila, V. (2005) The irrelevance of prizes to poetry. *New Coin* Vol. 41 No. 2, December 2005. 7-11. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Bila, V. (2006a) The Timbila Poetry Project. *In: South African Small Publishers Catalogue.* Centre for the Book, Vlaeberg.

Bila, V. (2006). *The Republic of Poetry project: Timbila launches a writer development programme*. Media release. March 10, 2006. (Available: http://www.oulitnet.co.za/relax/republic_of_poetry.asp).

Billie, A. (2004) Reawakening: African Languages. *Kotaz* Vol. 3 No. 4. 32-(33) Imbizo Arts of South Africa, New Brighton.

Brown, D. (1998) *Voicing the text*: *South African oral poetry and performance*. Oxford University Press, Cape Town.

Bleksem (1995). *Footprint in the sand*. Editorial. Bleksem, Johannesburg.

Bleksem (undated). *Don't gate crash a party of bankers, burn down the house.* Editorial. Bleksem, Johannesburg.

Blignaut, A. (1980) The Touleier: The Custody of History. *English in Africa* Vol. 7 No 2. 60-66. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Botsotso (2006) Botsotso. *In: The South African Small Publishers' Catalogue*. Centre for the Book, Vlaeberg.

Botsotso Jesters (1996) *We jive like this.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Botsotso Jesters (1999) *Dirty Washing.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Botsotso Jesters & Murcott, L. (2001) *Purple Light Mirror in the Mud.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Botsotso Jesters (2004) *Greetings Emsawawa.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Bunyan, D. (1987) 'Tradition in a State of Emergency'. Editorial. *New Coin*, Vol. 23, No 2. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Centre for the Book (2006). *South African Small Publishers' Catalogue*. Centre for the Book, Vlaeberg.

Chimurenga (2002). *Music Is The Weapon.* Vol. 1, April, 2002. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Chimurenga (2002) *Biko in Parliament*. Vol. 3, November, 2002. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Chimurenga (2004). *Head/Body(&Tools)/Corpses*. Vol. 5, April, 2004. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Chimurenga (2006). *Futbol, Politricks & Ostentatious Cripples*. Vol. 10, December, 2006. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Cloete, D. (2000) Alternative Publishing in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. *In:* Evans, N. & Seeber, M. eds. *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Holger Ehling Publishing, London.

Cope, J. (1980) The World of Contrast. *English in Africa* Vol. 7 No 2. 1-21. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Cronin, J. (1988) 'Even under the Rine of Terror': Insurgent South African Poetry. *In:* Trump. M. ed. (1990) *Rendering Things Visible.* Ravan Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. (undated) *An argument for independent publishing*. www.donga.co.za [No longer online].

Cummiskey, G. (1994) *The Secret Hour.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. (1994) *Lost In A World.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. (1994) *Conspiracies Of The Interior.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. ed. (1995) *Atio*. *A Dye Hard Press Anthology.* No. 1. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. ed (1995) *Atio.* No. 2. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. ed. (1998) *Mad Rains*. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G & Blumenthal, R. (1998) *Head*. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiksey, G. (1999) *Electric Juice.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiksey, G. (2001) *Reigning Gloves.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. (2002). Editorial. *Green Dragon* No. 1, December 2002. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. (2004) Editorial. *Green Dragon* No. 3. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey (2006a). Untitled [The story of Dye Hard Press]. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. (2006) *April in the Moon-Sun.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Cummiskey, G. & Salafranca, A. (2003). Interview. *New Coin* Vol. 39 No. 2. 73-87. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Edigile, M. (1995) 'Freedom Fighter'. Poem. *Botsotso* No. 5, March 1995. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Egan A. & Wafer A. (2004) *The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee*. A case study for the UKZN project entitled: Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa. University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban.

Eley, G. (1993) Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century. *In:* Calhoun, C. ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* The MIT Press, Massachusetts.

English in Africa (1980) Vol. 7 No. 2, September 1980. Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Ernsten, C. (2005) Consumerism and South Africa's rainbow unity. 10 May, 2005. *Review of International Social Questions.* http://www.risq.org/article455.html [Accessed December 2008].

Essential Things (1992). Poetry. Congress of South African Writers, Johannesburg.

Ferguson, G. (1994) *Icarus Rising.* Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Finlay, A. (1994) *Burning Aloes*. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Finlay, A; Bila, V. & Parenzee, D. (1998) *No Free Sleeping.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Finlay, A. (2002) Timbila Poetry Workshop, Pietersburg, December 1-2, 2001. *New Coin* Vol. 38 No. 1. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Finlay, A. & Zhuwao, P. (2002) *The Red Laughter of Guns in Green Summer Rain*. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Finlay, A. & Ka Ngwenya, S. eds. (2003) *Insight.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Finlay, A. & Salafranca, A. eds. (2003) Introduction. *glass jars among trees*. Jacana Media, Bellevue.

Fraser, N. (1992) Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *In:* Calhoun, C., ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Gardiner, M. (2002) Time to talk: Some literary magazines in the Pretoria-Johannesburg Region, 1956 to 1978. *Botsotso* No 12. 23-35. Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Gardiner, M. ed. (2003) *Throbbing Ink*. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Geldenhuys, JDU (1994) *Structured Space*. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Gqola, P. (2004) thinking through Bessie Head's shattered bits. *Chimurenga* Vol. 4. 6. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Green Dragon (2002) No. 1. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Green Dragon (2005) No. 3. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Green Dragon (2006) No. 4. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Greig, R. (2005) Chronicles of a transition foretold. *The Sunday Independent*, March 27, 2005. Independent News & Media, Johannesburg.

Habermas, J. (translation, 2003*) The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Cambridge.

Harris, V. (2007) *Archives and Justice*. The Society of American Archivists, Chicago

Haupt, A. (2004) Counterpublics, Noise and Ten Years of Democracy. *New Coin* Vol. 40 No 2. 76-90. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Hawthorn, J. (1994) *Contemporary Literary Theory*. Edward Arnold, London.

Higgs, C. (2005) *A rough guide to small-scale and self-publishing*. Centre for the Book, Vlaeberg.

Homeless Talk (undated) Who We Are, Aims & objectives, Mission statement, Homeless Talk History & background. Website. www.homelesstalk.org.za [Accessed December 2008].

Horn, P. (undated) *The World from Cape Town: Isibongo*. Available at: http://www.thedrunkenboat.com/isibongo.htm.

Horn, P. (1994) 'The poor interred corpses of the Cape Flats'. Poem. *Botsotso* No. 1, October 1994. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Isis X (2007). Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Jasmine, N. (2002) 'BReaTHING leSSonS'. *Chimurenga* Vol. 2. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Jenkins, M. (2000) 'Bitterness'. Poem. *Timbila* Vol. 1 No. 1, January 2000. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Jenkins, M. (2005) *Breaking the surface.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Johnson, S. (2003). Review. *New Contrast* Vol. 31 No. 3. [Page numbers not available]. [UCT Centre for Creative Writing], Cape Town.

Kgositsile, K. (2007) Jozi Spoken Word Festival. Botsotso, Sounds of Edutainment, and the Wits Writing Centre. Wits Theatre, Johannesburg.

Khumalo, B. (2002) 'Dinner Date'. Poem. *Timbila* 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Khumalo, M. (2001) 'feed the need'. Poem. *Kotaz* No. 1 Vol. 3. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, New Brighton.

Khumalo, M. (2003) *apocrypha.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Khumalo, M. (2004) (Black) Writers and the politics of dispossession. *In: Kotaz* Vol. 3 No. 4. 30. 30-[32]. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, New Brighton.

Kirkwood, M. (1980) Staffrider: An informal discussion. *English in Africa* Vol. 7 No. 2, September 1980. 22-31. Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Kolski Horwitz, A. (1979) *Call from the Free State*. Outposts, [place unknown].

Kolski Horwitz, A. (2006) *Michelle McGrane in conversation with Allan Kolski Horwitz.* http://www.oulitnet.co.za/relax/allan_horwitz_interview.asp. [Last accessed September 2006].

Kolski Horwitz, A. (2007) Jozi Spoken Word Festival. Opening Remarks. Botsotso, Sounds of Edutainment, and the Wits Writing Centre. Wits Theatre, Johannesburg.

Kolski Horwitz A.; Accone, D. (2008) Innovative platforms for local literature. August 20, 2008. *Mail & Guardian Online*. http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-08-20-innovative-platforms-for-local-literature [Accessed December 2008].

Kolski Horwitz, A.; ka Ngwenya, S. & Muila I. *et al* (referred to as The Editorial Board) (1994) What is BOTSOTSO?. *Botsotso* No. 1, October 1994. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Kolski Horwitz A.; ka Ngwenya, S., Muila, I., Rapola, Z. & Ndlovu, L. (2004) Editorial. *Botsotso* No. 13. Botsotso Publishing, Joubert Park.

Kota, N. (2002) 'Neighbours'. Poem. *Timbila* 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Kotaz (2001) Vol. 3 No. 1. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, Port Elizabeth.

Kotaz (2002) Vol. 3 No. 2. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, Port Elizabeth.

Lagarriga, D. (2004) *Chimurenga: who no know go know.* An interview with Ntone Edjabe. http://www.oozebap.org/text/chimurenga.htm [Last accessed September 2006].

Lebakeng, T. (1995) Beyond the myth of non-partisan artwork - Strictly for black South African artists. *Botsotso* No. 5, March 1995. 2-3. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Lo Liyong, T. (2005) *corpse lovers and corpse haters.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Maake, N. (2000) Publishing and Perishing: Books, People and Reading in African Languages in South Africa. *In:* Evans, N. & Seeber, M. eds. *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*, Holger Ehling Publishing, London.

Mamdani, M. (2002) Is African studies at UCT a new home for Bantu education? *In: Chimurenga* Vol. 2. 16-21. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Mapalakanye, H. (2002) 'Troublemaker's prison letter'. Poem. *Timbila* 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Mashego, C. (2006) 'parting shot ii'. Poem. *Green Dragon* No. 4. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Matiwana, M. (2004) Living Dead Writer. Interview. *Kotaz* Vol. 3 No. 4. 21-[26]. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, New Brighton.

Mboshwa, A. (2002) 'Not employed'. Poem. *Timbila* 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Meersman, B. (2008) Walking the world on Long Street. *Mail & Guardian*, *Friday*, December 19 2008 - January 8 2009. Mail & Guardian, Johannesburg.

Molobi, S. (2000) African Renaissance and cultural aesthetics: The challenges of national reconstruction and development. *Timbila* Vol. 1 No. 1, January 2000. 168-175. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Moolman, K. (2007) *Blind Voices*: *a collection of radio plays.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Motana, M. (2002). ‘Free uth’. Poem. *Timbila* 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Motadinyane, I.; Muila, I.; ka Ngwenya, S. & Kolksi Horwitz, A. (1994) ‘In the land of plenty’. Poem. *Botsotso* No. 5, March 1995. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Motadinyane, I.; Muila, I.; ka Ngwenya, S.; Varney A. & Kolksi Horwitz, A. (1998) Interview. *In:* Berold, R. ed. *South African Poets on Poetry* (2003) Gecko Poetry, Scottsville.

Motloi, M. (2007) *Kwaito music: A cultural revolution.* Ratsosa Publishing, Pretoria

Mpe, P. & Seeber, M. (2000) *The Politics of Book Publishing in South Africa: A Critical Overview*. Holger Ehling Publishing, London.

Muila, I. (2006) Isicamtho. *Botsotso* No. 8, 1997. Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Muila, I. (2004) *Gova.* Botsotso Publishing, Johannesburg.

Ndebele, N. (2006) *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture.* University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville.

Ndlovu, L. (2004) *Impiselo.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Ngesi, E. (2001) ‘Where did it go wrong’. Poem. *Kotaz* No. 1 Vol. 3. Imbizo Art of South Africa, New Brighton.

Nyezwa, M. (2001a) Notes from nowhere. *Kotaz*, Vol 3. No. 1. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, Port Elizabeth.

Nyezwa, M. (2001b). Notes from nowhere. *Kotaz*, Vol 3. No. 2. Imbizo Arts of South

Africa, Port Elizabeth.

Nyezwa, M. (2002) Notes from Nowhere. *Kotaz*, Vol. 3. No. 2. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, Port Elizabeth.

Nyezwa, M. (2004). Notes from nowhere. *Kotaz*, Vol. 3 No. 4. Imbizo Arts of South Africa, Port Elizabeth.

Nyezwa, M. (2006) Kotaz. Included in *South African Small Publishers' Catalogue*. Centre for the Book, Vlaeberg.

Oa Magogodi, K. (2006) On Ntone Edjabe. *YMAG*, 27 May 2006. http://www.kush.co.za/workarea/show.asp?articleno=293 [Last accessed September 2006]

Ogude, J. (1994) The vexed question of language. *Botsotso* No. 1. 2-3. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Oliphant, A. (1991) *Forums and Forces: Recent Trends in South African Literary Journals.* Publisher unknown.

Oliphant, A. (2000) From Colonialism to Democracy: Writers and Publishing in South Africa. *In:* Evans, N. & Seeber, M. eds.. *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa.* Holger Ehling Publishing, London.

Oliphant, A. & Vladislavic I. eds (1988) *Ten Years of Staffrider, 1978-1988.* Ravan Press, Johannesburg.

Olson R. & Torrance N. (2001) *The Making of Literature Societies.* Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts.

Olson, C. ([1960] 'Songs of Maximus'. Publisher unknown.

Open Research (2005) *Hisses and whistles*. Business and Arts South Africa, Johannesburg.

Pongweni, A. (2000) Voicing the Text: South African Oral Poetry and Performance. *Critical Arts* Vol. 14 No. 2. 175-221. University of Natal, Durban.

Press, K. (1990) Building a National Culture in South Africa. *In:* Trump, M. ed. *Rendering Things Visible* Ravan Press, Johannesburg.

Press, K. (1994) Poetry Journals in South Africa, 1994. *New Coin*, Vol. 30. No. 2, December 1994. 58-63. Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Grahamstown.

Rampolokeng, L. (undated) 'for the oral'. *In:* Berold R. ed. *it all begins*. Gecko Poetry, Skotsville.

Rampolokeng, L. (2002) 'Bavino on the run: Stateside'. *Chimurenga* Vol. 2. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Rampolokeng, L. (2006) 'Libete'. Poem. *Green Dragon* No. 3. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Righteous the Common Man (2002) 'They have landed'. Poem. *Timbila* 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Rosemont, F. (1980) *Surrealism And Its Popular Accomplices*. City Lights, San Francisco.

Salafranca, A. (2000) *The fire in which we burn*. Dye Hard Press, Johannesburg.

Salafranca, A. (2006) Flourishing literary journals offer vibrant alternative to mainstream publishing industry. *Sunday Independent* [date unknown]. Independent News & Media, Johannesburg.

Scholz, T. (undated) *Chimurenga: Cape Town Now! Politics, Music, Culture. An interview with Ntone Edjabe.* http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=341 [Last accessed September 2006].

Sole, K. (2004) The Witness of Poetry: Economic calculation, civil society and the limits of everyday experience in a liberated South Africa. *Botsotso* No. 13. 115-134. Botsotso Publishers, Johannesburg.

Sole, K. (2002) Afterword. Robert B. ed. *it all begins, poems from postliberation South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville.

South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002) Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Thompson, J. (1995) *The Media and Modernity*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Cambridge.

Timbila (2000) Submission details. Vol. 1 No. 1 January 2000. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Timbila (2002) Vol. 3. May 2002. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Timbila (2005) Vol. 5. November 2005. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Titlestad, M. (2007) Jozi Spoken Word Festival. Botsotso, Sounds of Edutainment, and the Wits Writing Centre. Wits Theatre, Johannesburg.

Uhuru Cultural Group (2000) 'Mother and father'. Poem. *Timbila*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2000. Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

Varney, A. (1994) 'Starting with circumcision'. Poem. *Botsotso* No. 1, October 1994. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Varney, A.; Motadinyane, I., Muila, I. & Kolski Horwitz, A. *et al* (1995). Editorial. *Botsotso* No.5. [Botsotso Publishing], Johannesburg.

Wainaina, B. (2002) Going Home. *Chimurenga* Vol. 2. Chimurenga, Cape Town.

Warner, M. (2002) *Publics and Counterpublics*. Zone Books, New York.

Wessels, P. (2003) Connecting with the world from the inside out. *ThisDay*, December 4, 2003. ThisDay, Johannesburg.

Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and literature*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Xaba, M. (2005) *these hands.* Timbila Poetry Project, Elim Hospital.

YMAG (2004) Interview with Ntone Edjabe. YMAG, May 2003. http://www.chimurenga.co.za/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=78 [Last access September 2006].

Websites:

Acacia: http://www.acacia.org.za/

Aids Consortium: http://www.aidsconsortium.org.za/affiliatesprofile.htm

African Books Collective: www.africanbookscollective.com

African Poetry Review: http://african-poetry.blogspot.com/

Botsotso blog: http://botsotso.book.co.za/blog/

Cassava Republic: http://cassavarepublic.biz/

Chimurenga: http://www.chimurenga.co.za

Chimurenga Library: www.chimurengalibrary.co.za

Dye Hard Press blog*:* http://dyehard-press.blogspot.com

Dye Hard Press newsletter: http://dyehard-press.blogspot.com/2007/08/dye-hard-press-newsletter.html

Farafina Magazine: http://farafinamagazine.com

kasiekulture!: http://kasiekulture.blogspot.com/

Kubatana.net: http://www.kubatana.net

Electronic Sesame (Barefoot Press): http://www.pix.co.za/barefoot.press/index.html

eM&G: http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/books/9811/981124-poetry.html

Exclusive Books: http://www.exclusivebooks.com

Internet World Stats: http://www.Internetworldstats.com/af/za.htm

kasiekulture!: http://kasiekulture.blogspot.com/

Litnet.co.za (old site): http://www.oulitnet.co.za/relax/arthur_attwell.asp

National Arts Council: www.nac.org.za

National Library of South Africa: http://www.nlsa.ac.za
(and Centre for the Book: http://www.nlsa.ac.za/NLSA/centreforthebook)

National Community Radio Forum: http://www.ncrf.org.za

One Small Seed: http://www.onesmallseed.com

Pan African Space Station: http://www.panafricanspacestation.org.za/

Pan African Market http://www.panafrican.co.za

Southern Rain Poetry: http://www.southernrainpoetry.com/

Timbila blog: http://timbilapoetry.blogspot.com/

TVSA: http://www.tvsa.co.za/actorprofile.asp?actorid=6512

A Virtual Anthology of Some South African Poetry:
http://www.cope.co.za/Virtual/content.htm

Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwaito