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Book Frontiers

Reconstructing Readers and Reading in a Nineteenth Century Eastern Cape Missionary Journal

Russell Clarke

Abstract

This study is a historical analysis of readers and the practices of reading in the late nineteenth century Eastern Cape, with particular focus on the Lovedale Institution. Well known as the progenitor of an African elite, the Lovedale mission institution, school and Press have been well-documented and studied, as has the Eastern Cape frontier – but the role of books and reading in their social and material practice has seldom been examined in very close detail in relation to this imagined textual community. A close examination of the contemporary evangelical journal, *The Christian Express*, reveals much in terms of what was being read, and how reviews and secondary matter on texts that were in circulation may have influenced conceptions of what books and literacy meant to the people reading the journal. These ideas have been traced through advertisements, reviews, columns and letters in order to understand the ways in which the journal portrayed books as material and intellectual objects. Delving deeper than the materiality of the book in an empirical world, however, this study seeks to analyse how books and readers were both constructed and represented, and involves an attempt (although admittedly a highly theoretical undertaking) to reconstruct the various reading strategies employed by readers on the frontier of race, class, and nation.

Declaration

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I declare that it is my own original and unaided work. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

_____

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15 March 2005

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Introduction

In an excerpt from the 'Monthly Summary (From the Missionary Magazines)'of *The Christian Express* in January, 1895, the following passage appears:

> 'My students', says Dr Mackay of Formosa, 'study the Bible, morning, noon, and night; we begin with the Bible and end with the Bible, and preach Jesus Christ as the only saviour of men. O that book, the Bible! It is full. It teems. You can never get to the bottom of it. I have found it a spring which never can be drained.'

The passage stands alone, as it has been reproduced here. There are no contextual markers, and no indications (it seems) of how it should be read. But this exhortation of what a book *is*, and the metaphors surrounding the book, as well as strategies of reading, are an important piece of historical archive surrounding print culture that call for closer examination. This passage seems to sum up many of the themes that I would like to address within the course of this study. There are many sites which need analysis – what audience or public are being addressed in this passage? In the context of both this passage and *The Christian Express*, a monthly journal devoted to publishing details of the mission endeavour in southern Africa and the world (in a rural but important centre of Evangelical mission activity), there are many different publics being invoked: the colonial reader (both 'colonizer' and 'colonized'), readers with an interest in the African mission, the students of Formosa, the students of the Lovedale College. What this passage invokes, through its textuality, context, production and consumption, is a transnational

public sphere[1], where the reader becomes a critical actor in the 'communication circuit', for it is ultimately in the figure of the reader that the most pertinent information lies. There are also links to the Bible, which in the context of the late nineteenth century Eastern Cape is hardly surprising – Christianity and western conceptions of literacy had been in place for many years – so the fact that ways of *reading* the Bible are being highlighted is important. The Bible is equated with a spring which 'never can be drained', an image that could be circulated around the world with little fear of it being misunderstood, as the concept of the spring or well is one that is global and cross-cultural. The metaphor of attempting to 'get to the bottom' of a book is one that suggests a way of reading that is close and intensive, but can also never be fulfilled (in the case of the Bible, as it is presented here).

What effect would this imposition of the function and ways of reading have on the reader of *The Christian Express*? What effect would this kind of reading have on the intricacies of everyday life? How would studying the Bible morning, noon and night make a difference to one's life? Is it important that one should start and end with the Bible? What effects could a reading of this sentence as metaphor for life and death (and the presence of a textual God at each of these events) mean? The passage quoted above contains elements of all of these; metaphors of reading, circulation, transnationalism, colonialism, a description of what a book is or could be, and most importantly, how to read it. Context is of course critically important. No history of print culture can simply be literary and take an imposed or supposed reading simply from what is actually printed – we need a deeper and more practical understanding of large social and cultural dynamics in order to answer, or perhaps even understand the full import of the questions that have

[1] Hofmeyr, I.: "Spread Far and Wide over the Surface of the Earth": Evangelical Reading Formations and the Rise of a Transnational Public Sphere – The Case of the Cape Town Ladies' Bible Association. Forthcoming in *English Studies in Africa,* January 2005.

been posed. The answer to this question comes in the form of the study of the History of the Book.

The History of the Book

The study of books, readers and reading has become a major focus for academic study in the past two decades, within the loose discipline of the History of the Book. It has become increasingly apparent through the work of scholars such as Roger Chartier, Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bordieu, Paul Ricoeur, David Barton, Stanley Fish, Janice Radway and countless others[2] that readers and reading (as social and material practice) are critical to the understanding of any text as well as to any history of print and communications. Roger Chartier, an influential figure in the call for historicizing books and reading, has outlined a theory for reconstructing communications in history. This theory is three-fold and each "segment" which defines the space of this history is 'separated by academic tradition':

> … first, the analysis of texts, either canonical or ordinary, deciphered in their structures, themes and aims; second, the history of books and, more generally, of all the objects and forms that carry out the circulation of writing; and finally, the study of practices which in various ways take hold of these objects or forms and produce usages and differentiated meanings.[3]

The central area of investigation of this study will focus on the last two of these three segments, a micro-analytical study of the practices through which books are circulated,

[2] These scholars are practising in diverse fields such as Reader Response, Cultural Theory and Philosophy and New Literacy Studies, which can all be read under the discipline of the History of the Book.
[3] Chartier, R.: "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader" in Bennett, A. (ed.): Readers and Reading. Pearson / Longman, Harlow. 1995. (P. 134)

and their power and meaning imposed and deciphered from printed items, focused on the figure of the reader. This study is a historical analysis of readers and the practices of reading in the late nineteenth century Eastern Cape, with particular focus on the Lovedale Institution. Well known as the progenitor of an African elite, the Lovedale mission institution, school and Press have been well-documented and studied, as has the Eastern Cape frontier – but the role of books and reading in their social and material practice has seldom been examined in very close detail in relation to this imagined textual community. A close examination of the contemporary evangelical journal, *The Christian Express*, reveals much in terms of what was being read, and how reviews and secondary matter on texts that were in circulation may have influenced conceptions of what books and literacy meant to the people reading the journal. I have traced these ideas through advertisements, reviews, columns and letters in order to understand the ways in which the journal portrayed books as material and intellectual objects. Delving deeper than the materiality of the book in an empirical world, however, this study seeks to analyse how books and readers were both constructed and represented, and involves an attempt (although admittedly a highly theoretical undertaking) to reconstruct the various reading strategies employed by readers on the frontier of race, class, and nation. Broadly termed 'reception', such approaches seek to understand the emotions, ideologies and identities that each reader brings to the table.[4] These factors will necessarily have an effect on what is read, why it is read, who it is read by and how it is read – and the implications of these answers bring to the fore larger questions involving literacy, society and culture in the turbulent setting of the late nineteenth century Eastern Cape frontier. This study uses as its basis the representation of reading practices of an 'interpretive community'[5], through

[4] As Joan Shelley Rubin remarks, however, the term 'reception' connotes a sense of passivity that denies the intensity of readers' actions. (See Rubin, J. S.: "What is the History of the History of Books?" in *The Journal of American History*, 90 (2). September 2003. Available at www.historycooperative.org./journals/jah/90.2/rubin.html)

[5] A phrase coined by Stanley Fish and echoed by Michel de Certeau and Roger Chartier.

the archive left by the journal. From this archive it may be possible to gain a nuanced and rich history of reading practices within the polyglot communities found on the frontier.

Within the context of the interdisciplinary area of the History of the Book, studies of readers within historical contexts have been fruitfully applied to tease out the specific formations and practices that reading and readers take on in different cultural and historical settings, leading to greater understanding of how cultures work(ed), the historical and cultural development of intellectual thought and consciousness, and most importantly, the impact of print on societies – how knowledge was created and circulated, posing this against an assessment of cultural change and flux. Literacy, and particularly print literacy, is viewed as an agent of change, and the processes of change as well as the changes themselves are worth studying in detail. As Stephanie Newell states in her groundbreaking macro-analytical study of the literary history of colonial Ghana, the book is

> … conceived as an "agent of change" and transformation, but such a concept of literacy cannot be divorced from the particularities and dynamics of local readerships and the social context of literacy. Colonial literacy must always be situated within the complex social, economic and political relationships that determined the way in which it was regarded locally.[6]

Thus, our understanding of the nature of colonial relationships to literacy and ultimately social change in Africa could be greatly enhanced by pursuing this avenue of research focusing on the material object of the book itself and the interaction between object and reader. New views of the nature of the relationship between readers in colonial contexts and printed materials can be carefully constructed; the 'gap' between orality and literacy

[6] Newell, S.: Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana. Manchester University Press, Manchester. 2002. (P.2)

reshaped into a continuum, and the methods of apprehending written texts understood in great detail. This study could be conceived as one outlining the rich and diverse relationships existing between books, readers and reading practices in the Eastern Cape frontier, in order to gain a better understanding of the societies enveloped in colonialism and the specific practices in which these societies engaged in order to make sense of a rapidly changing landscape, yet at the same time not attempting to create strict cultural cleavages and social hierarchies or 'simplistic relationships between particular cultural objects or forms and specific social groups'.[7]

The conception of a 'book frontier' is an interesting one, and I believe it acts as an interesting metaphor for the complex interplay between society, culture, technology and ideology that any history of print culture should attempt. Lamar and Thompson offer an interesting definition of the frontier:

> … a territory or zone of inter-penetration between two previously distinct societies… The frontier 'opens' in a given zone when the first representatives of the intrusive society arrive; it 'closes' when a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone.[8]

The use of the frontier as an explanatory concept in South African historiography is well documented,[9] and Mostert has called the Eastern Cape frontier the 'determining' frontier in South African history. What is invoked here is the sense of *inter-penetration* of societies and cultures, whilst making reference (albeit glancing) to the turbulent climate of the Eastern Cape frontier. What should be questioned in this definition is whether, in

[7] Chartier, R.: "Texts, Printings, Readings" in Hunt, L. (Ed.): The New Cultural History. University of California Press, California (Los Angeles and Barkley). 1989. (P. 169)
[8] Lamar, H. & Thompson, L. (eds.): The Frontier in History. Yale University Press. 1981. (P. 7) Quoted in Mostert, N.: Frontiers. Pimlico, London. 1992. (P. 228)
[9] See also Legassick, M: "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography" in Marks, S. & Atmore, A. (eds.): Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa. Longman, New York. 1980.

cultural terms, the frontier ever really closed. This conception of the frontier follows some earlier historians who have viewed the concept of the frontier in very specific economic, political or racial terms – I am arguing for an opening up of the definition to include all of these elements, to become social and cultural, in order to reveal a small slice of how print may have influenced the inner workings in the frontier. As Owen Lattimore has stated: 'Frontiers are of social, not geographic, origin… In large measure, when he [Turner, another frontier historian] thought he saw what the frontier did to society, he was really seeing what society did to the frontier'.[10]

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The emerging subdiscipline of the History of the Book is a vast and amorphous field that has, in the last two decades, begun to form a coherent shape. As outlined above, there have been three major foci for the study of books[11], outlined by Roger Chartier as the 'text itself, the object that conveys the text, and the act that grasps it'.[12] In its simplest form, the study of the text itself and its writers (within literary studies); the physical object and its production and circulation (bibliophiles and historians of printing and publishing); and finally the consumption of both the text and the material object which conveys it (scholars and students of readers and reading) – the three rubrics of

[10] Lattimore, O.: Studies in Frontier History. London, 1962. Quoted in Legassick, M: "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography". (P. 68)

[11] The word 'book' itself is fraught with debate regarding what this appellation signifies. In the context of this study, I shall restrict myself to the definition offered by Jonathan Rose and Ezra Greenspan, in which the word is a signifier for a fuller range of written communication and media, including books (codex), newspapers, periodicals, journals, manuscripts, and other ephemera. (See Greenspan, E. & Rose, J.: "An Introduction to Book History" in *Book History,* 1. 1998. (P. ix) quoted in Rubin, J. S.: Op Cit.) Karin Barber raises some of these issues in relation to the book in Africa, and calls for a reconception of the cross-cultural meaning that the word 'book' may entail, and views the characterisation of books ('… what its properties, conventions and possibilities are felt to be, in any given culture and historical moment' as critical to understanding the relationship between author/text and the audience. See Barber, K.: "Audiences and the Book in Africa" in *Current Writing,* 13 (2). October 2001. (P. 9)

[12] Chartier, R.: "Texts, Printings, Readings". (P. 161)

production, distribution and reception. Of course, these three categories cannot be separated with any ease, as Robert Darnton in his essay entitled 'What is the History of Books?' pointed out, theorizing a 'communications circuit' in which all of the role players (writers, publishers, printers, binders, booksellers, readers, state structures and so forth) function in deeply intertwined ways. Each of the actors in this circuit plays an important role, but it is the figure of the reader that 'completes the circuit, because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition'.[13] This view of the reader also places the writer or author within the ambit of study, as readers' impact writers, and writers can themselves be readers.

Bearing this in mind, it is also essential not to lose sight of the book as a material object that must come under close scrutiny, because it is the combination, in de Certeau's words, of the actualisation of a work (a reading) and its literality or *readable space* that allows a text to exist.[14] The readable space allows for actualisation, and it is the task of the historian to reconstruct the '… variations that differentiate the "readable space" (the texts in their material and discursive forms) and those which govern the circumstances of their "actualisation" (the readings seen as concrete practices and interpretive procedures)'.[15] Hofmeyr, Nuttall and Michael outline the reason why, in Africa, we should analyse the materiality of the book, as well as the text: 'The necessity for a more material engagement with the text is pressing, particularly since much in postcolonial literary studies relies on a markedly abstract notion of texts… we currently inhabit a world of postcolonial literary theory where texts have become their own agents'.[16] They go on to outline how a study of the materiality of the book can greatly enhance our

[13] Darnton, R.: "What is the History of Books?" in *Daedalus*, 3. Summer 1982. (P67)
[14] Michel de Certeau: The Practice of Everyday Life quoted in Chartier, R.: "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader". (P. 133)
[15] Chartier, R.: "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader". (P. 135)
[16] Hofmeyr, I. & Nuttall, S. with Michael, C. A.: "The Book in Africa" in *Current Writing*, 13 (2). October 2001. (P. 3–4)

understanding of precisely how and in what form texts are '… circulated, how they are used, taught and read, how their meanings are determined, not prior to their circulation but in the social arenas of their dissemination'.[17] This statement, however useful, does bring to light one concern – the idea that any focus should rest heavily only on the time *after* circulation has begun to take place – surely we should be looking at the initial attempts to circulate the text and create a public or audience for it? Close scrutiny of the modes in which certain orthodox readings may have been attempted, by the way in which they were marketed and conceived by authors, publishers and booksellers would tell us much about the imagined or implied readers and intentions of producers – as well as giving us some pointers as to what was in circulation at all within our imagined 'interpretive community'.[18] This information will give us the first steps toward what may have been thought of as constituting an audience or a public for these products.

Taking the cue from Jurgen Habermas, who saw the development of the public sphere as closely related to the rise of print culture and production, and the commercialisation of artistic form, large questions are raised regarding rational-critical discourse and the development, in essence, of the traces of democracy and the tensions between democracy and authority, as well as the formation of new ways of being public and social through the text-based public sphere. This view has been propagated by Michael Warner, who sees as central to the creation of the 'third' sense of public the *reflexive circulation* of

[17] Hofmeyr, I. & Nuttall, S. with Michael, C. A.: Ibid. (P. 4)

[18] One of the most important conceptual tools to arise from Reader-response theory is Stanley Fish's theoretical tool of the 'interpretive community' and is related to the idea that all sign systems are communal and meaning is located within the reader's self, and then the interpretive strategies that constitute it. Meaning, then, is 'a consequence of being in a particular situation in the world'. See Tompkins, J. P.: "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism" in Tompkins, J. P. (ed.): Reader-Response: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism Criticism. Johns Hopkins University Press, Maryland. 1980. (P. xxv)]

texts, where a concrete audience can potentially become an unbounded public.[19] It is how this self-conscious circulation is represented that interests us here.

The reader, within the scope of the history of the book, is absolutely critical as a central figure in the reception and consumption of print communications (in both their material and literary form). Studies of readers and reading have taken many different forms and delved into many areas of scholarship, bringing along with them very different conceptions of readers and reading. In an attempt to reinsert the figure of the reader into literary history, which had been effaced under the concepts of the New Criticism (which gave primacy to the text over the reader and assumed that meaning was embedded in the text itself) reader-response theories or theories of reception were developed. One of the main concerns to emanate from the debates over reader-response was the reinsertion of the importance of the reader to interpretations of a text. This critical trend succeeded in giving renewed vigour to the study of readers and the act of reading itself, and the modes and forms that reading can take and the effect this would have on creating differentiated meanings of the same text. It is at this meeting point of writer, reader, object and text that we could begin to understand how texts were used, what assumptions and methods of interpretation already existed within African societies, bringing into the equation the relationship between orality and literacy. The introduction of print culture to African societies within the colonial context has long been viewed as the imposition of literate cultures upon oral cultures – this conception is being exploded by new studies into literacy and orality that view African societies as having an environment pre-disposed to the incorporation of script and print.[20] We can also show how conceptions and uses of books informed identity, created new ways of being social, and used literature and

[19] Warner makes the distinction between *a* public and *the* public, and argues that there is a third sense of being public. Warner, M.: "Publics and Counterpublics" in Warner, M.: Publics and Counterpublics. Zone Books, New York. 2002. (P. 66)
[20] Barber, K.: "Audiences and the Book in Africa". (P. 10)

literacy to express '… social and economic aspirations within the rapidly changing and highly charged atmosphere of colonial society'.[21]

Studies of readers and their modes may lead to a closing of the gap between realms of readers, audiences and publics – why is there such a difference or gap? Is it because reading is presumed to be silent and internal, personal and carried out within the private sphere, whereas audiences are bounded and more prone to being oral rather than textual? As Robert Darnton states, for most people throughout most of history, books had audiences rather than readers.[22] This raises questions of the modes of reading employed by the community of readers within the Lovedale Literary Society. A set of detailed minutes exist for the period between 1936 and 1948,[23] and clearly reveals an established and documented interpretive community. Unfortunately, for the sake of brevity, I will not attempt to analyse this community in any great depth within the confines of this study – but it should be recognised that there still exists an important historical resource which has not yet been fully analysed.[24] I will, however, devote space to some of the published addresses to the Society, in order to gain an idea of how the Literary Society was being publicised, and how books and reading became part of a broader, more social movement, rather than simply being devoted to the study of Literature. Newell's parallel study of colonial Ghana revealed that while the interpretative space (in particular, Literary societies) invoked by Africans refracted particular European and missionary concepts of reading[25] which include interiority, silence, and truth, all performed in the

[21] Newell, S.: Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana. (P. 3)
[22] Darnton, R.: "First Steps Toward a History of Reading" in The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History. W. W. Norton & Company, New York. 1990. (P. 169)
[23] Hofmeyr, I.: The Portable Bunyan. (P. 124)
[24] For more information and an analysis of the Lovedale Literary Society, see Hofmeyr, I.: The Portable Bunyan. (P. 113–136)
[25] Different modes of reading are the subject of much debate within the history of reading. For more discussion on this topic, see Chartier, R.: "Labourers and Voyagers" as well as "The Practical Impact of Writing" in Finkelstein, D. & McCleery, A. (eds.): The Book History Reader. Routledge, London. 2002.

private sphere, new sets of associations also emerged in colonial Ghana where reading was linked to noise, debate, and the invocation of a type of public sphere. Literacy, in this context, becomes a social and practical application, as well a route to personal knowledge and a way of evoking new audiences and new publics.

The way books are defined in Africa must be studied in a historical context, and absolutely central to this configuration is the role of the reader, in terms of the reader's conception of books, use of books and the way in which books can both act as creators of new ways of being social and make sense of the changing order of the world, as well as provide some kind of template for constructing identity. The core of this study, dealing with readers and reading, is therefore interwoven with how the book, as an object, was conceived.

There is research that has begun to unpack some of these questions. The most notable and recent is Isabel Hofmeyr's study entitled *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of 'The Pilgrim's Progress'*.[26] Hofmeyr carefully constructs a narrative around John Bunyan's famous text, skilfully conveying the sense of transnationality within the circulation of this particular text. She also examines African mission elite readers and the Lovedale Literary Society, and their particular ways of reading and applying *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Hofmeyr's study has given a strong impetus for the seeds of development of this study, but Hofmeyr focuses on the readings of a particular text, and consequently there is still much to be learned from Lovedale and its readers. The other study to focus on Lovedale and literary history is Leon De Kock's *Civilising Barbarians*. De Kock has made an in-depth study of the construction of identity within narratives that came out of both mission

[26] Hofmeyr, I.: The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Wits University Press and Princeton University Press, Johannesburg and Princeton. 2004.

texts and the African elite response to these texts (which are both oral and scribal). De Kock has a very particular view of Lovedale (and more specifically, the Lovedale Literary Society) which lends its members an air of 'alienated black Englishness'.[27] This view raises questions of assimilation into colonial society and the idea that colonial orthodoxy would have been internalised, although De Kock argues strongly against this and asserts that colonizing discourse was appropriated by African writers and redeployed in subtle ways to counter the colonial dyads of good / bad, black / white.[28] In opposition to this conception is Stephanie Newell's frame of the 'paracolonial network'. Newell suggests that instead of mere assimilation and response to the imposition of cultural products by the first world, received more or less 'passively', we should rather view these networks as 'paracolonial',[29] as macrocultural studies of 'complex global power relationships' where the locally rooted reader becomes a translocal traveller, 'entering the "elsewhere" opened up by global electronic media, imagining themselves and their futures by refashioning goods and ideas brought in by these cultural flows, criss-crossing and interacting with one another in ways that defy the conventional definitions of culture as bounded by language, ethnicity and location'.[30] This sense of translocation and transnationlism is important because it seems to be so strongly presented within the journal, that to ignore it would be tantamount to perjuring oneself.

Jeffrey Peires, one of the leading historians of the Eastern Cape frontier, wrote an influential article dealing with aspects of the publishing history of the Lovedale Press.[31] Focusing on the period of R. H. Sheperd's influence (1930–1950), and the editorial

[27] This is Hofmeyr's view. She counters this by saying that a deeper view of the society must be sought in order to understand its function. See Hofmeyr, I.: The Portable Bunyan. (P. 124)
[28] De Kock, L. Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in the Nineteenth Century. Wits University Press and Lovedale Press, Johannesburg and Alice. 1996.
[29] [29] Newell, S.: Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: How to Play the Game of Life. Indiana University Press. 2002. (P. 27)
[30] Newell, S.: Ibid. (P. 27)
[31] Peires, J.: "Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited" in *English in Africa,* 7 (1). March 1980.

interference experienced by writers working for the Press (particularly on manuscripts dealing with Xhosa history), Peires opened up the production and distribution history of texts related to the Lovedale Press, but does not deal with the consumption of texts or objects in any meaningful way. His work provides a very useful background and institutional history of the Press itself.

Jeff Opland's article entitled "The Image of the Book in Xhosa Oral Poetry", documents the attitudes of Missionaries towards creating literacy within Xhosa society. Opland quotes a dialogue published in an early Xhosa journal, which '… asserts the benefits of literacy and the superiority of books over oral tradition."[32] This gives a small idea of the ethnocentric attitudes employed by missionaries. Opland also alerts us to the fact that by 1862, Xhosa writers and readers were contributing articles and letters, and that a textual public sphere was already well established. Images of the material objects of books and their functions made their way into oral poetry, but it seems that the views of books and writing were rather negative and related directly to colonial rule and as symbols of white deception. But does this hold true for most of society? Obviously, there is no empirical way of deciphering this, we can only attempt to flesh out how other people conceived and used books and texts in order to gain a fuller picture of the outlines of literary culture in the Eastern Cape.

A special relationship seems to exist between the material object and 'the act that grasps it' when taken to Africa, particularly within the context of the conceptual realm of colonialism and which has implications relating to literacy and orality, audience formation, the role of publics and all of the conceptions that are appended to that. As we have seen, there did exist a community (however linked) that actively pursued reading,

[32] Opland, J.: "The Image of the Book in Xhosa Oral Poetry" in *Current Writing,* 7 (2). 1995. (P. 32)

writing, debating – but we need to uncover some empirical detail of the processes that went into the making of this discursive community – by studying the readers and their books and then, critically, linking these empirical findings to social movements and cultural formations. It is only by doing this that we can avoid running the risk of the entire enterprise becoming antiquarian,[33] and to achieve a wider understanding of the place of books in both southern Africa, and indeed in a global society.

Methodology

This is necessarily a wide-ranging empirical study that has to draw in many fields and theories in order to piece together a slice of the history of books and reading, while attempting to remain within strict parameters of time and space. This study will bring together two ways of approaching the study of literary practices – the social formations surrounding reading; and analyses of the way in which books and printed matter were being circulated. One can never, as Robert Darnton asserts, really recreate the inner experiences of readers,[34] and placing them in a historical situation makes this all the more difficult. We can, however, attempt to reconstruct a good deal of the social context of reading. Use of statistical data to figure out who was reading what has proved useful elsewhere[35], but in this study is untenable and as Chartier has proposed, no longer sufficient, because the data yielded from analyses of libraries and so forth make overly simplistic correspondences in relation to social levels and cultural boundaries and miss the complex ways in which '…groups or individuals utilized shared themes or forms'.[36]

[33] Rubin, J. S.: "What is the History of the History of Books?" (P.5)
[34] Darnton, R.: "What is the History of Books?" (P. 79)
[35] See Pawley, C.: "Seeking Significance: Actual Readers, Specific Reading Communities" in *Book History*, 5. 2002.
[36] Chartier, R.: "Texts, Printing, Readings". (P. 171)

Instead, there will be a strong reliance on close, qualitative readings of certain historical artefacts and on representations of readers and reading.

Any attempt at this kind of history faces immediate methodological problems, one of which has been outlined by Chartier, who asks whether, in a history of reading, what should be placed at the centre: text or reader, as they are equally important.[37] This study restricts itself to analysing the social life of reading and the circulatory nature of texts, rather than in-depth textual analysis of one particular text. There is also the problem of using book reviews and advertisements as chronicles of what was being read, and signifiers of broader conceptions of books and reading; these texts need to be viewed *as* texts in their own right, with inherent conventions, forms and traditions, and as such need to be treated very carefully so that the information gained is treated as highly subjective. This study (it is hoped) will fulfill two prerogatives of any inclusive history of readers (and of the book). By looking at the way in which the *idea* of reading was textually imagined, which includes what was being read and how reading was being envisaged and promoted (through production and circulation), and by a study of reading and consumption practices, or at the least what information one can glean of consumption and actual readers embodied within the metatexts of the journal, we can study both the look from within and the look from without.[38] By combining close textual and literary analysis with material and historical research, as Priya Joshi points out, one can better understand 'literature's particular role in the technologies of colonialism'[39] but in a broader sense, one can better understand the development of a reading culture in South Africa. What should also be understood are the limitations of this study. It is not

[37] Chartier, R.: "Texts, Printing, Readings". (P. 156)
[38] Paraphrased from Joshi, P.: 'Consuming Fiction' in In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India. Columbia University Press, Columbia. 2002. (P. 14)
[39] Joshi, P.: Ibid. (P. 14)

intended as a comprehensive cultural history. Rather, it is a small historical sounding taken from the young roots of an emerging literary culture.

1

The Eager Thirst: Reconstructing Readerships

The aim of this first chapter, then, in light of what has already been discussed, is to closely analyze some of the ways in which readers can be reconstructed from within the confines of a single journal. The first part of this project is rather problematic in terms of methodology, as finding raw data in which reading is represented can often be a time-consuming and laborious process. In order to reconstruct this historical readership, I have had to adopt a two-pronged approach when viewing the journal. It must be viewed both as an important historical print artifact in its own right, but it also needs to be scrutinized for the historical archive that it has left behind. The journal itself has already begun to be disseminated in it own right; the publication of *Outlook on a Century* in 1973[40], with selections from the journal from 1870 to 1970 testifies to this, but it seems that the journal has never been studied from the perspective of either the history of the book or the history of reading. Contemporary views on 'Native Labour Policies' and policies of

[40] See Wilson, F. & Perrot, D. (eds.): Outlook on a Century: South Africa 1870-1970. Lovedale Press and Spro-cas, Lovedale and Braamfontein. 1973.

education take up a majority of the book – but much of the *missionary endeavor* regarding literacy, reading and books has never really been scrutinized. *The Christian Express* has been studied for the information that can be gleaned from its articles on South Africa – but rarely, if ever, has it been studied as a product of transnational circulation, a topic I would like to address with some vigour. The mission endeavor itself has long been recognized as having implicit transnational aspects. As Isabel Hofmeyr has stated:

> … the styles of reading and writing practices formulated by … local groupings are currently poorly understood. In part this has to do with the tendency to see broad social processes like imperialism, missionary activity and so on as transnational, while people, and particularly colonial subject[s], are seen as national.[41]

In fact, most studies in the history of the book or 'print culture' are grounded in a nationalist paradigm, the most obvious being Benedict Anderson and his study of nationalism in print. Even the theorist Michael Warner seems to be rather fixed within a nationalist rubric.[42] But there are complex mechanisms that point to a far larger world embedded within many missionary journals – and while it is not always easy to see these machinations at work, these circulations of abstracted notions of the world, the construction of the world at large in print, could have formed the basis of the technologies of modernity for allowing the transnational world in which we now live, to exist.

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[41] Hofmeyr, I.: '"Spread Far and Wide over the Surface of the Earth": Evangelical Reading Formations and the Rise of a Transnational Public Sphere – The Case of the Cape Town Ladies' Bible Association' Forthcoming in *English Studies in Africa,* January 2005.

[42] See Warner, M.: The Letters of the Republic. Harvard University Press, Harvard. 1992, although Warner does begin to remedy this in his later work, Publics and Counterpublics. Zone Books, New York. 2004. Both are concerned with either America or Britain, and reinforce the metropole / periphery dyad.

The first chapter shall devote itself to attempting to reconstruct a vision of what readers and what types of reading are suggested or could have been imagined within *The Christian Express*. Obviously, this approach leaves much to be desired from a methodological perspective, as many of the inferences that I shall make are, of necessity, highly subjective. David Hall, a leading book historian, has outlined a useful way in which one can reconstruct the reader and reading from their representation in text:

> Putting these parts together – representations of reading, writing and speech on one hand, and on the other the method of learning how to read and recorded responses to actual books – the historian can arrive at a complex description of what reading signified and possibly of how it was practiced within a particular social and historical setting.[43]

It must be remembered of course that this history of reading has not to do with 'real' readers, but 'with rules within texts and ideological representations of reading'.[44] This is a point that was made by Kathryn Shevelow. She insists that 'although textual representations of readers undoubtedly bear upon actual reading practices, as they were intended to … my focus on representation necessarily is a focus on readers as the periodicals constructed them – that is, on intended or inscribed readers'.[45] This is an important distinction to bear in mind.

The study restricts itself to analysing copies of *The Christian Express* between 1890 and 1895 – a period chosen for several reasons, the most pertinent of which was the content split of the journal originally known as the *Kaffir Express*, a bilingual monthly that eventually evolved into two separate journals, the English version of which became *The*

[43] Hall, D. D.: "Readers and Reading in America" in Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book. University of Massachusetts Press, Massachusetts. 1996. (P. 179)
[44] Hall, D. D.: "Readers and Reading in America". (P. 180)
[45] Cited in Hall, D. D.: "Readers and Reading in America". (P. 180, footnote 35)

Christian Express and the Xhosa version *Isigidimi Sama Xosa* in 1870, shortly before the outbreak of the last of the frontier wars in 1877.[46] This split could lead us to the conclusion that there were changes occurring on the frontier of the public sphere. One of the most pertinent was the opening up of a more inclusive textual public sphere. The 1890s were quickly proving to be a turbulent era. Lovedale was going through seismic changes, as had Xhosa society for the last forty years. The great famine brought about by the prophet, Nongqawuse, had brought Xhosa society to its knees by 1857,[47] playing directly into the hands of colonial government, who had used the weakened position of the Xhosa people to push further into the interior and to create stronger holds on land and people during the 1860s. The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and gold on the Witwatersrand suddenly made the labour force offered by the impoverished Xhosa people far more attractive. In this excerpt from *The Gazette*:

> Sir George Grey has distinctly given them to understand that there is plenty of work for all those who be industrious but that there is no bread for the idle… It would consequently be a direct interference in the policy of His Excellency. It would be a premium on idleness, and prevent the [Xhosa] from becoming what we would find it so much to our and their interest for them to be – labourers.[48]

Colonial plans for the Xhosa people were fairly simple, and those starving people arriving in towns were subjected to 'Victorian charity', a concept that saw the lower classes as needing poverty to become proper labourers. The Cattle Killing merely sped up Grey's plans for the Eastern Frontier, allowing him to change the physical and spiritual topography without hope of resurrection. The Xhosa were to become 'useful

[46] A brief history of the journal is available in Wilson, F. & Perrot, D.: Outlook on a Century: South Africa 1870–1970. Lovedale Press and Spro-cas, Lovedale and Braamfontein. 1973.
[47] Peires, J. B.: The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-killing Movement of 1856–57. Raven, Johannesburg. 1989. (P. 245)
[48]" Editorial". *King Williams Town Gazette*. June 13, 1857. Cited in Peires, J. B.: Ibid. (P. 245)

servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue'.[49] The Xhosa nation was to be broken up entirely, to lose its home and its culture. This strategy included the most insidious campaign of assimilation – which included the cultural conversion of people through discursive and material practices, and which touched nearly all aspects of everyday life, including housing, clothing, forms of labour, agriculture and importantly, worship.[50] The main protagonists of this cultural transformation (however witting) were evangelical missionaries, through the process of mission education. One of the leading institutions was Lovedale, situated on the banks of the Chumie River near a town called Alice, in the rural heart of the frontier. Lovedale, by the time of our textual arrival in 1890, had a rich history and is viewed as the largest and most influential missionary education institution in the country.[51] It was also the most productive creator of the new African elite. Literacy was at the heart of 'assimilation', as illustrated by this passage from Lovedale's Jubilee Celebrations in June, 1891, where the opening address of the Institution in 1841 was reprinted as a reminder of the foundations of the Institution. Laing and Bennie were both crucial players in the formation of Lovedale:

> He [Mr Laing] then took up the question of native agency, arguing not only for the employment of natives, but for their being sent forth with the advantages of education. And he then proceeded to explain and vindicate the principles of the proposed Seminary, particularly that of allowing and enabling the educated native to drink at the English fountains of literature, science, and practical godliness; and afterwards to employ himself dispersing abroad these very fountains through the medium of his mother tongue… 'Let us,' said several intelligent Kaffirs, 'have access to knowledge in English, for it is as a river, and, unlike our rivers, it is ever flowing and ever full.' Mr. Bennie on the conclusion of Mr Laing's address, rehearsed it briefly to the natives in their own language.[52]

[49] Peires, J. B.: The Dead Will Arise. (P. 247–48)
[50] De Kock, L.: Civilising Barbarians. (P. 49)
[51] De Kock, L.: Civilising Barbarians. (P. 69)
[52] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 252. July 1, 1891. (P. 97–98)

Several phases of the institution have been outlined, the first being that of William Govan (under who the above passage and its fairly clear messages fall); the second is the Stewart period (which directly precedes our interest – James Stewart leaves Lovedale in 1889) during which the cultural superiority so very clearly demarcated in the above passage makes way for more race-based superiority. Stewart tried very hard to win over the positive sentiment of the settler community, and agreed with settler demands to focus on educating as many African people as possible (to a fairly low level of literacy) rather than promoting an elite.[53] By 1890, there was clear dissatisfaction among the educated African elite with missionary paternalism, and there comes during the years that follow a move toward secessionism (for example, Mzimba's formation of the African Presbyterian Church); and the creation of an independent African protest press, which represented the interests of the African petty bourgeoisie.[54] The period 1890–95 is also important because it marks the temporal epicentre of a period in South Africa's history during which socio-political and economic changes were forging ahead. Race, class and nation were becoming very important issues for debate, and new public spheres were being opened up by print mediums – questions of civilisation and franchise were becoming openly debated within very different strata of South African society. The central question raised then is how these new arenas were being accessed, and by whom? It is within the confines of these new practices of textual identification that mission-based education becomes important – and to which we shall now turn to in order to construct a picture of how print technology and the importance of reading and books were presented. I am interested in the mechanics of these technological and cultural 'innovations', and hope to analyse them by looking at their representation from without,

[53] Switzer, L.: "South Africa's Alternative Press in Perspective" in Switzer, L. (ed.): South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880s – 1960s. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1997. (P. 24)
[54] Switzer, L.: "South Africa's Alternative Press in Perspective" (P. 3)

rather than from within. This entirely new public sphere was created both through knowledge gained about representing audiences and readers from Europe, but a newer, more local layer was added when the African elite were created – what effect did this have on the way in which reading and 'the public' were presented within contemporary journals such *The Christian Express*?

If we look to the journal itself, at the first page of the first volume for 1895[55], the first column is headed 'To Our Native Friends and Readers'. This kind of address is a normal strategy for journals of this type, a generic form used since the seventeenth century at least.[56] But there are two interesting things to note about this address – first the odd split between 'Native Friends' and 'Readers'. Are they not one and the same, or is there a conscious hierarchization being implied by the editor of the periodical? Are the readers of this journal not also 'Native Friends'? This hierarchization is an important facet of the colonial encounter, and this illustrates very simply the complexity of colonial hierarchy – whilst a 'native' might be a reader as well, they are addressed (possibly) as both 'reader' *and* 'native friend', but these categories could be read to be exclusive of one another – indeed, a very complex situation for any reader of the journal. The column discusses with great vigour the changes that the Eastern Cape Frontier was undergoing, and relates three imperatives for 'Native Friends' – being Education, Industry and Moral Character. But the modern reader soon realizes that the addressed reader is implicitly unrelated to the 'Native Friends', although we could make the assumption that there were in fact 'native' African people reading the journal (and more than assumption, there are detailed subscription lists in every issue which I shall discuss, that show that there were indeed African readers) and the 'Native' is written in as a third person, an object of study:

[55] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 293. January 1, 1895. (P. 1) Page numbers are related to the collected volume for the year 1895, and do not relate to each issue exclusively.
[56] Hall, D. D.: Op Cit. (P. 178).

> To our native friends and readers we offer a few words of greeting and good wishes for the year which is now beginning. The year that has just ended is one which has caused them a good deal of anxiety and perturbation of feeling. Certain rights and privileges, or individual liberties, in the possession of which they had believed themselves to be perfectly secure, have been somewhat suddenly ignored or taken from them. Their right to sell their labour, in common with any other property they possess, to whomsoever they pleased – or not to sell it, if they did not wish to do so – has been one of these disturbed beliefs… [57]

The column continues in a similar fashion. Whilst the implied problematic 'race relations' were usual for the time period, it does tell us much about the ways in which readers were expected to relate to subject matter and indeed how to make sense of the world of reading itself – this is a perfect example of the early English liberal humanists that became so peculiar to South Africa. This point is very interesting because only six years after the journal was begun, as both English and Xhosa represented under the *Kaffir Express* banner in 1870, the two languages split apart and were published separately as *The Christian Express* and *Isigidimi samaXhosa*. The real nature of readerships potentially changed rather considerably, and what we have seen evoked by the editor of *The Christian Express* here is indicative of what the reader may have been like. By both instructing the reader *how* to read what may be *within this* text, the reader is also being instructed on how to read the world and at the same time imagine him/herself as part of a broader readership (simply put, this is the nature of the printed artifact and the printed public sphere), which while including 'native' people in a potential reading world, also excludes 'them'. As a piece of the textual public, it soon becomes apparent, *The Christian Express*

[57] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 293. January 1, 1895. (P. 1)

was neither impartial nor open to everyone and runs contrary to Habermas' notions of the equality of print and the fostering of a knowledgeable, disinterested citizenry.[58]

How else were readers imagined, both as a public for the journal, but as readers in a broader world? Piecing together the fragments of representation, we see many different types of readers, including missionaries from all over the world, teachers in schools, sympathetic Victorian philanthropists, teachers from neighbouring districts, colonist-settlers from all over Africa, pupils in mission and out-station schools all over Africa; the list is potentially endless. Of course, these readers are purely speculative, and there should be an attempt to realize the fruits of what close readings of *The Christian Express* could offer us. The first set of 'hard' readers we encounter would be those involved in the educational institution at Lovedale. The students were absolutely critical to the mission endeavour and education was a matter reported with vigor, the end result of which was good 'Christian character'.[59] In an address to the Lovedale Literary Society in 1890, Reverend T Durant-Philip explains the expected result of education:

> Remember that knowledge is only of value as it is carried out in action. The man who teaches a school, or who ministers to a congregation, or who edits a newspaper,– each is putting his knowledge to practical use. What you learn must be put into practice, young man, and young woman too. It is to you that your people are looking to be their leaders, their teachers, their guides to higher civilization and Christianity. The eyes of your people are upon you to be examples of what men ought to be. Quite you, then, like men and be strong.[60]

Quite clearly, rather than merely debating aspects of literature and book-learning, the Society acted as a sounding board and space for rehearsing the tools needed in order to

[58] Rubins, J. S.: "What is the History of the History of Books?" (P. 13)
[59] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 246. January 1, 1891. (P. 2)
[60] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 246. January 1, 1891. (P. 2)

become 'leaders' within colonial African society. 'Literature' as a category played the role of providing fuel for debate and thus led to the preparation of leaders for the 'community'.[61] The Society thus acted as an entirely new public sphere, with a rooted audience who were both readers and listeners. What is interesting in this paragraph is the emphasis on the practical use of knowledge – the concept of knowledge and book-learning being enough to fill a space within the colonial hierarchy is simply not enough, but book learning can indeed be used to advance oneself. Also to be noted is the reference here to women, which are scarce within the pages of the journal. Women are mentioned, but rarely within relationships to power, whilst here there is a direct reference to the role that women ought to play. Of course, the reference is glancing, as male power is asserted toward the end of the excerpt in the exhortation to be 'quite you, then, like men and be strong'.

In August 1891, as part of the Jubilee celebrations at Lovedale, a supplement to the journal again notes the words of Durant-Philip on the role of book-learning and education are further explicated:

> A little knowledge is a dangerous thing… Lovedale is founded not to give a little knowledge, but to give more, so as to make the pupils know themselves and take their proper place in life, that is to bring them to the point at which they can use, in their daily lives, the knowledge they have acquired… And the Kaffirs should be commended, not condemned, for seeking after it more and more eagerly… I have heard of men from Kimberley mines… putting down on the table as much as £80, the savings of years of hard, unhealthy toil, saying "Teach us!" and then going and sitting down in the station school with little children to begin their education from the ABC. But there is a higher power that knowledge gives than the power to read books. It gives men spiritual power also… it is power over the

[61] Hofmeyr, I.: The Portable Bunyan (P. 126)

> hearts of men, over the souls of men to turn them from moral and spiritual darkness to light.[62]

The usual colonial dyads of light and dark are used here to illustrate what the power of reading and books can accomplish, in daily life and in a social sense, but it is once again asserted that simply being able to read is not enough to act as a vehicle for moral upliftment, but the only true way to have moral and spiritual fortitude is to be able to read and apply that to one's life. This is of course the opinion of Durant-Philip. In a later issue of the journal we find a transcription of the Chairman of the Lovedale Literary Society's opening address in 1891, entitled 'Reflections on the Lovedale Jubilee, or Some of the Influences That Really Tell on the African Races'. The Chairman was John Knox Bokwe, ardent Africanist and Post-Master General of Lovedale. He talks of the evil which Britain has brought upon Africa, and which only Britain can remedy. He responds to Durant-Philip's address with the following:

> The great fault of our race is that we are too easily contented with the education of the Standards. Now, let me put it to you plainly,– that is only the ABC of your education – the ABC and nothing more. You are poor specimens if you think that you have reached the summit of education when you have passed the School Higher, or the Teacher's Examination'.[63]

This statement echoes Durant-Philip, but places the emphasis on 'our race'. What is interesting is the next paragraph, entitled 'Literature':

> The thirst for education is good, and I rejoice to see it; but until our race are more athirst for reading, they will remain at the Standards, and be conceited. I want to see a desire for reading, and I want to see greater facilities for reading.

[62] Supplement to *The Christian Express*. Vol. XX, No. 253. August 1, 1891. (P. 129)
[63] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 254. September 1, 1891. (P. 150)

> Translations from English into Kaffir are few. But whose fault is it? If we had the desire for reading in our own language that would create a demand for it, and what is to hinder the native students from meeting this demand? They know how to express thoughts in their own language better than most Europeans. There are surely some who have the literary gift. They must rise to the occasion, they must write and translate, and be the pioneers of a Native Literature.

Bokwe is here advocating a strong reading culture, but suggests it in order to, in Priya Joshi's words, 'rescript the colonial narrative and create a new role and new possibilities for themselves within it'.[64] Reading thus is still viewed as an upwardly mobile pursuit, but for very different reasons to those advocated by Durant-Philip. Africans, the Chairman of the Literary Society advocates, thus find a way of consuming colonial dominance and diverting the apparatus of domination (books, literacy and reading); he restructures and realigns them in order to fulfill his own social priorities. We also see evidence that reading is not simply about the ability to read, but also about the habitual *practice* of reading.[65] He continues:

> We have one or two newspapers, the *Imvo* at King Wm's. Town and the *Umhlobo* at Queenstown, and these are doing in their own sphere an incalculable amount of good. But we need more, and literature of a loftier kind than they provide. The native mind is open, and ought to be constantly supplied. The native needs must find expression through native channels, else their word will never be listened to, their voice will never be heard. I say to the students of to-day, 'Bend your minds to this task; apply your talents thus for the good of your people; be yourselves earnest and industrious, and your powers and energies will reflect upon the mass, and help to raise the people to a higher and more intellectual standard.'[66]

[64] Joshi, P.: Consuming Fiction. (P. 23)
[65] Shevelow, K.: Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical. Routledge, London. 1989. (P. 31)
[66] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 254. September 1, 1891. (P. 150)

Bokwe is here exhorting the attendees of the Literary Society to use reading, knowledge and education in a far more creative and dynamic way than suggested by Durant-Philip. Instead of simply being content with using reading as an aspirational, spiritual tool, he suggests that it instead be used for social means. Not only to be a Christian, but also to identify oneself as an African, and write in such a way that gives voice to the African experience within the colonial context. Joshi describes this act of consumption as a weapon and the agency of the weak, through the process of mimicry of the strong.[67] Reading then becomes not only a private, internal function but also leads into writing and social and cultural debate about power. This is in stark contrast to an unacknowledged piece written earlier in that year that highlights some of the more unpalatable truths of the colonial quest:

> The old fancy of the educated Native being inferior to the uneducated is sinking in to the abyss of things men are ashamed of, and the need for Natives who can read and write and do more than lazily wait upon a flock of sheep or milk a cow, is increasing every day. There will always be a supply of the lower grade, for nature provides them in plenty. Some effort is needed to produce the better sort, and when among the Natives themselves there is found a desire corresponding to this new demand, then is the time for the state to meet and foster that desire.[68]

Education was not only defined in such lofty terms – it also had a very practical application, from which we can deduce a fair amount of what was being taught and read by learners. We have detailed descriptions of what mission-based education included, of which two streams are identifiable. There existed an academic stream, in which book-learning was central, complemented by the thinly-disguised 'vocational training', which included printing and book-binding (which took the place of masonry), gardening, the

[67] Joshi, P.: Consuming Fiction. (P. 25)
[68] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 248. March 2, 1891. (P. 33)

maintenance of the Lovedale grounds, waggonmaking (sic) and building work,[69] and for women there was laundry work, sewing and dress-making. The emphasis of this education was to 'civilise races emerging from barbarism'[70] but the function it also had, particularly in relation to printing and bookbinding, was to give Africans the skills to create a media environment themselves (the emergence of an independent African protest press in the Eastern Cape in the 1880s testifies to this).

In March 1895, the 1896 University School Examination syllabus was published. The subjects that were taught included English History between 1485 and 1688; Latin included *Themistocles*, Cicero's *De Imperio Cnaii Pompeii* and Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Even more interesting are the details of the English syllabus, including Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, and Macmillan's edition of *Selections from the Spectator*. Of particular interest is the History syllabus, of which a special subject is 'Outline of English History, 1660–1871, with Descriptive Geography as connected with this period. [The attention of candidates should be directed to those events which have principally affected the growth of the Constitution and the Empire, and the position of England as a European power.][71] It is obvious from this small sampling that books read within the confines of the school were completely Anglophone and directed toward an English education. This could have acted as part of both the colonizing mission, but also reflects class and status amongst different sectors of the population, the English colonists and African pupils alike. There is an interesting article which asserts that the status of English was regarded as higher by the missionaries than other languages, and must have had an effect on readers of the journal, as well as on how language was conceived and placed in a hierarchy between colonists and settlers themselves. We should never forget how fractured colonial society was even

[69] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 246. January 1, 1891. (P. 11)
[70] De Kock, L.: Civilising Barbarians. (P. 71)
[71] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 295. March 1, 1895. (P. 48)

amongst colonists and settlers. The following appears in the review entitled 'An Interesting Book' which deals with a French missionary's autobiography, 'My Life in Basutoland'. When the author, Eugene Casalis, goes to Franschoek (called French Hoek) in the Cape, he comes across some descendants of the French Huguenots:

> He found them sunk into a state of religious formalism. He describes with clear perception the causes of this deplorable fall from the piety of their forefathers. First of all, in place of attempting to elevate the Hottentots, they joined the earlier colonists in hunting them down for the smallest robbery of cattle; and, it may be added, they shared also in the sin of slaveholding. Then by the Dutch law which interdicted the use of French in official business, in churches, and in schools, the French language disappeared and with it the power of reading the good books which nourished the piety of their fathers, and handed down the holy and noble traditions of the past. Out of this religious declension, and their treatment of the Hottentots, arose that bitter prejudice against the coloured people which continues to the present day.[72]

So the ability to read (or not, in this case), and in certain languages, is linked directly to both religious declension as well as the rise of settler racism. The language issue is one that is written about often, although the most scathing attacks are on the Afrikaans language, described in such terms: 'The *Taal* however is not a language but a mere gibberish, with neither grammar, vocabulary, nor literature'.[73]

Not only were books and reading encouraged and discussed in the school environment, but there were also libraries, whose use was encouraged. Lovedale had a busy, full library, which opened its doors to 'the public' in 1876, and contained, in April 1891, roughly 6,200 volumes (although this number excludes 'duplicates and obsolete books, which

[72] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 250. May 1, 1891. (P. 67)
[73] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 248. March 2, 1891. (P. 31)

have been stowed away for want of space).[74] *The Christian Express* noted with extreme care the goings-on of the library:

> The number of those who took out books during the year is 79. This number includes 8 students who take out one book at a time for half the usual subscription. The subscriptions received amount to £42 3 6, with no arrears outstanding. Though the number of subscribers is smaller than last year, the number of books read is larger. The total number taken out was about 2600. An addition of 168 volumes was made to the Library, 153 of which were from Mudie's. The want of a complete catalogue has long been felt, but that is now in course of preparation, and is partly printed.[75]

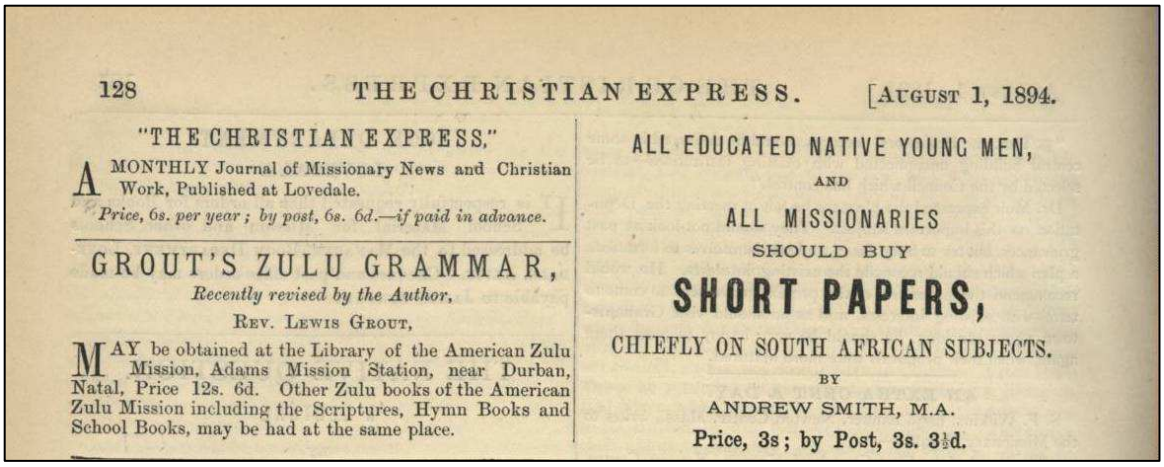
Access to the library was both about literacy and financial means, and it seems that books were readily available for perusal by most of the inhabitants of Alice. What is particularly fascinating is the fact that, of the 168 new titles, 153 of them came directly from London, supporting the centre / periphery debate of cultural transmission, and highlighting the transnational aspect of book purchasing and circulation within the colonies. A quick glance through the catalogue reveals on overwhelming number of books produced in England, purchased at Mudie's bookshop in London.[76] There was also a library at nearby Blythswood, whose report is fairly similar: 'The Library opened last year [1889] has been well patronized by Europeans in the district, and a few Native Teachers have taken advantage of it.'[77] Books were also available from bookshops, and Lovedale had a large store nestled in the centre of the Institution. Called 'The Book Room', advertising was carried out regularly within the pages of *The Christian Express*. The majority of titles were the products of the Lovedale Press. One of the press' most important titles (assumed due to the large typeface and careful design of the advertisement) was the third edition of

[74] Catalogue of the Library of the Lovedale Missionary Institution. Lovedale, 1891. (P. iv)
[75] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 246. January 1, 1891. (P. 14)
[76] Catalogue of the Library of the Lovedale Missionary Institution. Lovedale, 1891. (P. iv)
[77] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 247. February 2, 1891. (P. 19)

'Uhambo Lo Mhambi: The Kaffir Pilgrim's Progress', a critical text through much of the late nineteenth century.[78] The book is advertised as having new illustrations, and is sold in 'Neatly Bound Cloth Cases' – an important accessory for the learned and aspirational reader to display education and class. The books were also sold singly or in batches, reminding us that this is a transnational journal, so all advertising and indeed sales were done within local, national and international frames, and so were increasingly geared toward these markets. The journal advertises itself, as well as other similar journals, such as *The Leselinyana*, published at the Morijah Press, general school books, the publications of the Tract Society, an active organization within Lovedale. The tracts themselves are advertised as being 'well printed on good paper of various colours', indicating perhaps that coloured paper was a novelty item sure to attract readers. The technology of printing is also often brought up in relation to printed material, creating a sense of attempting to familiarize readers with the jargon associated with print mediums. The titles of the tracts include '*Izitanda Bunyama* by Dr W A Soga. Nine reasons given by the heathen for not believing in Christ, and replies to them', '*How to be Saved*' (which would shortly be available in Xhosa), '*Okutetwa ngu Tixo*. Verses from the Bible about sin and salvation. Also to be had in Sesuto'. All of these titles contain religious advice on how to be a good Christian.[79] Evidently, part of being a good, literate Christian would be to exchange written pleasantries, as there were also advertised certain oddities, such as Christmas Carols and Christmas and New Year Cards.[80]

An advertisement in August 1894[81] looks as follows in Fig 1.1.

[78] See Hofmeyr, I.: The Portable Bunyan (Chapter Five) for further information on Lovedale and 'The Pilgrim's Progress'.
[79] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 299. July 1, 1895. (P. 112)
[80] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXI, No. 266. September 1, 1891. (P. 152) and Vol. XXII, No. 269. December 1, 1892. (P. 200)
[81] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXIV, No. 288. August 1, 1894. (P. 113)



128 THE CHRISTIAN EXPRESS. [AUGUST 1, 1894.

"THE CHRISTIAN EXPRESS."

A MONTHLY Journal of Missionary News and Christian Work, Published at Lovedale.

Price, 6s. per year; by post, 6s. 6d.—if paid in advance.

GROUT'S ZULU GRAMMAR,

Recently revised by the Author,

REV. LEWIS GROUT,

MAY be obtained at the Library of the American Zulu Mission, Adams Mission Station, near Durban, Natal, Price 12s. 6d. Other Zulu books of the American Zulu Mission including the Scriptures, Hymn Books and School Books, may be had at the same place.

ALL EDUCATED NATIVE YOUNG MEN,

AND

ALL MISSIONARIES

SHOULD BUY

SHORT PAPERS,

CHIEFLY ON SOUTH AFRICAN SUBJECTS.

BY

ANDREW SMITH, M.A.

Price, 3s; by Post, 3s. 3½d.

Figure 1.1 An advertising sample

The reader envisaged within the advertisement for 'Short Papers' is not imagined, but quite clearly 'Educated Native Young Men' and 'Missionaries'. This is also clearly a sales technique by the publishers of the journal, creating a sense of community by using the word 'All', alerting these readers that to be without Smith's book would be a grave social mistake. Coupled to the sales techniques employed is the increased work of the postal system, which makes circulation and access a far simpler task. The technology surrounding the postal system is constantly analyzed, and highlights localized and international circulation. Letters and parcels sent to Lovedale during 1895 exceeded 50,000, excluding the journal subscriptions themselves, and certain other published materials.[82]

This chapter has had at its core a reconstruction of the reading world that was created through the pages of *The Christian Express*. Our analysis has lead us to view education as critical to the colonial and mission imperative – in the promotion of literacy, reading, writing and to developing complex relationships with print culture. We should however not forget that the peculiar situation of the Eastern Cape public sphere was, when we

[82] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 300. August 1, 1895. (P. 113)

regard race, class and nation, one not impartial or equitable. Print in this situation, clearly demonstrated by *The Christian Express*, does not always allow for enfranchisement and inclusion, in fact, as Kathryn Shevelow says, 'if we insist upon equating access to the mechanisms of print exclusively with metaphors of enfranchisement and inclusion rather than those of restriction and containment',[83] we are likely to be confronted with a rather different set of representations. Ultimately, we are left with a vision of the restrictions that liberalism imposed upon itself. We can also see that these readerships are regarded as occupying very different positions within the colonial hierarchy, and this in turn impacted upon position within the limited public sphere. Of course, people such John Bokwe sought out ways of resisting print orthodoxy and in turn using these appropriated tools of colonialism in order to create an (other), African public sphere.

[83] Shevelow, K.: Women and Print Culture. (P. 1)

2

‘Not Heathen, But Atheists’: Modes of Reading

The second imperative in this history of books, readers and reading is to attempt a construction of the modes of reading implicit and explicit within the confines of the journal. A point which gradually came into sight is to view the Eastern Cape missionary endeavor, and its articulation in print, as a rehearsal for creating certain modes of reading: these could include transnational reading – the particular mechanics of reading the world as constructed within a specific locality; the conception of the oppositional reader; the true and false reader (particularly when related to the bible and biblical reading); a way of reading the world that is constructed by the inscription of that world in print, a kind of geographical literacy as a mode of reading. All of these will be explored within this chapter, but there is a warning that Leon De Kock advocates; he suggests that researchers should be wary of attempting to retrieve the lost subaltern subject as a ‘recovered, authentic voice’, but that one can however seek to determine nuances of

expression, without imposing a unitary colonial subject or a general colonial (or in this case, missionary) consciousness.[84]

We begin then by analyzing one of the most straightforward modes of reading the journal accesses – reading for pleasure. In a review entitled 'The Dark Land and Other Poems' is printed:

> This is a volume of verse printed here and to be had from the Book Room. What Tennyson calls the "sad, mechanic exercise" of verse-making is neither always sad nor only 'mechanic.' It is a means, as well as proof, of mental culture, and an elevating relaxation. Here are poems both grave and gay – narrative, lyric, sarcastic, and philanthropic. Some are local, for example a vigorous, rollicking song of "The Kurveyor," and some are reminiscent of days and places far away. For half-a-crown any one may get in this book many a pleasant quarter of an hour.[85]

The importance of reading for pleasure is here linked to 'proof' of mental culture, an important element in understanding what modes of reading were considered appropriate. Interiority and silence are being given headway and are not only promoted but approved of, due to the benefits that one might obtain. We also see that the book of verse is printed at Lovedale, and contains some local poets. It is interesting that the local nature of the writing is deemed important, and we could infer that much poetry is drawn from outside the immediate location, or perhaps even South Africa. It is also made clear that the book is accessible both in level and in price – an important imperative for the publishers of book the book and the journal (who are of course, one and the same.)

[84] De Kock, L.: Civilising Barbarians. (P. 107)
[85] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXI, No. 269. December 1, 1892. (P. 186)

Reading (as we have seen in the previous chapter) is employed as an explicit act for making sense of the world, but it is also a fantastic representation of the way in which the printed item is circulated and distributed within an empirical world, as well as offering a glimpse at the way in which reading (as an act and as representation) can have different meanings. Education and the bible are the lenses through which this is framed. When beginning this project I (rather naively) underestimated the role of the Bible and just how often the images of it are conjured up within the missionary narratives. There is a dense report in February 1891, from the Rev. A. J. Wookey in Kuruman, entitled 'A Bechuana Missionary's Outing' in which the writer relates his travels through different parts of Bechuanaland. The entourage's first call was to a village on the Batlaro side of the Kuruman district, Madibeng:

> Here there lives a well-known opponent of all Christian teaching, Mabihi. He is an oldish man. He has a bible, can read, and knows a good deal about the Scriptures, and yet is bitterly opposed to everything of the kind. We outspanned by his village, and I think he was glad to see us. He gave us a sheep to slaughter. I held service at his courtyard, or khotla, at which only some five or six men were present beside himself. The rest of the people were afraid to come, as some of them told me afterwards. The old chief was very kind to us, however, and took the trouble to go with us some distance, so as to put us into the right road to the next place. [86]

Is this an example of oppositional reading? What has Mabihi done with his knowledge of scripture? If we are to take a transnational analysis of reading practices throughout the world, then Vanessa Smith's work on reading in early mission encounters in the nineteenth-century Pacific could shed some light on what is happening in this encounter. Whilst Smith's work deals with *initial* encounters, this example is one from a later period,

[86] Rev. A. J. Wookey: 'A Bechuana Missionary's Outing' in *The Christian Express*. Vol. XX, No. 247. February 2, 1891. (P. 24)

where the transmission of literacy has already been undertaken. In her formulation, the transmission of literacy is not enough for the European missionary to accept that the reader has become a true reader-convert – rather, genuine conversion is not signaled by displays of reading, but rather by the evidence 'of a facility for interpretation'.[87] So the case of Mabihi is perhaps an example of oppositional reading and interpretation – but the resistance that Mabihi shows to the bible and conversion evidently becomes subsumed under the narrative, where the service that is held is poorly attended – but some of the people, we are led to believe, are afraid to attend due to the implied power of the chief, which (also implied) they would rather not upset. The report continues:

> From the pan we went on, some three or four miles farther, to the village of Maubelwe. This place was felt to be a rendezvous for people who have tried to get away as far as possible from Christianity and English rule. Here we found Bechuana atheists out and out; not heathen, but atheists. Some of them could read and write, and seemed otherwise intelligent. They asked for ink and paper etc. but they will have no preaching, no service, no schools. They would rather be eaten by lions, or die of hunger and thirst in the desert bush that have anything of the sort – at least, so one of them said.

Wookey is here faced with a dilemma. Not only can these people read and write, but they are *actively* avoiding Christianity and 'English rule'. Their ability to read has allowed them to understand the Christian mission – and reject it. But note that they are described within Christian generic terms – these people are willing to be 'eaten by lions' or 'die of hunger and thirst in the desert bush'. Wookey is clearly textually denying these people access to their own atheism, by placing them within the Christian idiom. The mission group then goes on to trade with the people and arrange a camp for the night, where

[87] Smith, V.: Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1998. (P. 2)

some of the local people join them and some of the young men in the village talk to them:

> Their talk was very bad, ridicule and abuse being heaped on missionaries, and books, and everything belonging to them. Our girls argued well, but being unable to cope with them in their abuse, of their own accord started singing. Like most natives, they can sing nicely. Our men and boys joined in, and at last fairly drove the scoffers off the field, for they suddenly got up and went off without saying good-night. I never saw anything better done.

This seems to be the description of a counterpublic that has arranged itself around their disinclination to both political domination, but also their refusal to read the bible or be taught Christian doctrine. But if we analyze this passage with more depth, it soon becomes apparent that Smith's conception of the true and false reader is now coming to the fore. The 'atheists', according to this reading, are actually only a backdrop against which the true converts are operating. Within this narrative, it is perhaps not the atheists who are being highlighted, but actually Wookey's 'girls' and 'boys'. The abuse that the missionaries and their books receive is countered here by the invocation of song – 'like most natives, they can sing nicely'. It is the power of the oral that ultimately drives the atheists away, and although we do not know what is being sung, is it stretching the point too far to read that the group are singing biblically-inspired hymns? Could this be the sign of true conversion? If they were not, it is still the invocation of the oral that holds sway. How then, does Wookey at the same time acknowledge this power, whilst asserting another, higher power? He goes on to conclude his report, describing his next stop, Honing Vley:

> Here lives Bareki, a Batlaro chief, and a number of people. Some time ago Bareki shut up the little church, and for a long time would not allow the people to hold

> any service. We tried to get him to open the church and let the people meet, but he refused. At last we put the account of the matter in our native paper, *Bechuana News*. The result was Bareki opened the church, though he abuses us roundly for exposing him. I held service there. Bareki gave Mrs. Wookey a fine fat sheep, as he said that he had no dispute with her.

Vanessa Smith's description of encounters in the Pacific is apposite:

> The straining evident in [the] narrative, as the author betrays his anxiety to re-establish a patronizing control over Polynesians who have appropriated, rather than been transformed by, literacy, is a recurrent phenomenon within early Pacific accounts. Not only the missionaries who made literacy a project, but the beachcombers, travelers and traders who regarded it as a form of distinction, register in their writings the disconcerted sense that the culture of print, in new hands, threatens to escape them. There is a recurrent, if suppressed recognition that, with the transmission of literacy, the prerogative of interpretation has been surrendered. It is the Western authorial prerogative that is actively asserted in the description of Polynesian responses to writing: absurdist narratives which illustrate, anxiously, that the Polynesian reader remains the object of European writing.[88]

If we delete all of the references to Polynesia within this extract, and insert 'Bechuanans', we are left with an interesting paragraph that shows that similar things were happening all around the world. But there is one point that extends further than Smith's reading, and that is insertion of the oral into the account. The power of the oral, within Wookey's narrative is at the same time then recognized, but hierarchized within a cosmology of technology, where it is recognized that the oral is powerful (and can at the same time display interpretation and get rid of atheists), but ultimately, the written has more power because it can open churches long closed in accordance to the tyranny of the African

[88] Smith, V.: Op Cit. (P. 4–5)

heathen chief. Print acts as a powerful method to 'expose' the itinerant chief and get the church opened. Of course, the reader is not sure of what, exactly, the chief has been exposed – but the fact remains that it was the power of print that allowed this wonderful scene to take place.

A further example of what Vanessa Smith describes as 'the disconcerted sense that the culture of print, in new hands, threatens to escape them' is brought to light in completely different circumstances. In an editorial article entitled 'Education and Forged Native Passes', the escalating problem of forgery of work passes and brandy orders becomes not a question of opportunism, but becomes embedded in the race and education question. The missionaries complain that the result of forgery is for rabidly racist settlers to blame the missionaries for educating Africans, upon whom the effect of education is 'mischievous'.[89] The answer is to blame not education, but defective education. To show how simply some missionaries viewed African people, witness:

> Probably the native does not distinguish between a forgery and a verbal lie, and does not understand the serious nature of his crime… we expect far too much in the way of moral improvement from education, or rather as it should be expressed, from mere instruction in the power to read and write and deal with numbers. No missionary educates under the idea that he is thereby of necessity making his converts morally better.[90]

This is an almost complete turnaround from some of the ideas we saw expressed in Chapter One, and shows both that the missionaries were not simply chasing one homogenous ideal, but also that ideas were changing – was the power of print perhaps beginning to escape them? Book learning suddenly comes under fire, and *The Christian*

[89] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 299. July 1, 1895. (P. 97)
[90] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 299. July 1, 1895. (P. 97)

Express begins to debate the power of reading and books, from what seems to have been a fairly straightforward view of reading as having an innate ability to better the mind, to being openly questioned by a Mr Gladstone of *The Spectator*, and endorsed by the *CE* editor:

> Even when education is fairly thorough, the book-man is seldom the superior in character of the man of action who hardly opens a book. The cultivated are just as passionate, just as greedy, just as lustful, as the uncultivated. A man is not less furious with an enemy because he has read many books, or less greedy of unearned luxury because he comprehends the law of numbers, or the methods of chemical combinations. The popular notion that an educated world will be a good world, is as much without foundation as the other notion that it will be a happy world. The eternal causes of unhappiness, are with the slight exception of some forms of physical pain, not removed nor removable by knowledge, nor are the eternal provocations to wrong doing.[91]

This view of reading and learning is one that denies the agency of reading as an act in itself, as well as the 'popular' conceptions of the effect that reading and book-knowledge can have on the mind. The fact that there is a 'popular notion' is itself also important, and gives us clues as to how reading may have been perceived on a broader scale.

Reading the bible can also give us clues as to how the act or practice of reading could be undertaken. In an extract taken from a Ceylon missionary, we find an interesting narrative:

> I was spending the night in one of our pastors' houses, and took up a Singalese Bible, which happened to be the one used by his wife. I noticed that, towards the end of the book, where I had opened it, all the chapters were marked with five

[91] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 299. July 1, 1895. (P. 98)

> small dots. I turned to the beginning of the Book, and there I found six dots over a chapter, and this was the case for about one or two books of the Bible. I was puzzled at first what they meant, but came to the conclusion that the owner was reading through that Bible for the sixth time; and upon inquiry how often she had read that Bible from beginning to end, she replied, 'I am reading it for the sixth time.' Her life is in keeping with that habit.[92]

The reading strategy taken up by the pastor's wife was, then, used to textually mark the piety according to which she lived her life. Another mission narrative relates the presence and importance of not only reading, but writing, in the cycles of life. Mr F Coillard's narrative epic entitled 'At Lealuyi and Sefula' (in Barotseland, later to become part of Zimbabwe) we read:

> When I took up my pen it was about Sefula that I wanted to write, since it is from Sefula that I am writing. For some time I had intended to visit it. I longed for this visit, though I dreaded it… Besides the work that has developed remarkably, and calls for our superintendance, our dear catechist Paulus and his wife are always ill. The dear fellow writes notes with very black ink and with good reason, He was thinking of his death and of what his young widow would do. Both of them are skeletons…[93]

The use of black ink is for Mr Coillard fitting for one who is so very ill, and near to death. Ink then becomes a metaphor for death, after which one stops productive value.

But to focus merely on the textual, literary representations of readers is perhaps antithetical to the purpose of the history of the book – we also need to analyze paratextual or metatextual elements which go into the creation of a picture of readers. What is interesting about Wookey, the Ceylon missionary and Mr Coillard's narratives is

[92] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 298. June 1, 1895. (P. 94)
[93] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 305. December 2, 1895. (P. 181)

that they were drawn from the London Missionary Society Chronicle. In fact, much of the bulk of *The Christian Express* is drawn from missionary reports all over the world, showing us an increasing transnationalism, at least within the global missionary colonies. But what is important to note here is that although this global intertextuality is not unusual for mission journals, what is so interesting is the way in which these international tales are presented within the journal – they are not highlighted as being peculiar and exotic, but rather they are embodied without any fanfare into the material that presents localized news, happenings and reports.[94] So a missionary report from nearby Blythswood would be printed side by side with one from Japan, another article from India and the problems missions are facing there, to Turkey and Bechuanaland and Nyasaland (present-day Malawi), a report in the proceedings of a mission conference in London or Glasgow, and a tale of bible distribution in the Congo. Print has a way of organizing globalization, and offers ways to read globalization. Readers are thus not faced with any kind of hierarchization, but instead an increasingly global literacy, taking the reader out of the isolation of the southern tip of Africa and inserting them into the global world of missions, where knowledge can be circulated on an increasingly transnational scale. The reader is then not merely a spectator, but is, *as a reader*, a functioning part within the machinations of this increasingly transnational world.

It must be admitted that the word 'transnationalism' is one that is increasingly bandied about with little regard for meaning – it has become a rubric under which many forms of circulation are sheparded, without a fundamental understanding of what transnationalism might be. Steven Vertovec has written on transnationalism and has outlined several aspects through which the study of transnationalism might be undertaken. Vertovec has broken down the concept and analyzed it using several banners, which include *social*

[94] This is a point that must be accredited to Isabel Hofmeyr.

morphology, with a focus on cross-border social networks of a very 'real' nature, the physical connections; *types of consciousness* which deals with the way in which consciousness can assume connections bounded in localities, even if in a diasporic situation; the *mode of cultural reproduction* which includes types of cultural interpenetration and is associated with 'a fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions, and everyday practices'. Often described with the words syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation and hybridity, these ideas are particularly relevant to the African continent. Also important are the concepts of the *avenue of capital* (where global flows and activities of capital also become ones of culture); and *sites of political engagement*, where technology has allowed a transnational global public space to develop.[95] The question begged, of course, is where these transnational flows developed *from*. What is the history of the transnational public sphere? How closely and in what concrete ways, is it intertwined with the development of print? What 'real' changes did the increasing globablisation of the world mean to everyday practices? And how were people, most notably readers, trained to read this global world? This paper, regarding one missionary journal, published in southern Africa, hopes to begin to provide answers to some of these questions.

The first of these answers has already been discussed, and uses the production of the journal as a basis for its transnational inclination. By presenting the reader with juxtaposed reports and articles from around the world, these world debates are then circulated and cut in to local dynamics. The bible, conversion, and the mission institution often form the core of these 'circulars'. The reports of Bible circulation is an interesting phenomenon – and is obsessively reported within the journal. Here is another missionary narrative, from the column 'Monthly Summary (From the Missionary Magazines)':

[95] Vertovec, S.: 'Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 2 (22). 1999. (Exact page references unknown)

> Bishop Tucker says:– To give you an idea of the eager thirst of the Waganda for instruction, I need only say that a man will willingly work for three months for a single copy of the Swahili New Testament. I cannot help thanking God that he put it into my mind to bring up 250 copies of the New Testament from Zanzibar. I also brought with me a large number of other books – parts of the Scriptures – the Kiswahili Prayer Book etc. I am told that there will be joy indeed in Uganda at the arrival of these books. Of course none will be given away; all will be sold, and consequently valued, nay I am assured, treasured.[96]

Not only is there a transnational report of the thirst for the bible in other parts of the world, but we are also made aware of the fact that the book is seen as a commodity by which the missionary can both achieve profit but also place not only a spiritual value upon the book, but also a fiscal value – making the book intrinsically more valuable, and showing the very real paths of the spread of global capital and social morphologies that the spread of print enable. It is this inscription of a culture of material consumption, or in this case the reading of transnational consumption, that goes into the making of a 'colonial' reader. Priya Joshi uses a penetrating extract from Jean and John Comaroff that is valuable here:

> Modern European empires "were not built merely on the violence of extraction, not just by brute force, bureaucratic fiat, or bodily exploitation. They also relied heavily on the circulation of stylized objects, on disseminating desire, on manufacturing demand, on conjuring up dependencies. All of which conduced to a form of bondage, of conquest by consumption, that tied peripheries to centers by potent, if barely visible, threads and passions".[97]

[96] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XX, No. 250. May 1, 1891. (P. 77)
[97] Comaroff, J. & J. cited in Joshi, P.: Op Cit. (P. 9–10)

What effect, then, would Bishop Tucker's report have on a colonized reader? Would a 'native' reader place themselves on a higher rung in such a hierarchy of literacy – not to be willing to pay for a book with three months labour would surely place one in a position of power, and the fact that the reader is being addressed by this incredulous voice must have some effect? But this is mere speculation. The 'desire' for books that is evident in Tucker's report must have had an effect on any reader of the periodical. On the other hand, we can also read into Tuckers report some of the dramatization of transnational circulation into which readers of the journal are being placed. The journal is peppered with accounts of the bible being circulated throughout the world by different organizations, but none of these organizations are given any priority – rather, it is this circulation that is so critical, and the dramatization of this circulation which is telling. The bible eventually becomes a highly stylized object and it is this transnational global demand and supply that it is being highlighted for the reader – who is created as an integral part of this process. Of course, the reader is nothing of the sort, but it is this dramatization of the reader that is so important.

There is also evident another way of representing transnational reading and readership practices within the journal. A most fascinating aspect of *The Christian Express* is the fact that subscription records were meticulously published in every month's issue. One must question why circulation would be such a consciously presented item of interest? There are a number of potential answers – one could be that, included in the lists, are the towns that each of the subscribers come from – advertising the circulation of the journal to the readers. A quick glance at the subscription lists reveal interesting points to note, most particularly the fact that this journal is not simply a localized paper, but that there are transnational links. There are subscribers in Port Elizabeth, East London, Cape Town, Alice (the town next to which Lovedale is situated), Bedford (is this in South Africa or

Britain – it is impossible to tell with the adoption of English place names in Africa, although we can make the assumption that the Bedford referred to in this context is the one that is sited north-west of Alice), Tennessee (USA), Brixton Hill (London), Stutterheim, Smithfield, Laurenço Marques, Queenstown, Bloemfontein, Glasgow[98] – the lists are endless but what they do show is that this journal, like many missionary journals, had a circulation that went beyond the immediate locale and does not reflect the metropole to periphery model which so many presume to be normative for colonial print materials. Readers, in their turn, could gain from the knowledge that they are from different places, and that the readers recognize that there are 'other' readers out there – the relation of unknown strangerhood of which Michael Warner talks[99], making it seem like a print 'community' but in which each reader is never actually able to know all of the other readers in person.

There is another reading practice that should be added to this, and it relates to some of the points already made. Copies of the journal are rich with intersecting stories describing far-flung places all around the world, many with unpronounceable names. The inclusion in subscription lists of names such as Hankey, Jacobsdal, Bomvanaland, Taba Morena and so forth, along with Nyasaland, Livingstonia, and names from all over the world, such as Sialkot (in present-day Pakistan) leads one to believe that the concept of the global is something which must take a great deal of rehearsal – could it be that this journal (like so many others) was promoting something like an exotic geographical literacy? Stephanie Newell has an interesting definition of the 'cosmopolitan' as one 'who exhibits a willingness to engage with the Other in a culturally competent manner'.[100]

[98] These names are taken from subscription lists in just two copies, from January, 1895 and November, 1895.
[99] Warner, M.: Publics and Counterpublics. (P. 58–59)
[100] Newell, S.: Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: How to Play the Game of Life. Indiana University Press. 2002. (P. X)

Could this geographical literacy be a part of the trade tools needed to be a 'cosmopolitan'? And how does this reflect back to the metropole? Surely, this would be part of a broader reading practice that included all readers, and which allowed a certain way of reading the world through the text as well as being able to perform one's knowledge of the world, if one were at a dinner party or at a meeting of like-minded people. Taking a different stance altogether, by analyzing just one of the advertorial pages that were staple for issues of the journal, we can see an entirely different picture. Two books are advertised under the heading 'Books for Natives to Read'.[101] One is entitled 'Ukupuma Kwelanga Kwintaba Zase Himalaya' (trans. 'Climbing the Hills of the Himalayas') and the other 'Uhambo Lwama Eskimo' (trans. 'Journey of the Eskimos").[102] What kind of reader is embraced here? There are two possibilities, the most obvious being the 'Native' for whom the book is advertised, and who is presumably reading the journal (subscription lists do indeed contain African names, although what can be deduced from this is fairly limited). There is also the colonizer-reader, as well as the reader in the metropole, or in America – there is no distinction here between them, which places us in a wonderfully transnational position, where all implied readers and forms of reading are allowed to embrace the same transnational reading style. From both of these examples we can see what Edward Said was referring to when he stated that European textual production created 'not only knowledge but also the very reality they [the texts] appear to describe', a sense of the global nature of the world – which was greatly enhanced by the input from the "exotic" periphery.[103] In a sense, this could be seen as an example of the periphery writing back to the centre, and then being integrated into the idiom of the metropole, changing its world views in subtle ways only to be re-read by the periphery, although in rather different forms.

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[101] *The Christian Express.* Vol. XXVII, No. 303. (P. 176)
[102] Translation courtesy of the attendants at a History of the Book class.
[103] Said, E.: Orientalism. Vintage, New York. 1979. (P. 94) Cited in Joshi, O.: Op Cit. (P. 12)

Conclusion

What, then, have we learned from this analysis of books and reading on the Eastern Cape frontier? It is important to remember that this study has at its root two facets. The first was a quest to discover what we could about books, readers and reading, in a particular time and a particular place. The second was to marshal this information in order to support broader social and cultural questions, so that instead of simply relaying statistical information, insight could be gained into the mechanics of cultural transmission and change. It may be useful to quote Joan Shelley Rubin:

> Those book historians who seek to illuminate how a culture functions have conceived of print not only as a product of socially inflected mediations but also as itself a mediating element in cultural life… their emphasis on reciprocal processes and on fluidity, multiplicity, overlap, and instability have resulted in histories closer to human experience than the ones they supplant.[104]

The print archive left by *The Christian Express*, whilst far from perfect if one thinks of it as leaving behind traces of consumption, offers us glimpses into the world of colonial

[104] Rubin, J. S.: "What is the History of the History of Books?" (P. 16)

reading. The first chapter sketched an outline of the intellectual, social and historical horizons that print was operating in, and attempted to trace intended or idealized readers. The turbulent social and political climate in which readers were operating led those proponents of reading and print culture to drag the reader through the many cross-currents of race, class and nation. We have deciphered the implied reader by analyzing the roots of a reading culture, which include the full hierarchical and demographic range of both the colonized and their colonizers. The implied reader, in this context, is a strange figure, one that existed across many boundaries. The implied reader also cannot be simplified into a set of rules – rather, they remain murky subjects, difficult to expose.

What makes *The Christian Express* so interesting is that, by culturally contextualizing literacy we see that literacy can not only be viewed as a technology of domination, but also as one of resistance. *The Christian Express* embodies a process of simultaneous enfranchisement and restriction, and it is the space between that highlights dominant modes of thought regarding access to print – we can see clear evidence of attempts to both encourage reading as a practice by promoting its power, whilst at the same time denying that very power when it is applied to the subaltern. The journal assigns particular ways of being, regulating readers lives by both inscribing dominant cultural themes (Englishness, morality, Christianity) while at the same time subverting that same message by inscribing difference – through this *technology* of literacy. So whilst advancing an African elite, according to religious convictions of literacy being able to inherently instill civilization, in order that middle class hegemony may be formed, literacy soon became a tool through which resistance could be fostered and heard (think of Wookey's narrative, and the rejection of western 'civilization' by the atheists).

What the second chapter makes clear is that national boundaries must be transcended in the study of book history – transnationalism simply cannot be avoided, in theory as well as in historical practice. There is evidence here of fascinating reading practices that transcend falsified national boundaries and rehearse ways in which the world itself can be read as an integrated whole, rather than the nominal bounded totalities implied by the very workings of colonialism itself. This study highlights the transnational public sphere and how it was brought into being. *The Christian Express* poached texts, reusing articles from all around the world, passing them from one published form to another, transforming the original text and constituting an entirely new public for it.[105] As Hofmeyr states, 'this transnational public of course comprised many millions of people involved in local reading, distribution and sometimes publishing operations and it was the joint labour of these people that brought this public into being'.[106] One of the advantages of this labour, without condoning or minimizing the effects of colonialism, was to bring the newly emerging African public sphere into contact with this large, global public space, onto which it could add yet another layer. The result? We can see that colonialism, in relation to how print practices worked, was not nearly as clear-cut as we would like to imagine. Rather, colonialism was in print, as Priya Joshi suggests, a relation of transactionality that spliced many different elements of consciousness and actual paths together; that there was no centre/periphery dyad, but rather a story of the complex enmeshing of fascinating textual and real encounters which, through an archive such as *The Christian Express,* we can only begin to imagine. What should be understood, however, is that although this analysis has attempted to be as equitable as possible, we can never escape the reality that much of what was included in the journal was, in one way or another, tinted by the missionaries who ultimately controlled publication. This

[105] Chartier, R.: "Labourers and Voyagers". (P. 140)
[106] Hofmeyr, I,: "Spread Far and Wide Over the Surface of the Earth". (P. 2)

leaves us in a difficult position, as many of the views embraced here are transported through very particular conduits, predominantly male, white, middle class, Christian views. There exists far more information on books, readers and reading than I have presented; this study merely scratches the surface of the history of a vibrant and complex print culture, of the practices that created and sustained the ideological, psychological, political and economic power of the printed word for those active readers in Lovedale, Alice, the Eastern Cape, sub-saharan Africa and indeed the world. In essence, what has been created through these pages is the image of a very particular public sphere, one which allows multiple, fragmented views of both the relationship between print and colonialism, and in a larger sense, adds subtlety and nuance to the way in which we view the frontier as part of South African history.

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