

Introduction

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To cite this article: Carolyn Hamilton , Lesley Cowling & Isabel Hofmeyr (2009) Introduction, Social Dynamics, 35:2, 345-347, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903076436](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076436)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076436>



Published online: 03 Aug 2009.



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Introduction

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There is much at stake in South African democracy. Through the anti-apartheid struggle, millions of people across the globe invested in South Africa as a utopian experiment. Burnished with the glamour of an almost retronarrative of national liberation, South Africa offered an ideal of ‘the people’ that could make democracy appear substantive once again.

As South Africa entered its second decade of freedom, its democracy showed signs of wearing thin. The state increasingly growled at the media. Definitions of citizenship have become narrower and implicitly racialised. Crime, HIV/AIDS, consumerism and xenophobia have become the post-apartheid threnodies. Mounting calls for the reinstatement of the death penalty threatened to overwhelm the post-1994 traditions of constitutionalism. Public debates have resulted in explosions of stigmatisation and suspicion. What does this mean for South Africa’s democracy and notions of public sphere underlying it? Given South Africa’s status as an international icon, this question has more than local interest.

The articles collected in this special symposium of *Social Dynamics*, and those which will appear in the March 2010 issue, direct themselves to this question. They are drawn from a conference entitled ‘Paradoxes of the Postcolonial Sphere: South African Democracy at the Crossroads’ held on 28–31 January 2007 at the University of the Witwatersrand. The conference arose out of a five-year research project, *The Constitution of Public Intellectual Life*, which investigated the conditions that promote or disable the engagement of complexity in public deliberation.

The starting point of the conference was the state of public debate in South Africa today. The conference rubric noted the extraordinary lengths to which the post-1994 South Africa had gone in order to promote public consultation through state-created institutions and legislation. However, a decade into the political transition, these state-convened institutions orchestrate public deliberation in particular ways. At the same time, deliberation and critique continue outside these officialised spheres on radio talk shows, sitcoms, soap operas, celebrity magazines and soccer fandom. Are these forums in fact sites of political interpretation as much as popular cultural analysis? Challenging ruminations on identity, subjectivity, citizenship and indeed publicness itself circulate in aesthetic forms – films, artworks, performances and literature – and in the many texts

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generated in their wake. In the news media, where the facilitation of public debate is understood to be a professional responsibility, who gains access to the media as commentators, columnists, reviewers and public intellectuals, and who is excluded and silenced?

While the conference used South Africa as a starting point, comparative axes pointed to broader debates on post-repressive regimes across Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and South Asia, presenting a complex picture of the state attempting to capture its citizens through officialised debate. In this post-resistance framework, the idea of counterpublic spheres is problematised. Can these exist or are they romantic illusions, at times upheld and used by the post-colonial state itself to capture its citizenry? How do we conceptualise these other spheres when they are manifestly reactionary?

The method of the conference matched its themes. The conference was designed to promote and encourage high levels of public participation and debate. In order to achieve this, the conference organisers collaborated with a media person to promote the programme and broker it to journalists. Over the three days of the conference, researchers, students, members of the media, prominent public commentators and performance artists grappled with these issues.

A selection of articles from these sessions is drawn together in this special double symposium of *Social Dynamics*. The symposium comes at the question of democracy and its expansion and containment via the notion of publics. The first part maps the limits and contradictions of contemporary South African public debate and rethinks publicness, reaching beyond conventional concepts of the public sphere. The rest of the symposium (to be published in the March 2010 issue of *Social Dynamics*) involves a focus on the tactics of address that come to be shaped in both official and unofficial formations. A political and analytical shift is made from concerns arising out of decades of identity politics – where the dominant question was ‘Who speaks for whom?’ – to a focus on the question ‘To whom does one speak?’ and in what kinds of public languages?

This part of the symposium comprises one section: ‘The public sphere in a developmental state: Consensus and contention’; the next part contains four sections: ‘Public silences and disavowed debate: The porous edges of the imagined public sphere’, ‘Mediatisation of debate’, ‘Uncharted spaces of public deliberation’ and ‘Public performances of wisdom and affect’. Each of these five sections is introduced by a framing essay, which sets its portfolio of articles in the context of relevant debates.

The articles argue that the standard ways of making sense of the post-colonial public sphere are exceeded by the South African case. Taking a post-resistance perspective, the collection suggests that public formations taking shape are neither simply about post-colonial officialisation with the dead hand of state seeking to ‘zombify’, in Mbembe’s phrase (2001, p. 104), its citizens nor about acts of glorious resistance against the new state. Neither is the South African case a straightforward one of the ‘refeudalisation’ of the public sphere with consumer spectacles dominating public debate.

These articles on a rich range of contemporary public forms (talk radio, tabloids, documentary photography, debates on witchcraft, museums, anti-privatisation forums, the discussion of same-sex equality) recast questions of publics, and of the role of public intellectuals, within the zone of the post-colonial. Testing the limits of the notions of the public sphere, publics and counterpublics, the collection suggests that we attend to formations that are more ambiguous, complicit, entangled. The focus on

questions of publics and tactics of address takes us decisively beyond the oppositions of colonial and anticolonial that still characterise post-colonial theorising. Although the double symposium focuses on the case of South Africa, its analytical wagers and the nature of the questions it poses aim to shift the nature of debate on democracy and public life in other parts of the globe.

Notes

1. This introduction draws on comments by Sarah Nuttall in response to an initial publication proposal. We are indebted to her for her insights.

Notes on Contributors

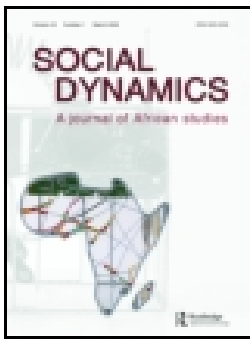
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Framing essay

Shireen Hassim

To cite this article: Shireen Hassim (2009) Framing essay, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 348-354, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903076444](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076444)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076444>



Published online: 03 Aug 2009.



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Framing essay

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All seven articles in this section speak, in a variety of ways, to a turning point in democratic debates in South Africa. They highlight the ways in which the deeply desired, seductive qualities of political liberalism that are embodied in the South African Constitution – voice, equality, inclusion, openness, tolerance – and officially articulated in state discourses have proved elusive in the face of deep social cleavages. The articles challenge the feasibility of the Habermasian notion of the public sphere as the space of open and inclusive debate, while, nevertheless, holding on to the idea that some version of the idealised public sphere is both desirable and necessary for democracy to thrive. The Habermasian public sphere can be characterised as the ‘virtuous’ public space of formal power (Habermas 1989). Theoretically, this is the space in which the putative citizens performatively call themselves to account; they are formally and ethically bound and they contest among themselves according to the ‘rules of the game’. It ought to be the space of good behaviour, politically speaking. And yet, all these articles lay out the disappointments attendant upon such assumptions. For democracy, as Claus Offe notes, is ‘a highly demanding regime, at least at the beginning and before the processes of consolidation and habituation set in’ (2001, p. 171).

The formal installation of a democratic political system in 1994 brought in its wake a range of expectations about the new ways in which relationships between South Africans, and between South Africans and the state, would be conducted. For many, it marked an apogee of struggle, embodied in the adoption of a Constitution that declared the subject of this new democracy to be the people resident in South Africa. This open definition freed citizenship of the markers of difference that had imprisoned South Africans in an earlier era into a fixed hierarchy. Democracy offered the promise that the fragmented subjects of apartheid – the multiple ethnically and racially divided groups – would be united in a single polity. As P.A. Hudson argues in his contribution to this symposium, this was made possible by the struggle for national democracy, a democratic intervention that was ‘an investment in openness’. Hudson points out that the romantic aspiration to unity and the sublimation of difference was captured in the notion of a liberal democracy as a staging post to full democracy, constituted by equal access to a common public sphere. Long before the enactment of the 1996 Constitution, this conjoining of romantic unity with strategic ideological imperatives was explicated in the Freedom Charter, drafted by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1955 and adopted at the historic Congress of the People in Kliptown. The opening sentence of the Freedom Charter – ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white’ – became the performative heart of South African democracy, reiterated

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throughout the period of mass democratic struggle by the ANC/South African Communist Party (SACP)/Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) alliance. Christa Kuljian captures this aspiration in the moving image of a needlepoint embroidered in the 1980s by her sister-in-law, in the colours of the ANC, of the 10 clauses of the Freedom Charter. The Charter lived in the most intimate spaces of society.

The mid-1990s was an expansive phase of democracy in South Africa, imbued with the spirit of the Freedom Charter. The drafters of the Constitution had to consider two related anxieties about the consequences of equality and inclusiveness. The first was the concern that asserting equality might erase the history of deep, racially defined inequalities in access to economic wealth and opportunities. The Constitution recognises this legacy in its sanctioning of affirmative action. The second concern was that equality might entail the cultural hegemony of whiteness or, at least, Western modernity. This concern that non-hegemonic identities might be further weakened or even annihilated found expression in the Constitution in the recognition of a range of cultural resources. Despite the Constitution's attempt to thoughtfully mediate the terrain between unity and cultural particularity, in everyday politics these anxieties are unresolved and are frequently expressed in new forms of group closure. Hudson notes the ways in which Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech following the adoption of the Constitution marked a shift in the meaning of 'African' from including all South Africans to including only some. Carolyn Hamilton reminds us of the debates about who could be a member of the Native Club. Similarly, the assertion of many other identities – Afrikanerism/Indianness/Colouredness – has ironically become more marked, more possible and more public than in the apartheid era when difference was actively promoted by the state. These expressions may suggest a flowering of diversity; at times, however, they are invoked in ways that balkanise citizens into closed-off groups that exist in a hierarchy of claims to authenticity.

As several articles in this symposium note, we are accustomed to thinking about the exclusions from the public sphere as constituted by long-standing material deprivation. The exclusions generated by poverty have fuelled new assertions of identity that interpret the values of the Constitution as applying only to a narrowly defined band of citizens. These assertions are discursively created in the language of authenticity and autochthony, rather than the openness and inclusiveness of the Freedom Charter. In the xenophobic violence of 2008, defenders of attacks on supposed foreigners asserted the privilege of natural rights of those who are 'authentically' South African. Their criteria for access to the rights of the Constitution were recast as those of blood and belonging. In sanctioning citizenship as the criterion for access to shelter, the state itself shrinks the entitlements to public resources, now available primarily to those who are constituted by its policies as citizens, limiting the socio-economic rights promised by the Constitution.

Other forms of exclusion and self-exclusion have also come to the fore. Some members of leftist communities, white and Indian in particular, have consciously silenced themselves since 1994, either justifying this by recourse to a set of arguments about the historical necessity of 'standing back', or imagining powerlessness in the public sphere while decrying, in the middle-class counterpublic of talk radio, the supposed political decay. This is a different aspect of the demobilisation of civil society that Preben Kaarsholm refers to, caused in this case not by absorption into the state but rather by the (imagined) exclusions of emerging Africanist politics. It is not clear what gestures would be necessary on the part of the state to signal inclusion in a

stronger sense; after all, both Indian and white members of the ANC have advanced strikingly well in the new government. Nevertheless, there are residues of anxiety among those once politically active, as well as resentments among those who were not part of the anti-apartheid struggle, but somehow see themselves as the contemporary bearers of the democratic project.

There has been, then, a slippage from the inclusivity envisioned in the Freedom Charter and the Constitution into the narrower notion of 'citizenship' found in the 'everyday' pronouncements of political actors and the state. Thus, who is or can be entitled to the rights of democracy is far from resolved by the Constitution; rather, as Hamilton and Ivor Chipkin both point out, it is a matter of enormous and constant anxiety. This contraction of the democratic subject reflects power-laden contestations over access to the ideological apparatus of the state, over control of the legacies of nationalist struggle and over the making of the future. The democratic state, at the messy core of such contestations, can neither embody nor guarantee inclusion.

The sliding away from the idea of democracy as an open-ended and contingent state to that of democracy as a form of political closure is even more apparent in the rhetoric of governance. In these discourses, the emphasis is on containing conflict and on predictability. The role of the public sphere, in this version of democracy, is to 'corral' behaviour, to reduce the messy reality of politics, as Hamilton reminds us. For Hudson, this slippage is revealed in the contraction of deliberation to voting, a thin and debased form of participation. Offe, reflecting on what is needed to make democracy work, points out that the institutional structure of a political system that is frequently emphasised in democracy-as-governance is the mere 'hardware' of democracy. What is needed, in addition, is the "software" of a horizontal relationship between any individual citizen and his/her fellow citizens' (Offe 2001, p. 171). This 'software' is constituted in the moral resources or the political culture of democracy, of which three resources are key: toleration, trust and solidarity. The development of these, in turn, is predicated on the 'background condition' of 'nationhood that constitutes the political community' (Offe 2001, p. 171). Offe points out that the assertion of nationhood ought to neutralise fear and generate tolerance. However, in the context of deep cleavages, conflicts and mistrust, it is difficult to create a unified conception of 'we'. Chipkin's article demonstrates this problematic superbly in the South African context. The question posed by Offe, and by Chipkin's article on South African democracy, is how to generate social cohesion 'without the supportive context condition of some shared and overarching identity, national or otherwise' (Offe 2001, p. 175).

The governance paradigm, in which the role of the public sphere is to legitimate newly installed and still-fragile governments and political institutions, cannot adequately address this challenge. Luke Sinwell provides us with an interesting lens onto governance processes in his discussion of development practices in the Alexandra Renewal Project. Sinwell is mindful of the importance of participation as the route to an expanded public sphere, seeing 'participatory spaces' as social arenas in which ordinary citizens can influence government policies. For Sinwell, the outcomes of participation are open-ended, as people may well use participatory spaces to impose their own interests on the process. Rejecting the rather static analyses that pervade leftist development approaches in which participation is seen as always and only a disguised form of top-down development, Sinwell looks for more subtle forms of agency in Alex. He shows that participatory spaces become particularly important when the formal spaces are 'empty': when institutional spaces that are imagined in the

virtuous liberal model to be the ‘proper’ avenues for participation are no longer working. The official view of participation emerges in his discussion of Alex as a kind of façade that covers real hegemony by the ANC and weakness of the very social movements in which Kaarsholm, by contrast, invests the possibility of building the democratic, deliberative public sphere. The flaccid politics of the older social movements is a consequence, Natascha Mueller-Hirth shows, of the ‘NGO-isation’ of movements that previously were rooted in resistance politics.

It is in the smaller, newer organisation, the Alexandra Vukuzenzele Crisis Committee (AVCC), outside the remit of the supposedly more legitimate social movements, that we see people who were disabled by formal governance processes taking the gap, as it were. As Sinwell’s contribution to the symposium argues, they ‘take the opportunity to resist ..., turning their exclusion into inclusion ..., opening and recreating, and reshaping’. The very open-endedness of such politics, of course, begs the question of how to link the importance of agency with the importance of democratic norms, a dilemma that Hamilton eloquently explicates. The xenophobia in Alex related in part to the new housing rules that the AVCC sought to establish: alas, the demands from below included that ‘foreigners’ be removed as beneficiaries of state-subsidised housing. Sinwell makes the important point that the outcomes of participation processes are always uncertain: government may have an agenda for encouraging participation-as-charade but ultimately cannot control the way that people use/subvert the spaces made available. The ugly side of this is that they may use the spaces to pursue uncomfortable politics – for democrats, that is.

The ways in which participation is understood and promoted by state actors tend to obscure the kinds of deliberation that Hamilton lays out as democratically powerful. Deliberative democracy requires openness to abandoning one’s own position if necessary for better and more just outcomes. Far from emphasising consensus, deliberation aimed at just outcomes sees conflict as a necessary condition in a democratic framework. The emphasis on passion and contention in the public sphere that is advocated by Mouffe (1993) is very different from the rational, consensus-driven model of the public sphere outlined by Habermas (1989). It is also radically different from the ritualised forms of participation embodied in government-led consultative processes, where the emphasis is on democracy as a system of governance and less on democracy as a mode of deliberation.

Yet, as the authors show, deliberation is more, not less, important in a context of mistrust and inequality. The public sphere is far from singular: it is fragmented into a multiplicity of spaces, many of which remain deeply scarred by the differences of apartheid. Indeed, to a significant extent they remain beholden to those differences. More troubling than this multiplicity – which after all, as Hamilton shows, we have come to accept as a marker of late modernity – are the hierarchies between and within these public spaces. Having established a formal public sphere in the image of the Constitution, in everyday politics we are confronted by a sense that the ‘real’ action is always happening somewhere else, just offstage, and that the conditions of access to these alternative spaces are frustratingly opaque (or, some suspect, frustratingly clear: they are the exclusions of race albeit in new forms). As Sinwell’s article makes clear, the state, in particular, continually seeks to constitute the formal processes of inclusion. The ideology of ‘developmentalism’, as Kaarsholm argues in his contribution to this symposium, has become the hallmark of public virtue, suggesting a state that is concerned with ‘includ[ing] the expansion and unification

of the sphere of the public and the extension of its availability to the widest possible range of citizens’.

Offstage, however, is where we suspect ‘real’ power lies, in spaces that are paradoxically both public and closed: formally open, they are nonetheless closed to those who do not participate in ANC activities, or do not speak languages other than English and/or Afrikaans. As Kaarsholm points out, these are not just *multiple* publics but *separate* publics. These spaces, as Hamilton reminds us, have sometimes been referred to as ‘counterpublics’, a useful notion up to a point, but one that suggests a fixed, ‘virtuous’ space against which subaltern groups struggle to define and defend alternatives. This public/counterpublic binary (each imbricated in and dependent on the other to constitute the terms of its existence, and each shot through with power) is a feature of many democratic contexts. Indeed, the idealised public sphere is in many respects normatively desirable, as Hamilton argues: one can defend the idea that democratic debate must proceed from upholding an arena in which democratic values are non-negotiable. While we can recognise that the democratic public sphere is primarily the sphere of performance, that is, the sphere in which we *act as if* we recognise each other as equals even when we do not necessarily *believe* this, the performance itself is important for democracy. The democratic project then is to include more and more people within the ambit of these values by expanding the spheres of deliberation while also transforming the power relations that constitute the relations between them. Most citizens, of course, have the ability to move between more than one public sphere. Some, however, take on the role of interlocutors between multiple public spheres. Interlocutors then have the choice of acting as bridges between spaces or of actively recreating those spaces to ensure that they thrive as *separate* spaces.

The choice is confounded when the aim of the interlocutors is to be subversive of the official public space without putting in place a more democratic set of alternatives. Consider President Jacob Zuma, for example, moving between discourses of Zulu ethnicity and ANC modernity during his rape trial; or ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema invoking both a history of democratic struggle and the right to incite followers to kill for the party. In these movements between spaces, there is a discomfiting performance that could be caricatured along the lines of ‘we know that the courts are independent and the judiciary is beyond criticism but (nudge, wink) we also know that we don’t really believe that, we know these are just white men’s courts and we don’t really trust them ... so let’s say the right things in English but between ourselves we’ll call it like we see it’. Despite the supposed existence of a free public sphere and, moreover, of a political arena in which the party of which Zuma and Malema are prominent members is in powerful control, the language they invoke is not of respect and tolerance but rather a retro-romantic idiom of nationalist struggle.¹ It invokes, troublingly, not the expansive spirit of the Freedom Charter but rather the mistrust and fear vesting in the darker spaces of political history, now extended into mistrust and fear in the new democracy. The ANC leaders, for example, reproduce the modes of debate from an earlier, authoritarian era, preserving internal party political spaces as the primary avenues for debate in preference to public deliberation. Even Parliament, where the ANC has an overwhelming majority, is undervalued as a deliberative public sphere.

The utterances of Zuma and Malema signal in the virtuous public sphere the existence of other alternative spheres, making them present in ways that seem to threaten (and perhaps thereby inadvertently to confirm) the virtuous public sphere. Alternative

publics that work in these ways can become dangerously subversive of democratic projects because they allow little room for discourse between the publics: the interlocutors work both ends, so to speak. The key challenge is that of *bridging* the separate publics, for to make the democratic project work, what is needed is for those ‘offstage’ publics to begin to see the value of the democratic public sphere. Although responses to Malema in the media vary between treating him as a buffoon and treating him as an incendiary, it is clear that he plays an important performative role in current politics. In articulating the ‘unsayable’, he bridges different public spheres and acts as a kind of political pressure valve. To some extent, it could be argued, he reveals the importance of what Mouffe (1993) calls ‘dissensus’ in deliberative processes. But the bridging is incomplete, for there is little effective political leadership that robustly asserts a normative commitment to respect and tolerance. In the context of conflict, the effect of Malema’s speeches is to heighten fear, mistrust and division, rather than create opportunities for dialogues across difference or for charting new paths that may lead to social justice.

The Freedom Charter itself has been downgraded and degraded. Kuljian shows that despite the grandiose official memorialisation of Kliptown, and the Square where the Charter was adopted, many local residents see it as a white elephant for the tourist market. The process of developing the memorial site, she argues, increasingly became one in which attention to the needs of people living in its midst was sidelined. The people who lived there were made invisible – a metaphor, indeed, for the ways in which ‘the people’ at the heart of the Freedom Charter have been made invisible in development processes. The deliberative approach that was used to such political effect in drafting the Freedom Charter, Kuljian argues, has been displaced by a process in which people are told what they want. The implication is that, for all the talk of participation and consultation, the space for deliberation in contemporary South African democracy is less wide than the drafters of the Freedom Charter would have envisaged.

Kuljian’s article draws us back to the question of how an inclusive public sphere might be built. Agreeing with Hamilton that such a process is normatively desirable, and with Chipkin that it is politically necessary, how would this be done and by whom? As Kaarsholm and Mueller-Hirth both point out, social movements have historically been key to this process, providing the bridge and expanding the deliberative sphere by creating ‘participatory publics’. Indeed; in their articles, we see how civil society organisations have moved from the ‘in-between space’ (between public and private) to an *alternative* public sphere. The problem is that some of these movements, in the ways in which they have articulated support for Zuma, reveal serious shortcomings in their approach to democracy. The ANC’s Polokwane conference in December 2007 was a landmark event, signalling a sea-change in leadership from the closed and elitist mode of Mbeki to the charismatic, populist mode of Zuma. Although the conference was heralded, as Chipkin outlines, as a breakthrough for democracy by many commentators, this is a superficial analysis. A different reading might suggest that what is revealed in the politics of Polokwane is the limited vision of democracy as *only* applying to the public sphere. Support for Zuma as the standard-bearer of grass roots popular (populist?) democracy is delinked from his social views on women’s sexual agency and on sexual rights. To represent his leadership as a revival of democracy, then, reinforces the complete neglect of the social and the willingness to trade away a conversation about cultural freedom in favour of political power. The rampaging effects on social life of economic inequality, HIV/AIDS and poor public services are

bracketed while internal power struggles are resolved within the political elite. There is almost an indifference within this elite to the crisis of social reproduction and no model to repair it or create a new one is up for debate in public discourses.

This leaves democrats with a real dilemma: the normative agenda of political liberalism must surely be even more important after recent events – the trials of Zuma, xenophobic violence, food riots – in the country. Yet there is a hollowness at the core of the bridging institutions of state, family and civil society that derive from apartheid's failings. Into this space there is a projection of a kind of liberal fantasy of a rational, capacitated state that can contain and enact fantasies of a unified nation. This is fuelled by romantic nationalism that veers between the erasure of difference and the assertion of specificity (*this* great nation that we are all sublimated into). In reality, however, the democratic ethos of the Constitution has opened up all kinds of new claims on authenticity, with shifting and contradictory alignments of power, bearing out what Jean Comaroff (1999) points to as the tension between normative citizenship and lived citizenship. These claims also point to the limits of citizenship, reiterating that the claim to citizenship always entails a negation of the rights claims of others not considered authentically part of the nation. Perhaps that is as it should be: a deliberative space at best *ought* to be the sphere in which these contestations are played out, negotiated and *may* be overcome. The public sphere, then, is the space of contingency rather than democratic certainty, and of contention rather than consensus.

Note

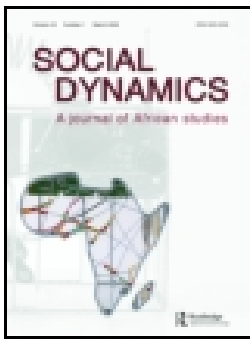
1. I am indebted to Isabel Hofmeyr for this phrase.

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Uncertain citizenship and public deliberation in post-apartheid South Africa

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To cite this article: Carolyn Hamilton (2009) Uncertain citizenship and public deliberation in post-apartheid South Africa, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 355-374, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903116091](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116091)

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Uncertain citizenship and public deliberation in post-apartheid South Africa¹

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The post-repressive-regime South African government has actively convened a public sphere bristling with institutions and policies designed to facilitate public deliberation. However, certain apartheid legacies and contemporary political compromises facilitate the reach of power into the convened public sphere, leading to the corraling of public deliberation and the attempted silencing of critical voices. By the end of the Mbeki presidency, a cacophony of public dissent erupted, some of it insisting on the importance of open public critique and some of it seeking to limit and shape dissent itself. The article discusses ongoing contests over the meaning of publicness, locating the roots of these different ideas of publicness in different political and intellectual traditions, each with different understandings of the deliberative citizen. It suggests that participation in public debate is increasingly confined to the exertion of a narrowly defined notion of national democratic citizenship. Arguing that the formation of counterpublic spheres in South Africa is inhibited, the article considers the role of what it terms ‘capillaries’ of public deliberation, in which various kinds of radical critiques of cultural values, norms, identities and the fragmentation of historical consciousness take place.

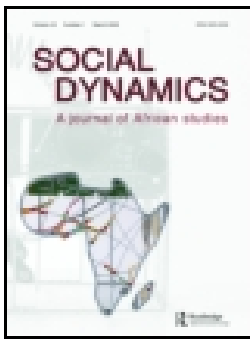
Keywords: public sphere; public interest; intellectuals; democracy; citizenship; arts

Introduction

Public deliberation is understood to occupy a central role in modern democracies and public discourse is recognised as a mode of social integration. There is, however, a widespread view that our times are marked by the collapse of the public sphere.

Indeed, the erosion of the public sphere was described by Habermas (1996) even as he identified its existence. As formulated by Habermas, the concept of the public sphere involves the assembling of private persons to discuss, unrestrictedly and in a rational–critical manner, matters of the public interest, and the transmission of the outcome of their deliberations in a form able to influence the state. Habermas identified the emergence of the public sphere as a historically specific phenomenon created out of the relations between capitalism and the state that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth Centuries in Europe, and as a specifically bourgeois phenomenon. Calhoun (1992, p. 2) points out that the value of Habermas’s intervention lies in its insistence that a public sphere adequate to a democratic polity depends upon both quality of discourse and quantity of participation.

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Democracy and dictatorship

Ivor Chipkin

To cite this article: Ivor Chipkin (2009) Democracy and dictatorship, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 375-393, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903116109](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116109)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116109>



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Democracy and dictatorship

Ivor Chipkin*

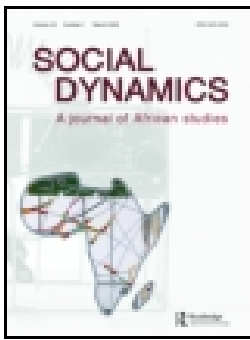
*Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, and University of the Witwatersrand,
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This article discusses recent developments in South African politics from the perspective of a paradox, even a contradiction, inherent in the democratic project itself. Democracy requires that the people, the source of democratic authority, are considered purely as an ideal. This is precisely what is at work in the notion of ‘human rights’, for example. The specific qualities and character of individuals – their culture, norms, values and history – are stripped away to venerate them simply in their essential humanness, that is as a pure abstraction. The moment, however, democracy is located in a specific state, the people are transformed from abstract and essential humanity into a concrete one, unified on the basis of some or other shared characteristic or norm (commitment to freedom, investment in a particular culture and notion of the good and so on). Yet, if ‘people’ is really a normative term, rather than a descriptive one, then ‘democracy’s people’ refers only to those persons who fit this norm. What this authorises is the privileging of certain classes of people, in democracy’s name, within the political system. I will argue that authoritarian tendencies in South Africa’s political culture are effects of the contradiction above. I will consider this tendency to dictatorship, not simply in ‘totalitarian’ constitutions or political dispensations, but in the heart of the most classically democratic ones as well. In this regard, I will review the American Constitution to discuss some of its ‘undemocratic’ features. In the last part of this article, I will consider the effects on South Africa’s democracy of trying to incarnate the people of South Africa as an ‘African’ people. What is at stake here is the concretisation of the people of democracy as a particular people. We will see that this has unleashed an identitarian politics about the content of this African identity. More importantly, it has authorised those who claim to be authentic Africans to assume privileged positions in politics and in the state.

Keywords: democracy; dictatorship; the people; totalitarianism; Vladimir Lenin; American Constitution; Thomas Jefferson; African values; Thabo Mbeki; South Africa; national liberation

The history of democracy cannot be reduced to any particular national history. The democratic imaginary may have specific historical conditions in certain times and places. Yet, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the banner of democracy animated struggles for freedom across the world. Hence, its meaning and associated thinking about its conditions have been the subject of theory and practice for more than 200 years, and democratic theory has been elaborated in the context of the American war for independence, the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Bolshevik Revolution, the struggle for ‘national liberation’ in Africa, Asia, Latin America and, most recently, in South Africa.

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Taking the democratic subject seriously

P.A. Hudson

To cite this article: P.A. Hudson (2009) Taking the democratic subject seriously, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 394-410, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903116133](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116133)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116133>



Published online: 03 Aug 2009.



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Taking the democratic subject seriously¹

P.A. Hudson*

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This article has two objectives. The first is to examine the post-Marxist concept of the democratic subject, which I argue requires criticism and revision if it is to be coherently integrated into the post-Marxist theory of democracy itself. The second is to examine the national–democratic project as proposed by the ANC and its allies in terms of this conceptual analysis of the democratic subject. It is argued that a ‘democratic turn’ has occurred in the national democratic project, but that national democratic subjectivity is still caught up in a fantasy of absolute political truth and closure, which interrupts its democratic practice.

Keywords: national democracy; post-Marxism; democratic subject; ideology; fantasy

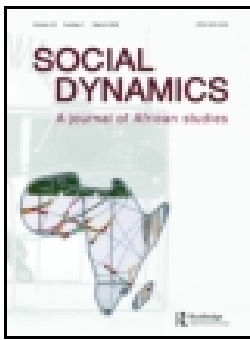
1. Introduction

1.1 *Mapping the problem*

This article explores the relationship between nationalism and democracy in South Africa that flows from the National Democracy project of South Africa’s ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), and its allies. It argues that the National Democracy project has taken a democratic turn which cannot be captured by the national subject/democratic subject dichotomy that characterises much contemporary political commentary on South Africa. The article seeks to take democratic subjectivity seriously and to work out the maximum possible distance a subject can have to a conception of identity as given and fixed. In so doing, it identifies the National Democracy project in South Africa as ‘semi-democratic’.²

The article first examines the post-Marxist conception of democratic subjectivity as developed by, *inter alia*, Claude Lefort, Ernesto Laclau and Yannis Stavrakakis; it finds this conception wanting and elaborates on it by examining the role of ‘fantasy’ in the constitution of subjectivity. What emerges from the critique is a more fine-grained conception of the democratic subject, able to distinguish ‘cynical-pseudo’, ‘semi’ and ‘full’ variations on democratic subjectivity. It then examines the theory of National Democracy, the lodestar of the South African Liberation Movement since the 1960s, and invokes the conception of semi-democratic subjectivity to throw light on the way National Democracy politics has been practiced since 1994 by the ANC government and its alliance partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). What is stressed is both the significance of the rupture in the history of National Democracy theory of the democratic turn in the early 1990s and the partial nature of this break, that is the ongoing

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Public spheres, hidden politics and struggles over space: boundaries of public engagement in post-apartheid South Africa

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To cite this article: Preben Kaarsholm (2009) Public spheres, hidden politics and struggles over space: boundaries of public engagement in post-apartheid South Africa, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 411-422, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903076501](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076501)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076501>



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Public spheres, hidden politics and struggles over space: boundaries of public engagement in post-apartheid South Africa¹

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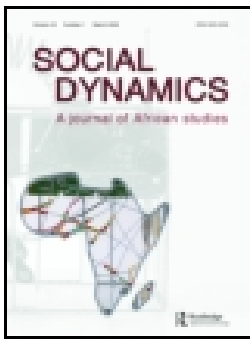
The development of a public sphere forms a central ingredient in the consolidation of a new political culture following a transition to democracy. The Habermasian idea of the public sphere has been challenged for not taking into account the role of ‘part’ and ‘counter public spheres’, particularly with reference to ‘developing’ societies. ‘Actually existing’ public spheres must therefore be conceptualised within the framework of a broader category of ‘public space’. A national public sphere in South Africa is held back by inequalities of wealth and power. A minority public of privileged consumers has access to a structure of print and electronic media, while the majority population relies on different systems of networking that make up counter publics. After 1994, the public sphere has been influenced by a dominant-party system, accompanied by a division into formal and informal politics, with formal politics assuming a ritualistic function and ‘*Realpolitik*’ being played out within the non-public structures of the dominant party. Meanwhile, critical public debate has had to find its course through varieties of informal politics. The article examines how moral debates around HIV/AIDS and crime in KwaZulu-Natal have constituted an alternative arena for debate, and how cultural and religious discourses have been the channels of a local public sphere. The article discusses to what extent debates have constituted a local democratic ‘deliberative public sphere’, and looks at the ways in which the local state in the form of the eThekweni Municipality has interacted with local publics since 1994.

Keywords: public spheres; democratisation; civil society; moral debate; local politics

The development of a public sphere – within which civil society institutions and social movements can deliberate around their positions and engage the state – forms a central ingredient in democratisation and in the consolidation of a new political culture following a transition to democracy in constitutional terms (cf. Linz and Stepan 1996).

But how do we conceive theoretically of the public sphere in terms of development? The idea of the public sphere as ‘*Öffentlichkeit*’ (an institutional landscape of openness and unrestricted debate and accessibility) as proposed by Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 doctoral dissertation has been criticised – also by Habermas himself – as a narrow ideal type, based on the state-society dynamics in a specific period of early modern European history. In spite of this, such a Habermasian notion continues to function as a critical ideal against which the actual organisation of publics in different situations of development may be assessed. The Habermasian framework of understanding has been challenged for not taking into account that public spheres are not

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South African NGOs and the public sphere: between popular movements and partnerships for development

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To cite this article: Natascha Mueller-Hirth (2009) South African NGOs and the public sphere: between popular movements and partnerships for development, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 423-435, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903076568](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076568)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076568>



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South African NGOs and the public sphere: between popular movements and partnerships for development

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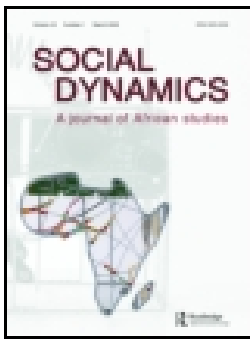
This article examines the widespread notion that post-apartheid democracy can be deepened and civil society strengthened by NGO activities in the sphere of public debate and participation. I focus on a number of interrelated processes which I argue may compromise NGOs' ability to expand the public sphere: first, donors' overwhelming focus on NGOs as the sole representative of civil society may contribute to a homogenous and institutionalised public sphere; second, the tendency for NGOs to be drawn into partnerships with government bodies and corporate sponsors casts doubt on their ability to open up spaces for critical public debate. By directing attention to popular movements as potentially offering a site for the production of critique, NGOs' relationships to such movements are examined. It is argued that attention must be paid to the processes of NGO-isation and reformism by which NGOs themselves come to define what civil society should be and may consequently contain counterpublic spheres.

Keywords: NGO; civil society; South Africa; social movement; counterpublics

Introduction

There are a number of South African non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose objectives include enhancing public debate and participation and building civil society capacity. Generally donor-funded, the activities of such NGOs are understood as deepening democracy and supporting a healthy civil society. This article seeks to assess claims about the role of NGOs in the public sphere: does their work open up the sphere of debate and critique or are their endeavours by definition elitist, excluding the experiences and socio-economic realities of the majority population? A number of interrelated processes are charted by which certain actors are included and others excluded in conceptions of civil society in South Africa. This, it is argued, may in fact impact negatively on the existence of spaces of public deliberation and on the shape of post-apartheid democracy. The article thus seeks to contribute to a critical reading of formalised South African NGOs and their relationships with other components of civil society. In the first part, I examine how particular donor understandings of civil society, chiefly its conflation with professionalised NGOs, contribute to a limited definition of civil society in post-apartheid South Africa. In the second part, reconceptualisations of public-sphere theory are employed in order to direct attention to popular movements and their potential to open up spaces for critique NGOs may structurally be unable to engage in. In examining the relationships of formalised NGOs to social movements, I argue that processes of NGO-isation as well as NGOs'

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Participatory spaces and the Alexandra Vukuzenzele Crisis Committee (AVCC): reshaping government plans

Luke Sinwell

To cite this article: Luke Sinwell (2009) Participatory spaces and the Alexandra Vukuzenzele Crisis Committee (AVCC): reshaping government plans, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 436-449, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903116141](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116141)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903116141>



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Participatory spaces and the Alexandra Vukuzenzele Crisis Committee (AVCC): reshaping government plans¹

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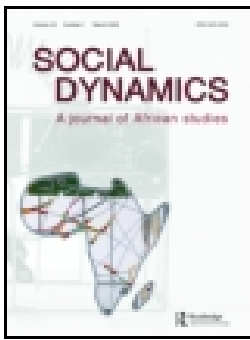
This article challenges the prevailing orthodoxy in the South African literature on participation in development, which suggests that it is government structures alone that determine citizen participation in development. It focuses on the empirical example of the Alexandra Vukuzenzele Crisis Committee (AVCC), an affiliate of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), to show the ways in which agents shape and recreate development practices on the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP), an African National Congress flagship programme. To do this, the article draws from interviews with stakeholders involved in the ARP as well as the AVCC who seek to contest the allocation of houses in the ARP. Following Cornwall (2004), this article argues that agents can force the government to concede to their demands despite the government's structures which initially appeared to exclude them.

Keywords: participatory development; participatory governance; social movements

Introduction

The most recent South African literature on participation in development has suggested that the government's technocentric and managerial approach to participation serves to limit citizens' ability to influence development. These authors claim that the possibility for citizen participation to move beyond encompassing state-led strategies that inform the public of decisions made on their behalf is limited. The assumption is that government structures must be reformed so that people can participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. However, the approach taken by these South African theorists thus far may be short-sighted since it largely ignores the role that agents play in defining participatory, and even development, processes. This article draws upon international literature, particularly Cornwall (2004), whose framework enables the researcher to advance beyond the one-sided depiction of the processes and outcomes of participation in development which has permeated the literature in the post-apartheid South African context. By understanding participation as a spatial practice, Cornwall's theory suggests that participatory processes are determined by power relations and therefore always in flux. This framework provides insight into the possibilities that agents have for reshaping and recreating the government's agenda and structures and also uncovers the possibilities and limitations this agency may pose to wider processes of development at a local scale, especially in the context of limited resources. Using Cornwall's framework as a backdrop, this article

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The Congress of the People and the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication: from public deliberation to bureaucratic imposition in Kliptown

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To cite this article: Christa Kuljian (2009) The Congress of the People and the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication: from public deliberation to bureaucratic imposition in Kliptown, *Social Dynamics*, 35:2, 450-464, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903076584](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076584)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903076584>



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The Congress of the People and the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication: from public deliberation to bureaucratic imposition in Kliptown¹

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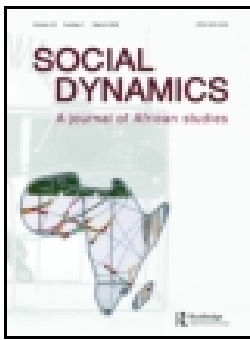
Kliptown was the site of the Congress of the People in June 1955 where the Freedom Charter was adopted – the culmination of two years of public deliberation. Fifty years later, in 2005, the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, a memorial to the Freedom Charter, opened on the same site. The new Square and a set of related buildings were built by the Johannesburg Development Agency as part of the Kliptown Redevelopment Project. The article begins with a brief review of Kliptown's history, especially on the fringes of apartheid, and then explores the new Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, which stands in stark contrast to its surroundings. The article continues with comment from local residents about the new Square. In an effort to understand what happened in Kliptown, it reviews the process by which the new Square design was chosen and the level of community involvement in the development of the Square. The section 'Memorialising Kliptown' briefly contrasts the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication with the District Six Museum and explores the concept of heritage as tourism. The article concludes ironically that in the era of democracy, in Kliptown – the home of the Freedom Charter – space for public deliberation has been severely curtailed.

Keywords: Kliptown; Freedom Charter; development; community participation; heritage; memorial

I first walked through Kliptown in 1985 with Uncle Bill, shopping for fruit and vegetables. A community activist and sports leader working with the United Democratic Front, he took me under his wing and taught me about South African history and politics. As we walked down Union Road, which is adjacent to Freedom Square, he motioned towards the Square and said: 'Kliptown is the home of the Freedom Charter. It was signed here in 1955 by the Congress of the People'. Before I could take a proper look, I had to veer around the flapping wings of live chickens for sale and negotiate the streams of people doing their shopping. Uncle Bill stopped to review the produce at a roadside trader. He made his choice and handed me a crate of tomatoes, then moved onto another topic. 'Mandela used to hide here in Kliptown when he was running from the police', he said. I wondered in which building. The butcher, the fabric shop and Jada's hardware store were all possibilities and permanent features on Union Road. Despite Eldorado Park on one side and Soweto on the other, Kliptown felt like a town, not a township.

Kliptown was never designed as a township. It was originally built on two farms on the Klip River. Klipriviersoog Estate was established in 1903 and the farming area

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Introduction

Carolyn Hamilton , Lesley Cowling & Isabel Hofmeyr

To cite this article: Carolyn Hamilton , Lesley Cowling & Isabel Hofmeyr (2010) Introduction, Social Dynamics, 36:1, 1-2, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561122](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561122)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561122>



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Symposium: Exceeding public spheres II

Introduction

Carolyn Hamilton^a, Lesley Cowling^b and Isabel Hofmeyr^b

^a*University of Cape Town, South Africa;* ^b*University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa*

In this issue of *Social Dynamics* we present the second special symposium on the theme *Exceeding Public Spheres*. The articles produced in the two symposia are drawn from a conference entitled ‘Paradoxes of the Postcolonial Sphere: South African Democracy at the Crossroads’, held on 28–31 January 2007 at the University of the Witwatersrand. The conference arose out of a five-year research project, *The Constitution of Public Intellectual Life*, which investigated the conditions that promote or disable the engagement of complexity in public deliberation. A brief report on the conference objectives and discussion is included in the introduction to the first symposium, published in the previous issue of *Social Dynamics*.

Part I of the double special symposium, published in September 2009, focused on the sub-theme of consensus and contention in the public sphere of a developmental state. The seven articles, and the framing essay by Shireen Hassim, dealt with the increasingly officialised public sphere convened in the heart of South Africa’s nascent democracy. The articles highlighted the ways in which public debate has been both actively promoted and effectively constrained, sometimes by the very institutions, policies and funding forms designed to foster it. As Hassim put it in her prefatory essay to the section, the articles challenge ‘the feasibility of the Habermasian notion of the public sphere as the space of open and inclusive debate, while, nevertheless, holding on to the idea that some version of the idealised public sphere is both desirable and necessary for democracy to thrive’. The articles highlight the difficulties of contributing to public debate in conditions of uncertain claims on citizenship and in the face of deep social cleavages. Collectively, the articles published in the previous symposium provide a critique of the operations of the public sphere that frame the articles that appear in this issue.

Where the first symposium mapped the limits and contradictions of contemporary South African public debate, this second symposium rethinks publicness, reaching beyond conventional concepts of the public sphere. A political and analytical shift is made from concerns arising out of decades of identity politics – where the dominant question was ‘Who speaks for whom?’ – to a focus on the question of ‘To whom does one speak?’; and, ‘In what kinds of public languages?’ The articles collected in the second symposium explore debates that occur in the shadows of the officialised public sphere, examine the role of the media in orchestrating debate, investigate the tactics of public address and the forms of public language drawn on in public deliberation, and offer methodologies for tracking the public life of ideas.

The symposium published in this issue comprises four sections: *Part 2: Public silences and disavowed debate*; *Part 3: Mediatiation of debate*; *Part 4: Uncharted*

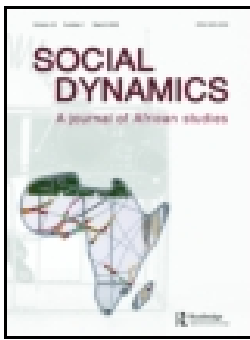
spaces of public deliberation; and *Part 5: Public performers of wisdom and affect*. Each of these sections is introduced by a framing essay, which sets its portfolio of articles in the context of relevant debates.

As we noted in the introduction to the first symposium, the articles argue that the standard ways of making sense of the postcolonial public sphere are exceeded by the South African case. Taking a post-resistance perspective, the collection suggests that public formations taking shape are neither simply about post-colonial officialisation with the dead hand of state seeking to ‘zombify’ its citizens, in Achille Mbembe’s phrase (2001, p. 104), nor about acts of glorious resistance against the new state. Neither is the South African case a straightforward one of the ‘refeudalisation’ (Habermas 1989) of the public sphere with consumer spectacles dominating public debate.

These articles on a rich range of contemporary public forms (talk radio, tabloids, documentary photography, debates on witchcraft, museums, anti-privatisation forums, discussions of same-sex equality) recast questions of publics, and of the role of public intellectuals, within the zone of the post-colonial. Testing the limits of the notions of the public sphere, publics and counterpublics, the collection suggests that we are seeing formations that are more ambiguous, complicit, entangled. The focus on questions of publics and tactics of address takes us decisively beyond the oppositions of colonial and anticolonial that still characterise postcolonial theorising. Although most of the papers in the double symposium focus on the case of South Africa, its analytical wagers and the nature of the questions it poses aim to shift the nature of debate on democracy and public life in other parts of the globe.

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Framing essay: In the shadows of the convened public sphere: public silences and disavowed debate

Carolyn Hamilton

To cite this article: Carolyn Hamilton (2010) Framing essay: In the shadows of the convened public sphere: public silences and disavowed debate, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 3-10, DOI: 10.1080/02533950903561148

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561148>



Published online: 18 Mar 2010.



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Part 2: Public silences and disavowed debate

Framing essay

In the shadows of the convened public sphere: public silences and disavowed debate

Carolyn Hamilton*

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‘The real problem, as I see it’, wrote veteran journalist Jon Qwelane (2008) in the weekend tabloid *Sunday Sun*, ‘is the rapid degradation of values and traditions by the so-called liberal influences of nowadays: you regularly see men kissing other men in public, walking holding hands and shamelessly flaunting what are misleadingly termed their “lifestyle” and “sexual preferences”’. As an experienced commentator, Qwelane understood well the likely reception of his intervention and anticipated it:

And by the way, please tell the Human Rights Commission that I totally refuse to withdraw or apologise for my views [...] I do pray that some day a bunch of politicians with their heads affixed firmly to their necks will muster the balls to rewrite the constitution of this country to excise those sections which give licence to men ‘marrying’ other men and ditto women. (Qwelane 2008)

In the melodramatic mode, characteristic of tabloid forms of public deliberation (Strelitz and Steenkamp 2008), Qwelane concluded: ‘How soon before some idiot demands to “marry” an animal and argues that this constitution “allows” it?’.

With this column, we see Qwelane deliberately challenging the limits of public deliberation laid down by the South African Constitution, and doing so in a forum (tabloid media) that one could argue is discredited as an arena for public deliberation. Qwelane’s extraordinary outburst speaks not just to the tension inherent in speaking from a ‘disavowed’ position in our society, that is, the anti-Constitutional position, but to key tensions in the enactment of public deliberation that are inherent to the Constitution itself. As we see from the articles in this section, this has resulted in a number of manoeuvres to contain these tensions and prevent them from bursting into an open space of serious deliberation. These manoeuvres, I argue, broadly take two forms: containment within the formally convened, institution-rich public sphere and consignment to sequestered spaces or places of exile.

Institutionalised containments

The South African Constitution envisages a highly participatory form of democracy, in which citizens actively deliberate about the kind of society they wish to constitute and which requires the creation of conditions to foster this. Yet, as noted by Qwelane,

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the Constitution itself sets limits on the scope of deliberation.¹ One of the ways that it does this lies in how it deals with rights: it sets up a regime of liberal-democratic values, upholding, for example, gay and gender rights and freedom of expression. However, it frames religion, custom and tradition differently, as cultural rights. Both the human rights and the cultural rights regimes set limits on freedom of expression, itself another right. The rights are underpinned ('strengthened', in the words of the Constitution) by a range of institutions, called the Chapter Nine institutions.² The Constitution specifies that other organs of state must assist and protect these institutions to ensure their independence and effectiveness and further makes provision for forms of redress in relation to the legacies of racism and violence.

However, 15 years into their establishment, the Chapter Nine institutions do not function effectively.³ An unanticipated effect of the Chapter Nine institutions is that, simply by existing, they fill up public space for the engagement of the issues which are their brief. Their presence encourages citizens to relinquish to them the role of public vigilance in relation to the issues for which they carry a public responsibility. When staffing failures and skills shortages immobilise them,⁴ they become places of the containment of debates or, at worst, deliberative graveyards. Further, as was found by the Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) Report (2007), a majority of people believe these institutions to be obedient to the interests of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). As then ANC government minister Kader Asmal put it:

Obviously, those who exercise power and authority do not want any strong countervailing institutions which would question their actions. For example, the investigation of excessive use of force by the police depends on the efficient exercise of investigatory capacity of the Independent Complaints Directorate. Yet, for over two years, there has been no chief executive officer appointed and scandalous staff shortages have not been addressed. The question to ask is why? (Asmal 2008)

Other institutions established in terms of the Constitution, such as the national House of Traditional Leaders and the provincial councils, have had similar effects.

In addition, there is a range of institutions set up with responsibility for advising government on and developing public awareness of specific issues with colonialism- and apartheid-linked redress imperatives. These include bodies like the National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office (NIKSO) and the National Heritage Council (NHC). NIKSO is an initiative of the Department of Science and Technology focused primarily on a National Recordal System, project-managed by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The underlying Indigenous Knowledge Systems policy is geared towards the 'recognition, affirmation, protection and development of IKS' (NIKSO n.d.). These bodies also occupy fulsomely the public space for the engagement of the issues which are their brief. Mobilising the moral power of the need for post-apartheid redress, they have given specific emphasis to the areas of public engagement which are their charge, often proscribing an orthodox valorisation of the African past, while deflecting and neutralising uncomfortable challenges.

Not only the South African regime of rights and the multiple institutions to support those rights, but also media and public sentiment frequently drive underground discussions of issues which challenge the values and rights thus upheld. Indeed, the email campaign which followed Qwelane's outburst sought to marshal not only public sentiment but also media norms and institutional safeguards against the publication of his

challenge to the Constitution. As an email sent out for onward circulation by Thomas Coggin on 23 July 2008 put it,

The article amounts to nothing short of hate speech [...] Mr Qwelane should be fired for his blatant homophobic remarks [...] I urge you all to copy this email to the Press Ombudsman at ombudsman@presscouncil.org.za as an official complaint – not only against Mr Qwelane, but the *Sunday Sun* and News24 for publishing the article.

Debates that are centred on issues variously described as tradition, custom, indigenous culture and so on sometimes puncture the normative reason-based notion of the public sphere that is central to the functioning of democracy. They do this despite the variety of legislative and institutional apparatuses set up by the post-colonial, post-apartheid and redress-sensitive state to accommodate them. The puncturing has uneven effects, depending on context and the articles in this section stage this puncturing and present its effects. The articles further offer glimpses of the ways in which issues of the sacred and the moral are entwined into matters of tradition and custom in a manner that is both troublesome for secular constitutionalism and democracy's vision of reasoned deliberation and a potential source of power for African nationalism. This entwining is further complicated by initiatives which seek in vernacular concepts, such as that of *ubuntu* (often translated as 'humanness'), an ethical basis for an alternative form of deliberative democracy and for distinctly post-colonial knowledge projects.

The gap between the ideals of the South African Constitution and the proscriptions of liberal democratic values, on the one hand, and lived reality and post-colonial sentiments of restitution, on the other hand, is vividly manifest in public contestations around gender and sexuality. Graeme Reid's article in this section notes that many cases relating to gay and lesbian equality have come before the Constitutional Court, generating widespread public deliberation. Gay and lesbian equality has come to occupy a paradoxical place. On the one hand, it is a litmus test for the success of constitutional democracy – emblematic of a social order based on human rights. On the other hand, homosexuality is cast as untraditional, as un-African and as unchristian – a dangerous threat to the social fabric. And because gay and lesbian equality is not widely supported, it is also one of the key 'moral barometers' that tests the gap between the ideals of the Constitution and popular opinion.

Reid's article reveals the way in which public discussions of the same-sex marriage proposals in a series of hearings became the occasion for the expression of widespread discomfort with the ideals of the Constitution and perceptions of the threat the Civil Unions Bill posed to social cohesion. The hearings were held in the rural hinterlands of six provinces and were organised under the auspices of the Traditions and Customs Committee of the national House of Traditional Leaders. Hereditary chiefs dominated the proceedings and presented themselves as the true voice of participatory democracy in listening to the conservative impulses expressed at the hearings and in arguing that the practice of same-sex marriages is against most of African beliefs, cultures, customs and traditions. The public discussion was vociferous, but ultimately limited and contained expression. A gay or lesbian voice was heard at only one of the hearings.

Reid points out, however, that public engagements with gay lifestyles are multiple, ambiguous and paradoxical. The very idea that homosexuality is imagined as 'untraditional' in certain settings means that in such contexts it is also available to be thought of as modern. The association with modernity is an ambiguous one: on the

one hand, it encompasses fears and anxieties about the erosion of traditional norms and values; and, on the other, a set of aspirations and expectations associated with modernity. Reid points to hair salons as another site for public engagement with African homosexuality. Hairstylists who are overtly gay can be accommodated – even celebrated – in communities which, in their public rhetoric around homosexuality, might agree with many of the speakers at the public hearings.

While Reid's charting of the informal deliberative space of the hairdressing salon maps the contours of deeply contradictory positions held in tandem, the formal, albeit contained, debates about homosexuality reveal a tussle between a rights-based Constitution and customary law, exposing the fault lines of a Constitution that attempts to accommodate both, but in which gender equality holds the trump card in the form of the Bill of Rights.

Traditional authorities enter the democratic present contaminated and illegitimate (as patriarchal colonial and apartheid agents and exploiters of their subjects) and also as consecrated custodians of authentic indigenous culture. This ambiguity feeds into a contemporary tension between the project to consolidate democracy and a post-colonial effort at recuperating the indigenous. Provisions in the post-apartheid Constitution concerning the recognition of traditional authorities, indigenous law and the protection of cultural and religious groups deal with this ambiguity and the ensuing tension. Yet, as Federico Settler (in this section) notes, the state has been reluctant to develop legislation that gives effect to these provisions, although it has set up provincial councils and a national House of Traditional Leaders. These limited interventions effectively regulate and domesticate traditional institutions, containing them in the realm of the cultural and the customary. They are circumscribed and isolated sites of debate denuded of power effects, able only to 'advise' government and 'make recommendations'. While discourses of indigeneity are carefully contained in relation to the political power of traditional authorities, in the areas of cultural, religious and language rights they are liberated and mobilised in politically powerful ways through ancestral claims, the recognition of indigenous healing systems, intellectual property rights for forms of indigenous knowledge and collective rights for the protection of indigenous communities, often made with reference to global discourses of indigeneity.

The issue of witchcraft offers yet another lens on the contemporary conditions of deliberation, being prominent in everyday conversation but absent in the formal settings of the public sphere. That witchcraft is absent in the formal public sphere is partly because of a conscious silencing by government and its exile into the containment of a commission (the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders), but also, Isak Niehaus argues in this section, because of its own popular status as 'deep knowledge' or 'subtext' to social action. Ordinary village and township residents feel that deliberations about witchcraft do not belong in public spaces of governance. His conclusion is that there is a dual orientation in which there is no synthesis or confrontation between discourses of witchcraft within, for example, the extended family and formal discussions in the public sphere.

Consignations

While certain ideas/materials are contained by institutional practices, others are simply consigned away. As the Niehaus contribution shows, issues around witchcraft were not simply contained in an official commission, they were consigned to sequestered spaces

like that of the extended family. We see consignment still more starkly at work in relation to inherited colonial and apartheid archives, which span collections of human remains, material culture including sacred objects, compendia of traditions and customs, recorded oral accounts and traveller observations and so on. They are today regarded as profoundly contaminated, their implication in racist knowledge practices amply attested to. Yet, paradoxically, these archives overflow with materials about a precolonial South African past for which there is currently an immense hunger. The post-apartheid government amply invests in promoting the heritage concerning the freedom struggle (notably through major projects such as Robben Island, Freedom Park and resistance memorialisations), yet the deeper past remains neglected. While government policy actively seeks to acknowledge intangible heritage, the colonial- and apartheid-era archives of tainted, but significant, materials are consigned to shoddy storage facilities in settings which make difficult the possibility of productive post-apartheid engagements with them.

Location in an archive is as much an act of forgetting as one of preservation. Jacques Derrida (1995, p. 11) termed this ‘archival consignment’ and laid out the act as having two components, gathering together – co-ordinating a single corpus in a system in which all the elements articulate the unity of a single configuration – and determining control over access. For Derrida, there is no archive without a place of consignment; it is the act of consignment that makes something ‘archive’. Central to Derrida’s concept is that there is no remembering without forgetting, but no forgetting without remembering. Archival consignment is never a final dismissal. Archival consignment thus both muffles and amplifies testimony to a complex colonial and apartheid past that potentially disrupts emerging consensus about the past fostered in the public domain. The articles by Sara Byala and Anne Wanless radically intervene in renaming tainted collections of cultural artefacts – for so long deemed atemporal cultural collections – ‘archives’ and attesting to their capacity to speak about the precolonial past. In this way the authors recognise consignment in the sense explored by Derrida. But they also reveal further acts of consignment at work.

Byala focuses on the vast collection of materials termed ‘ethnographic’ held by what was early Johannesburg’s premier cultural museum, the Africana Museum. Despite being renamed MuseumAfrica in 2004 in an urgent attempt to recuperate its holdings for the new democratic era and the politically thoughtful repositioning of the Museum, at first to considerable acclaim, it is now effectively disowned. Its ethnographic materials, once vividly displayed in service of apartheid’s vision of ethnically divided tribal peoples, are feared for their potential capacity to continue to testify to primitivity and backwardness, their ethnic particularity, as well as their legacies as trophies of an invasive colonial gaze. The sacred aspects of some of the items present further challenges to their retention and presentation in public institutions.

Wanless’s article homes in on one of the collections held in MuseumAfrica, the Fourie Collection of Khoisan Ethnographica. Exiled to the museum stores, the Fourie collection of Khoisan materials is doubly disavowed, both as a collection of a neglected museum and as an archive of a people – though officially accredited as South Africans, formally commemorated in the national motto, with a celebrated inheritance of rock art – whose historical subordination and obliteration, as well as earliest indigeneity, are carefully contained and whose marginal status is persistently ignored.

The two articles make a case for the immense archival potentiality of these collections, a potentiality that remains confounded by anxiety, even where it is recognised.

Contemporary debates about Khoisan heritage periodically erupt into the public domain. One of the most vivid instances was provided by the opening of the *Miscast* exhibition in 1996. Curated by University of Cape Town academic and artist Pippa Skotnes, the exhibition excavated similar kinds of contaminated materials from museum archives across South Africa and indeed the European metropolises, in a move designed to focus attention on the colonial encounter with the Khoisan and the range of tainted colonial knowledge projects that flowed from this encounter. Public responses from people who identified themselves as Khoisan descendants were diverse, with considerable celebration and strong outrage expressed at what was seen as yet another act of appropriation being the most vocal. Exhumation by a white curator was judged to be an unacceptable form of public engagement and the exposure of the tainted archive a repeat humiliation (see Skotnes 1996, Abrahams 1996).

These archival consignations take place against the background of active campaigns in government heritage and research bodies for the recognition of indigenous knowledge as part of a wider effort at ethical redress. The primary sources for these efforts are understood to be located outside the institutions that originated under colonialism and apartheid, to lie in intangible forms, in oral memory and in everyday practices, that is, in the hands of the people considered indigenous. Yet, as the articles in this section show, those same institutions, when treated as archives, have much to contribute to contemporary understandings of past and vernacular ways of knowing.

The post-colonial play of light and shadow in the convened public sphere

In their consideration of how the South African state, founded on liberal universalism, accommodates cultural practices deemed ‘dangerous’ by the canons of enlightenment reason, John and Jean Comaroff (2004) highlight the ways different forms of cultural and confessional reason enter public and legal discourse with new kinds of weight. They conclude that an Afromodernity is taking organic shape in the interstices between new democratic institutions and what they term the kingdom of custom. The Comaroffs’ analysis is framed in terms of an antinomy – a contradiction between two equally binding proscriptions – between lived culture and the law rooted in liberal universalism.

The articles in this section allow us to identify a further contradiction, centred on tradition and custom, discernible in a play of light and shadow in the contemporary public domain. It is a contradiction constituted by the coexistence of the worrisome colonially and apartheid-tainted inheritance of tradition and custom, profoundly implicated in the operation of power, alongside a passionate contemporary desire to redeem a suppressed precolonial legacy of knowledge practices, philosophies, sacred charters and cultural practices including, for many, the conservative values and traditions invoked by Qwelane. Post-apartheid conditions both condemn the colonial and apartheid inheritance of tradition and custom and valorise the indigenous. While that which is condemned is clearly different in many respects from that which is valorised, in other respects the condemned and valorised objects and ideas overlap.

This overlap installs a contradiction in contemporary engagements of the past, a contradiction that is institutionally and legislatively contained, but which sometimes bursts out loud, leaping, as in Qwelane’s eruption, into the mainstream media. These ambiguities are seldom engaged head-on in the public domain. They are, however, the subjects of direct debate in sheltered sites of the academy, with occasional percolations into the public domain. They are also addressed in what I have conceptual-

ised, in an article in the first part of this double symposium (Hamilton 2009), as capillaries of public deliberation – those areas not conventionally recognised as formal sites of public deliberation, that is, in performances, exhibitions, reviews, artworks, films, advertising and speeches. It also encompasses the invocations of Zulu culture as a justification for extra marital sexual involvement by the then ANC Deputy President Jacob Zuma around his rape trial in 2006, which allowed disavowed debates around understandings of tradition and custom. Not only were there statements in support of the invocation of traditional culture. As Shireen Hassim (2007) has noted, public articulation around the rape trial by black feminists and progressive black men of views of culture as constructed and malleable was an important departure from the usual lineaments of the public discussion of culture. It was a rare direct public surfacing of the ambiguities of the contemporary invocations of tradition and custom.

Issues of tradition and custom are saturated in repressed anxieties about the identification of the African post-colony as a place of superstition, brutality and irrationality. This is despite a political and intellectual analysis of the conditions that gave rise to those caricatures. These anxieties transect race and emanate from many angles. They drive AIDS denialism (in the form of fear of manipulation of the spectre of unbridled sexuality in Africa, itself a staple hoary of colonial fantasy), quiet diplomacy in relation to Zimbabwe (suspicions about Western values), a refusal to acknowledge the extent of crime (anxieties about a criminal black identity) and white flight (driven by a host of racist stereotypes). Equal anxieties drive the many and varied engagements with the troubled archive of the past undertaken by scholars, activists and artists.

Paradoxically, then, in the current condition of a new democracy with immense policy and legislation to guarantee vibrant public deliberation, some of the most unsettling debates of the day are driven underground by formal arrangements which install forms of debate containment within what is regarded as the public sphere, or deport such debates outside of that sphere. The forms of *containment* within the recognised public sphere are typically institutional. The tactics of *consignation* may be hidden acts of eschewal, silent acts of political disavowal, enclosure in sequestered spaces, performances of exile or from spaces of exile.

However, the disavowed debates, nonetheless, go on within the conditions of containment and consignation, as the articles in this section show, with silent effects and occasional outbursts, variously contesting, gathering and losing power in public, only occasionally under the spotlight of the convened public sphere. The exiled colonial archive, channelled discussions of gay rights and subterranean engagements of witchcraft lurk in the shadows of the post-colonial public sphere, sometimes lit up through the promotion of indigeneity. Public silences and disavowed debates alert us to a discursive instability around the nature of the remote past. They embrace rules of conversation, sites of debate and even different languages from the formal public sphere and they are diverted from the main arteries of power. Strikingly, they constitute forms of public engagement very different from the Habermasian conception of the political as a space of transparent communication between all people.

Notes

1. On the way constitutionalism sets a limit on, or regulates, majoritarian outcomes in public deliberation, see Klug (2000, chapter one).

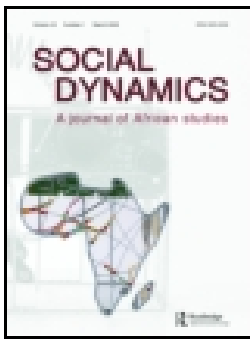
2. Viz. the Public Protector; the South African Human Rights Commission; the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities; the Commission for Gender Equality; Independent Communication Authority of South Africa; National Youth Commission; Financial and Fiscal Commission; the Pan South African Language Board; as well as the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commission.
3. The 2007 parliamentary review of these institutions chaired by Professor Kader Asmal (*Report of the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Chapter Nine and Associated Institutions*, 31 July 2007) and a number of other co-timed reports such as the Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) Report, *Effectiveness and Impact of Three Constitution-Building Institutions in South Africa*, June 2007, the Human Sciences Research Council's presentation 'Evaluation of Chapter Nine Institutions' and a report by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (*Review of State Institutions Supporting Democracy*, January 2007).
4. One of the findings of the *ad hoc* committee, see above.

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The museum becomes archive: reassessing Johannesburg's MuseumAfrica

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To cite this article: Sara G. Byala (2010) The museum becomes archive: reassessing Johannesburg's MuseumAfrica, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 11-23, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561171](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561171)

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The museum becomes archive: reassessing Johannesburg's MuseumAfrica

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This article charts the history of MuseumAfrica (formerly the Africana Museum) from its founding vision to the present. Taking the museum's current abysmal reputation as its starting point, it seeks to fill the void in academic and popular thought that encompasses the institution. Sketching the original mandate under which it was created before focusing on the museum's work from 1935 to the near present, it explores the ways in which the museum interacted with and impacted the world outside its doors. Paying particular attention to the museum's engagement with liberal and illiberal forces for change, it presents the museum as something other than the monument impervious to change that it is often assumed to be. Categorising the museum as an archive, this article argues in favour of the museum's enduring relevance in the post-colonial order.

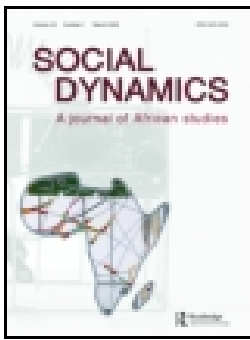
Keywords: MuseumAfrica; Africana Museum; Gubbins; archive

Introduction

To the extent that anyone bothers to speak about Johannesburg's MuseumAfrica these days, it is with sadness at best and derision at worst. In the Africanist climate of post-apartheid South Africa, this 74-year-old institution of Africana (or objects of Africa) appears extraneous to modern needs. Scholarly literature, if it even mentions it, tends to gloss the institution's history, painting it as either a decent – but not entirely successful – reincarnation or a static remnant of a thankfully dead order.¹ Cast in both popular and academic thought as inessential to the new way of life, MuseumAfrica slowly rots. Inherent in these spoken and silent critiques is the notion that the museum embodies the worst of South Africa's past to an irredeemable extent. Many believe that prior to its 1994 facelift and name change from the Africana Museum, the museum was an unflinching supporter of first segregation and then apartheid and that this unyielding stance precluded any meaningful transformation. Given this characterisation, the museum is, unsurprisingly, written off as a monument that has outlived its usefulness, a temple to a discredited deity.

This article offers a reassessment of MuseumAfrica's past in order to suggest for it – and other post-colonial museums – the possibility of a different future. Exposing the malleability of the institution over the twentieth century, this essay highlights the ways in which the museum interacted with contemporaneous liberal discourse. While at times, and in keeping with the general consensus on the institution, the museum emerges as a willing supporter of racist logic, elsewhere the museum falls in line with

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The Fourie collection of Khoisan ethnographica: forming an archive

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To cite this article: Ann Wanless (2010) The Fourie collection of Khoisan ethnographica: forming an archive, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 24-37, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561197](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561197)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561197>



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The Fourie collection of Khoisan ethnographica: forming an archive

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University of Cape Town, South Africa

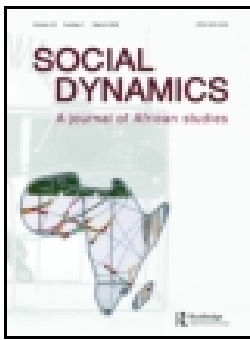
In the 1920s, in the course of exercising control over the furthest reaches of South Africa's recently acquired protectorate, Dr Louis Fourie, Medical Officer for the Administration of the Protectorate of South West Africa, amassed what was to become probably the world's most extensive collection of Khoisan artefacts. Today the results of this decade of part-time collecting and anthropologising form a neglected source of knowledge as it rests in the storerooms of Museum Africa in Johannesburg. Fourie and his collection formed an important part of the process of a discourse that created knowledge about the Khoisan over the subsequent decades, both shaping and being shaped by the academic paradigms of his time and the colonial perceptions and imperatives that informed policy and practice in the Administration. This recursive pattern continued as the collection moved in and out of public institutions, reflecting a continuing obsession with the Khoisan in the West, both in public and academic discourses. Examining the collection, its history and its context uncover seldom distinguished characteristics of archives and, particularly of, mixed-media collections.

Keywords: archives; Khoisan identity; Louis Fourie; material culture; museums; politics of knowledge

Introduction

In 1978, Bob Fourie donated the Louis Fourie Bushman Collection¹ to the Africana Museum in Johannesburg.² Created by his father during the 12 years he spent as Medical Officer in South West Africa,³ the bulk of the collection consisted of thousands of objects, but also included almost 400 photographs and a large number of documents. The multimedia nature of the collection presented a problem to the museum, which in the past had passed on documentary collections to other institutions and focused its attention on objects and images. The museum was not alone in its perplexity. The issue of the relationship between archival and museum practice, each subject to a different body of theorising, had not been addressed then and it still remains an unexplored area. And while there has been a recent flourishing of theorising in both disciplines, no one has problematised the ways in which knowledge is extracted from mixed collections such as Fourie's (Wanless 2007, pp. 29, 36). For this study I approach this miscellany as an archive in its entirety, with the understanding that everything it holds was collected because the items were believed to hold knowledge that could, at a later stage, be extracted and interpreted (Wanless 2007, pp. 269–270). Extending the definition of 'archive' to include artefacts and photographs offers

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The canary of the Constitution: same-sex equality in the public sphere

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To cite this article: Graeme Reid (2010) The canary of the Constitution: same-sex equality in the public sphere, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 38-51, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561221](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561221)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561221>



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The canary of the Constitution: same-sex equality in the public sphere

Graeme Reid*

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Nowhere is the paradox between the ideals of the South African Constitution and lived reality more apparent than in public contestations around gender and sexuality. Gay and lesbian equality has come to occupy a symbolic place as a litmus test of the success of constitutional democracy in South Africa. And yet, because gay and lesbian equality is not widely supported, it is also one of the key moral barometers testing the gap between the Constitution and public opinion. This article looks at a series of public hearings held under the auspices of the National House of Traditional Leaders to gauge public opinion on same-sex marriages. This is used as a case study to explore how sexuality becomes pivotal in debates about nationhood and belonging.

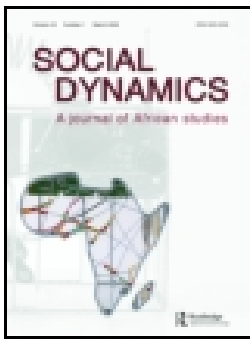
Keywords: South Africa; gay and lesbian; Constitution; gender; sexuality; traditionalist

Introduction

Nowhere is the paradox between the ideals of the South African Constitution and lived reality more apparent than in public contestations around gender and sexuality.¹ In this respect, public debates around same-sex marriages have been particularly vocal. More than any other single issue, cases relating to gay and lesbian equality have come before the Constitutional Court, generating widespread public deliberation. Gay and lesbian equality has come to occupy a paradoxical place. On the one hand, it is a litmus test for the success of constitutional democracy – emblematic of a human-rights-based social order. On the other hand, homosexuality is cast as untraditional, as un-African, and as unchristian – a dangerous threat to the social fabric. And because gay and lesbian equality is not widely supported, it is also one of the key ‘moral barometers’ that tests the gap between the ideals of the Constitution and popular opinion. ‘Sexual orientation’ is a Constitutional provision with profound connotations, both positive and negative.

This article will look at a series of hearings held under the auspices of the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) to gauge public opinion on same-sex marriages. These hearings provided a forum for the articulation of negative ideas about homosexuality, sparked by the prospect of same-sex marriages. Questions of gender and sexuality were subject to vigorous debate; ‘tradition’ was pitted against ‘modernity’, while the participants raised questions about the nature of democracy, and the relationship between public opinion and minority rights. The idea that homosexuality is contrary

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Indigenous authorities and the post-colonial state: the domestication of indigeneity and African nationalism in South Africa

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To cite this article: Federico (Rico) Settler (2010) Indigenous authorities and the post-colonial state: the domestication of indigeneity and African nationalism in South Africa, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 52-64, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561239](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561239)

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Indigenous authorities and the post-colonial state: the domestication of indigeneity and African nationalism in South Africa

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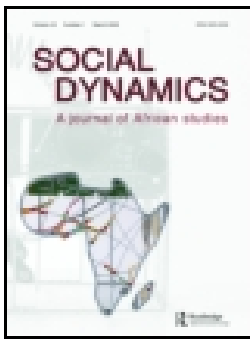
Since the advent of the African Union, confidence in Africa's renaissance has been high, but a number of state-civil society anxieties continue to challenge stable social relations. One area of anxiety concerns post-colonial African governments' attempts to incorporate traditional authorities into largely secular, constitutional democracies. Indigenous authorities have been a significant part of South Africa's colonial and apartheid history – in resistance and collaboration – and are widely imagined to be part of the country's political culture for the foreseeable future. The post-1994 African nationalist government sought to deal with the indigenous through the formal regulation of indigenous authorities and the integration of indigenous institutions into the fledgling democracy, without adjusting the provisions of South Africa's culture of secular constitutionalism. In this article, I explore the possibility that the post-apartheid state's promotion of religious, linguistic and cultural rights, and its protection of indigenous authorities through legislation serve to domesticate and exclude such organic, indigenous institutions and social movements from matters of state making. I argue that while such domestication is a feature of the contemporary situation, it is made more complicated by the sources of sacred power, which ideas of tradition and indigeneity offer African nationalism.

Keywords: indigeneity; post-colonial; post-apartheid; African nationalism; nativism; rights

Mahmood Mamdani (2001, p. 31) argues that 'if the anticolonial struggle was about deracializing the state, the post-colonial debate was about deracializing civil society'. I share Mamdani's conviction that the tension between ethnicity and nationalism remains one of the most pertinent debates in post-colonial Africa. The critique of ethnicity and the often-linked discourse of indigeneity have all too easily been dismissed as part of a liberal, Western enterprise to discredit any kind of autochthonous polity. Yet, ideas of indigeneity remain a challenge to the modern, and presumably democratic, post-colonial state.

Mamdani (1998, p. 12) goes on to suggest that, in a post-apartheid South Africa in particular, although 'civic citizenship is deracialised, ethnic citizenship has remained unreformed'. His remarks are informed by the conviction that while the formerly racist laws of the country have been reformed to provide protection for all its citizens regardless of race, colour or creed, the vestiges of anglophone colonial rule – indirect rule – have remained largely intact, both in legislation and in the indigenous imagination.

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Witchcraft as subtext: deep knowledge and the South African public sphere

Isak Niehaus

To cite this article: Isak Niehaus (2010) Witchcraft as subtext: deep knowledge and the South African public sphere, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 65-77, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561247](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561247)

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Witchcraft as subtext: deep knowledge and the South African public sphere

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Anthropologists have documented pervasive discourses about witchcraft in South Africa. The issue of witchcraft gained prominence during the latter years of apartheid when youths called ‘Comrades’ sought to cleanse rural villages in the north-eastern provinces of witches. However, after apartheid witchcraft has only made a few brief incursions into the South African public sphere. I suggest that the absence of witchcraft in formal political discussions is not only due to censorship by a modernist government. It is also a product of the popular status of witchcraft as ‘deep knowledge’ or as a ‘subtext’ to social interaction in village and township settings. Accusations of witchcraft occur largely in private domestic spaces. Moreover, the ontological status of witchcraft as a mystical reality that transcends ordinary perception implies that it cannot meet standards of proof demanded by courts of law.

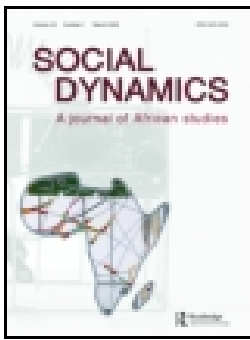
Keywords: witchcraft; deep knowledge; political sphere; Bushbuckridge

Introduction

It is hard for any anthropologist to ignore the prominence of witchcraft in everyday conversations in South African villages and in township settings. There were very few days during my fieldwork in Bushbuckridge, a rural municipality in Mpumalanga, on which I did not hear some form of talk about witches (*baloyi*) and their nefarious craft (*loya*). It is through discourses of witchcraft that villagers explained and attributed blame for otherwise incomprehensible misfortunes. These discourses also implicated tensions arising from inequalities of wealth and of power. Villagers described witches as deprived kin and neighbours, who perpetrated revenge by mystical means. The imagined technologies of witchcraft included poisons, potions that caused suicide and motor vehicle accidents and familiars such as the snake-like *mamlambo* and the ape-like *tokolotši*. The witchcraft accusations that I recorded during fieldwork frequently involved open confrontation, and at times violent attack (Niehaus *et al.* 2001).

Whilst it is true that witchcraft beliefs are especially pronounced in South Africa’s north-eastern provinces, anthropologists have also documented their salience in other parts of the country, such as in the informal settlements of Cape Town (Bähre 2002) and in Soweto (Ashforth 2005), and in some Pentecostal churches (Badstuebner 2005). Though Jean and John Comaroff (2000) recognise that witchcraft beliefs are rooted in histories that go way back into the pre-colonial and colonial eras, they suggest that these beliefs have attained special salience throughout the country today. The Comaroffs argue that various ‘occult economies’ have arisen in the context of the

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Framing essay: The media and the production of public debate

Lesley Cowling

To cite this article: Lesley Cowling (2010) Framing essay: The media and the production of public debate, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 78-84, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561288](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561288)

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Part 3: Mediatiation of debate

Framing essay

The media and the production of public debate

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The coffee shop debates invoked by Jürgen Habermas (1989) as components of the Enlightenment public sphere imply something spontaneous – an engagement between individuals on serious and pressing issues, arising from the events of the day. In our contemporary democracies, the romance of that idea still lingers, despite the increased complexity of society. We optimistically imagine the media as a window into the coffee shop, transmitting diverse voices and views in discussion. In this conception, media are seen as critical to the operations of democracy by virtue of their capacity to facilitate citizens' engagement with the questions of society. But what this section of the symposium shows is that debate in the media does not arise simply and naturally from issues 'out there'; it is actively created. Topics are deliberately sought out, the dynamics of the discussion set and an imagined public engaged, as the production of debate is a necessary and vital process of news media, deeply woven into conceptions of journalism.

The separation of analysis and opinion from information – packaged as news – is a widespread convention of journalistic content. In old-style print newsrooms, opinion is assiduously stripped from news reportage, consigned to pages set aside specifically for commentary and marked as such for readers. Although the production of news and the production of analysis, opinion and debate take place in parallel, research into media production has tended to focus on news. Thus, the idea that news content is produced and constructed by the operations of production is not new, and has been much researched and theorised in media studies (Schudson 2000). The production of debate, however, has tended to slip from analytic view. The value of the articles in the section is that they hone in specifically on such production, attempting to make visible, identify and describe its operations, and sketching out some ideas about the processes at work. They ask, too, what consequences the particular demands of journalistic production have for the dynamics of debate in the media, and consider the implications for the operations of public deliberation in society.

A key component of the production process is the decision-making power and practice of journalists and other media producers, explored in Kenichi Serino's article on the *Sunday Times* and Lesley Cowling and Carolyn Hamilton's examination of the radio programme AMLive. In sociological approaches to news, media decision makers have been conceptualised as 'gatekeepers' (Shoemaker 1997), responsible for deciding what information should be selected for publication and what should be rejected. Initially predicated on a simple notion of one individual having the power to

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make decisions based on his or her personal preferences (opening or closing the gates), research has shown that the gatekeeping process is highly complex and that different individuals are inclined to make similar selections of news reports. The gatekeepers, therefore, do not make decisions idiosyncratically, but operate from a professional set of values and understandings, and take into account a number of factors. These range from deadlines and technical factors to organisational influences and professional ideologies (Shoemaker 1997). Hugely influential in this mix is journalistic professional ideology, a set of values, concepts and practices that regulate (mostly through self-regulation) the behaviour of journalists.

Cowling and Hamilton's article on AMLive and the linked debate programme, the *After Eight Debate*, delineates the attributes of the professional practice of its producers. The investigation of a controversy around the selection of commentators in 2006, in which the journalists and producers of AMLive were active protagonists, further illuminates their values and understandings of their journalistic role. The research showed that the journalists and producers at the public broadcaster's flagship radio station operated very much in professional mode, with a sense of themselves as both representing the public (by operating 'in the public interest') and as being accountable to the public. They did this both by producing news reports and by producing debate on issues arising from the news, or issues that the team decided were important or of common interest. Their sense of their professional role did not differ in any great degree from what is described in studies of journalists across the world in their newsrooms (see, e.g., Soloski 1997; McNair 1998). However, in looking at the production of the hour-long *After Eight Debate*, Cowling and Hamilton identify practices that deviate distinctly from conventional gatekeeping processes around news. They note that callers were coached into making cogent points and challenged to support them, pushing them beyond simple statements of opinion. The presenters also provided context for the points under discussion and made sure that all the potential positions were set out and engaged. The interventions of the presenter were directed towards the dynamics of the argument, not the content. In other words, the protagonists could present any arguable position, but they had to be able to argue it rationally, presenting reasons and evidence for their ideas.

Cowling and Hamilton note that these interventions went beyond the conventional idea of journalists as providing an imagined space for opinion and analysis, in which their role is confined to opening or closing the entry to the discussion and selecting the issues to be engaged (the apparent *modus operandi* of the media examined by Pascal Mwale in this section). Here the producers and journalists are not so much 'gatekeepers' as 'conductors', wielding the baton to swell the noise from one section of the orchestra, while quieting others. The producers and presenters conducted and managed the on-air interactions in accordance with their vision of an engaged, critical and debating public, a process that Cowling and Hamilton call 'orchestration'.

The orchestration in the *After Eight Debate*, as conceptualised by this article, is a set of practices that is not simply the shaping of debate through the general operations of media production, in which production is conceived of as limiting and framing – orchestration is productive and constitutive. The orchestration is not bent on achieving or promoting any particular views, but is focused on the dynamics and operations of the debate. It is the production of debate that is bent on a particular vision – in the case of AMLive, the imagined debating public who are critically engaged, where positions are actively interrogated and solutions are posed. It is a vision resonant with Enlightenment ideals of public rationality and with Habermas's more normative versions of

the operations of the public sphere. The authors argue that, through this orchestration, AMLive brought precisely this kind of public, and this version of publicness, into being.

Given the more hands-off professional practice described in gatekeeping theory, the active orchestration of the AMLive producers could be seen as exceptional and arguably as particular to one site of media production. But although AMLive did have its own organisational culture and the medium of radio talk demanded a particular set of orchestration processes, Serino's examination of gatekeeping in the *Sunday Times* opinion and analysis sections reveals some key similarities. The most striking of these is the adherence of the decision makers of the *Sunday Times* to a vision of public debate that resonates with Habermasian notions of the public sphere, including a desire for rational-critical debate, and the idea that the media space for debate is a space separate from the state, where the state can be held accountable to public opinion. Serino notes that the editors of the section set limits on what was acceptable in their pages and that the ability to present new perspectives on issues or to set out arguments, rather than simply indulge in personal expression, were key criteria. The *Sunday Times*, like AMLive, took seriously a responsibility to be 'the highest court in the land', in other words, to select the most serious issues for society and to choose columnists who could speak to those issues. They orchestrated in print a vision corresponding to that of AMLive of an engaged, debating public.

Orchestration is thus a concept that is key to understanding how deliberation can take place in media and what this may mean for public deliberation more generally. If it is orchestration that brings publics into being, as Cowling and Hamilton argue, then the nature of that orchestration is crucial to the creation of publics in South African society. Media production offers the opportunity for individuals to be constituted into publics and also a range of ways in which those publics can be shaped and can engage in the joint enterprise of deliberative life. However, constituting certain publics can also foreclose on the possibility of other types of publics, thus excluding certain individuals or communities from public engagement. Furthermore, particular kinds of orchestration can also construct debates in ways that do not meet the ideals of critical rationality, elevate certain issues for discussion while consigning others beyond the limits of the debate and subvert the discussion of certain topics by allowing a stalemate to set in around the positions taken.

Mwale's article in this section powerfully demonstrates the ways in which this can happen. Mwale used content analysis to map the opinion and analysis pieces in news media in four Southern African countries around the issue of Genetically Modified (GM) foods. It is already well established in journalism theory that issues the news media set up as important will be considered to be important by the public, and media thus set the agenda for public discussion (Protest and McCombs 1991; Dearing and Rogers 1996; Graber 2000). However, agenda setting is not simply a media-to-society effect, as campaigns by government, civil society and other issue proponents' influence what the media put on the news/opinion agenda. It is clear from the weight of the research, though, that agenda setting through the media decides which problems enter the public domain and in what ways, in this case the issue of whether the countries concerned should accept donations of GM maize. Mwale, by focusing on what he calls the 'forms and modes of address and interaction – that is, how participants communicate with each other in the public sphere', takes an approach that goes beyond the mere tabling and framing of an issue for debate to the dynamics of the debate itself. He assesses how the debate unfolds against the Habermasian ideal of rational-critical

discourse, designed to engage with an issue of common concern, and finds that it bears little resemblance to that model.

In the print media Mwale delineates, he finds that there is a slippage in communication, in which proponents in the debate do not engage with other arguments and positions, thus leading to restatements and evasions. The Tower of Babel situation that results, Mwale argues, is a result of a failure of media gatekeepers to orchestrate debate. This ‘babelisation’, which Mwale outlines in its constituent parts and their workings in newspapers, is a result of ‘relay reporting’ and the practice of professional journalists of remaining independent of the views expressed in the opinion pages and reports that they produce. Although Mwale sees this as a lack of orchestration, it could also be conceived of as ‘fractional orchestration’, where the work of setting up the debate is limited to selecting the issue and opening the gates for various protagonists to enter into a debating space. In this model, the dynamics of the discussion are largely left to the participants and the media professionals do not engage with any interchanges at all. Mwale identifies this as a double-bind in the heart of normative conceptions of journalism, in which the media are expected to provide a space for diverse voices and debate, while journalists are expected to remain independent of differing positions, provide the protagonists with the right to reply, and exercise fairness and balance in the presentation of issues. These professional practices can lead to a situation where the debate simply slides into a stalemate, as the protagonists never move from their positions to engage with the issues raised by their opponents and there is no possibility of moving the discussion forward to potential resolution or to greater complexity. This makes it impossible for the media to deliver on the ideal of providing a forum in which public opinion can be formed by discussion and debate.

Whether orchestration automatically leads to quality-engaged debate (and whether we should always aspire to this as a norm) is not directly engaged with by the articles, but we can draw a number of inferences. First, it seems clear that to achieve debate in the rational-critical mode, it is necessary for the producers of debate to operate with a vision of a debating and engaged public, and also with a high degree of skilful intervention in the dynamics of the debate. Second, the articles suggest that different kinds of orchestration could result in different kinds of discussions and bring different kinds of publics into being, as Tanja Bosch (2008) has shown in her research on the Cape Talk radio programme. Also, it is not clear that a lack of orchestration automatically leads to babelisation in all cases, as the contestants in a discussion could conceivably choose to engage in a rational-critical manner, or in other forms of address that move the debate forward. However, it does seem clear that orchestration is necessary to shift a babelised debate out of stalemate towards a fuller engagement of the issues. Finally, it appears that orchestration of the order of AMLive and the *Sunday Times* is not widely elaborated across all news media into a set of shared professional values and practices, codified into ethics or explicitly taught as necessary skills in journalism education and newsrooms. Rather, it is developed in specific sites of production through reference to and awareness of normative expectations of the media to facilitate public debate in society.

Litheko Modisane’s article in this section provides a lens on how media orchestration can shift and reconstitute debate by following one issue as it circulates through various sites of orchestration. Modisane’s article on the television drama *Yizo Yizo* outlines attempts by its producers and South African Broadcasting Corporation, which commissioned the series, to orchestrate debate on schools through and around the series. Despite the enormous effort put into it, with pre-testing of the show,

post-testing and the development of materials for schools and other media to accompany the lighting of the drama, the debate as it circulated in different spaces took different shapes. Research showed that it did not achieve the objective of intergenerational discussion in family spaces, showing little success at getting parents and schoolchildren to talk about sex, for example. In the news media, the debate appeared to be shaped by a set of issues beyond the remit of the series' agenda – which were set to some extent by the individual commentators. These were issues of representation (its limits, its veracity) and black identity, rather than the problems in South African schools.

Modisane further argues that the orchestration of issues through filmic media is complicated by the relationship of such media to so-called 'reality', by conflict around representation in the medium itself, and that even an array of accompanying texts did not achieve the objective, at least in the news media space, of generating discussion about issues that face schools. In the familial space, it appeared that the orchestration was not able to go beyond generating awareness of these issues and to stimulate discussion by families on how to deal with and resolve such issues.

The *Yizo Yizo* case vividly demonstrates the difficulties inherent in making the ideal of media as a shared arena for public deliberation a practical reality. In the words of political commentator Aubrey Matshiqi, 'the media is not a lump of clay',¹ but a vast range of heterogeneous publications, broadcasting channels, Internet sites and institutions, which operate within their own particular circumstances and constraints. In South Africa, media that are defined as producers of news, information and debate tend to fall into three tiers – public broadcasting, community media and commercial media. These sectors have very different remits and ways of fulfilling them. In addition, there has also been an explosion of electronic media genres that are almost impossible to characterise and offer very different types of audience engagement. There may be broad similarities of content and approach across some media, but others may be entirely idiosyncratic, such as particular tabloid newspapers or satirical news websites.² Such particularities mean that public discussion may take a different shape from one product to the next, across a range of divergent audiences who are engaged in disparate ways. Even so, what are we to make of such drastic shifts from one media genre and site to another, and what does this tell us of how the operations of news media can seize on debates and reconstitute them?

Agenda setting demonstrates how a combination of news events and lobbying by individuals or groups can push an issue onto the pages of newspapers and keep it there, claiming public attention. Serino's article on the *Sunday Times* shows in more detail how what is defined as news pushes issues into the opinion and analysis sections, and into the columns of regular commentators. Debate arises out of a weekly production process in which discussion of possible topics follows immediately on newsroom decisions about the news stories to be carried in the paper. Serino notes that issues engaged by columnists and guest writers in the opinion and analysis pages are largely linked to news reports that appear in the news section of the paper. Occasionally, social issues not linked to a news report are proposed as topics for debate, but these form a small fraction of the issues. Columnists, too, have the freedom to engage with issues that are unrelated to news, but seem to mostly occupy the position that they should be giving their opinion of the events of the day.

What is defined as news then largely shapes what is defined as debate in the media. Media theorist Stuart Hall (cited Schudson 2000, p. 191) argues that the principles that underlie the concept of news and the process of news gathering are

opaque, ‘a “deep structure” whose function as a selective device is untransparent even to those who professionally most know how to operate it’. However, various definitions of news values have noted that news is skewed towards conflict, is about events rather than issues, personalised and sensation-driven. Controversy is more newsworthy than sober reflection; adversarial conflict more reported on than amicable discussion that leads to consensus. The tendency of news towards the violent, the negative and the problematic can also create in readers the sense of an unsafe world. It could be argued that debate that is too strongly fixated on news events, that is combative and conflict-focused, has the potential to heighten anxieties about the state in a difficult transformative phase, rather than engage citizens in discussion about how to deal with problems.

Yizo Yizo’s explicit objective was to focus attention on how to rebuild township schools and to both demonstrate the problems and model potential solutions, and the drama series and accompanying materials were orchestrated towards that. But this discussion in the news media was pulled into another debate – a debate about how black men are represented in film – by the newsworthiness of a complaint to Parliament and the controversy generated by a strong reaction from certain regular columnists. This also alerts us to the possibility that there may be a concatenation of columnists that also swings the weight of the debate in certain directions. We have already seen that the regular columnist whose mandate it is to comment on issues of the day in one media site has a tendency to comment on news. But there also appears to be a clustering of columnists at work around an issue that has to do with an awareness that it is on the agenda; it is the issue of the day. If those commentators have similar positions, the accumulation of their opinions will seem to be the weight of public opinion.

The fact that styles of debates and publics shift so radically across media sites demonstrates the power of media production. Depending on the ways in which journalistic professionalism is applied, debate can be tightly orchestrated with a vision of a public that brings that public into being, or allowed to unfold in a gatekeeping mode that leaves the dynamics to the participants, with the potential for babelisation or for opinionated talk. Even where media take seriously the responsibility to provide a space for debate, they are largely commercial entities, obliged to operate with an eye on their profit margins and their advertising revenue. Theorists in critical-political economy and Marxist schools of thought have argued that profit-making seriously constrains media’s ability to fulfill their normative role as watchdog of the powerful and convener of society-wide debate (see Herman and Chomsky 1988; Bagdikian 2004). One factor is that many media seek audiences that are affluent, as they are preferred by advertisers because of their spending power and advertising revenue. This is true for the public broadcaster too. Both AMLive and the *Sunday Times* had audiences that were affluent, educated and urban. Thus, when certain media orchestrate engaged and debating publics, they orchestrate them for urban elites around the issues that concern them. The majority – the poor and disadvantaged – have little or no access to the mode of engaged citizenship such media can offer.

This illuminates a conundrum at the heart of the Enlightenment notion of the public sphere: for a rationally debating public to come into being, a high degree of orchestration is needed. However, with orchestration comes control – control over the dynamics of debate, over the issues and voices, and over who gets to be part of a public and who is excluded. It is control over the creation of publics. In the multiple, various and diverse forms of news media, the Enlightenment ideal of public rationality

and its significance for citizenship is woven into media production through journalistic values, but it is unevenly expressed in practice. Publics debating in a variety of modes surge into life episodically, in particular spaces and at particular times across the media sector. The vibrancy of these capillaries of public debate can obscure the reality, however, that access is limited and that orchestration by the media cannot help but exclude significant numbers of South Africans from public deliberation.

Notes

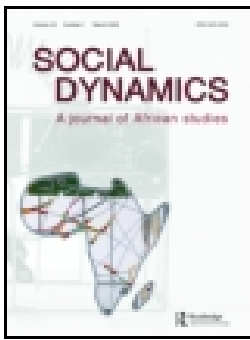
1. Aubrey Matshiqi is a political commentator on television and radio. He also writes articles for the print media. I am quoting him here from a 2008 broadcast of the television talk show *In the Public Interest*, aired on SABC on Sundays.
2. Recent research in the United States demonstrated that many young people get their news from comedy shows that parody mainstream news. In South Africa, a website entitled 'Hayibo' satirises various news stories and debates.

Notes on contributor

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Thinking aloud/allowed: pursuing the public interest in radio debate

Lesley Cowling & Carolyn Hamilton

To cite this article: Lesley Cowling & Carolyn Hamilton (2010) Thinking aloud/allowed: pursuing the public interest in radio debate, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 85-98, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561304](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561304)

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Thinking aloud/allowed: pursuing the public interest in radio debate

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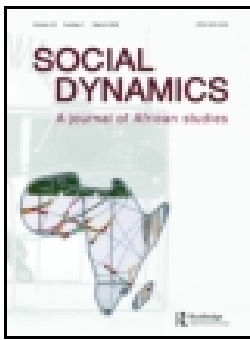
This article examines the controversy that erupted in 2006 when the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was accused of banning certain commentators. The ‘blacklisting’ saga surfaced differences in ideas and practices of publicness among the contenders in the controversy and revealed that notions of the public, public accountability and the public interest were contested. The research describes independent newsroom practices conducted in terms of journalistic ethics and professional ideologies, and shows that journalists assume a powerful role in defining publics and calling them into being, as well as in orchestrating their participation in public deliberation. This is a professional responsibility that is recognised and defended. However, the practices associated with that responsibility and the power to orchestrate the debate in particular ways are not critically engaged within the profession. Just as the debate illuminates the concept of publicness imported into journalistic practice, it also illuminates concepts imported into SABC institutional practice which are rooted in a long lineage of national democratic struggle. In the controversy, the two concepts chafed against each other, propounded in each case by protagonists embedded in their respective lineages. The controversy was thus more than simply a struggle for political control; it was a contest about the meaning of democratic citizenship itself, rooted in differing but intersecting political-intellectual logics.

Keywords: public sphere; orchestration; media debate; journalistic professionalism; public interest

Introduction¹

This article examines the public broadcaster’s radio programme AMLive and the controversy that erupted in 2006 when the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was accused, in the programme, of banning certain commentators from its news shows. We look at the ‘blacklisting’ saga not so much to ‘take the temperature’ of the health of South African democracy, but to examine differences in ideas and practices of publicness among the participants in the controversy and to consider their implications for public deliberation in South Africa. We note that the issue surfaced contested notions of the public, public accountability and the public interest, and that these concepts were linked to the situational practices and political-intellectual lineages of the protagonists. We argue that specific elements and dynamics of the contest over publicness have local inflections that seem to be particular to public deliberation in post-repressive regime South Africa.

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'Setting the agenda': the production of opinion at the Sunday Times

T. Kenichi Serino

To cite this article: T. Kenichi Serino (2010) 'Setting the agenda': the production of opinion at the Sunday Times , Social Dynamics, 36:1, 99-111, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561312](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561312)

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‘Setting the agenda’: the production of opinion at the *Sunday Times*¹

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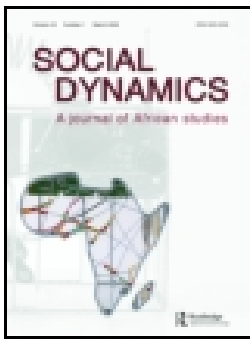
The news media in a democracy are widely expected to facilitate public debate on matters of significance to its citizens. However, commentators and issues for newspaper opinion pages are necessarily selected from a broad set of possibilities, and the process of selection is thus significant in shaping the nature of debate and opinion in the media. This article examines how ideas and topics enter the South African print media for public discussion, specifically how opinion pieces and columns are chosen for inclusion in the *Sunday Times*. Using interviews with decision makers at the *Sunday Times*, as well as observation of newsroom processes and some analysis of the opinion pages, the research established a number of key factors at play in the ‘gatekeeping’ of opinion, analysis and debate. These include journalistic professional norms, which prioritise news and politics as criteria for selecting topics for discussion; an adherence to notions of public deliberation that resonate with the Habermasian concept of the public sphere; and an awareness of the *Sunday Times* as an agenda setter with a role to play in a transforming democracy. These factors, I argue, amount to an active ‘orchestration’ of debate.

Keywords: agenda setting; media debate; opinion; *Sunday Times*; public sphere; gatekeeping; orchestration

Introduction

This article examines how ideas and topics enter the South African print media for public discussion, specifically how opinion pieces and columns are chosen for inclusion in the *Sunday Times*. In addition, I have attempted to establish what kind of relationship exists between the content of the news pages and what is discussed in opinion pieces and columns. As the largest weekly newspaper in South Africa, the *Sunday Times* provides an important forum for the exchange of ideas. According to the research group Mediatenor (2007, p. 3), the *Sunday Times* serves an agenda-setting role for South Africa, influencing what the public and other media perceive as important. However, commentators and issues for newspaper opinion pages are necessarily selected from a broad set of possibilities, and the process of selection is thus significant in shaping the nature of debate and opinion in the media. This research uses interviews with decision makers at the *Sunday Times*, as well as observation of newsroom processes and some analysis of the opinion pages, to examine the factors at play in the process of selection and the implications for public deliberation. While much research has been conducted on how news items are selected (Shoemaker 1997), the selection process that applies to opinion and analysis has rarely been examined. The article also

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The babelisation of debate on GM maize via the media in southern Africa in 2002

Pascal Newbourne Mwale

To cite this article: Pascal Newbourne Mwale (2010) The babelisation of debate on GM maize via the media in southern Africa in 2002, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 112-121, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561346](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561346)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561346>



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The babelisation of debate on GM maize via the media in southern Africa in 2002

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The operations of public debate on science in the media have been little understood in southern Africa. Public sphere theory has not specifically addressed the complexities of debate on science in public, in the media, and science communication in general. This article focuses on media debate centred on genetically modified maize in 2002 in southern Africa in order to illuminate such operations. The article argues that the debate became a cacophony of voices, or what I term ‘babelised’, because the media did not actively orchestrate the discussion. Instead, they relay-mediated the various contributions to the debate. Such ‘babelisation’, the article argues, appears to be an inevitable consequence of the journalistic practices inherent in newsmaking.

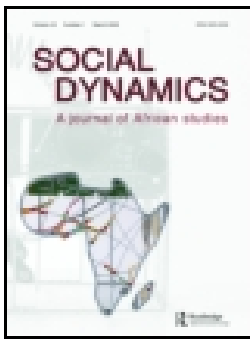
Keywords: babelisation; rhetoric strategies; public debate, science and media

Introduction

Using theories of the public sphere developed by Jürgen Habermas, this article examines some communication practices in southern Africa today. It focuses on the question of forms and modes of address and interaction – that is, how participants communicate with each other in the public sphere.¹ The Habermasian conceptualisation of public sphere activity invokes ideas of ‘rational-critical debate’ (Habermas 1989) and ‘communicative action’ (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1990), modes of communication which lead to mutual understanding and consensus on the way forward in democratic public deliberation. Initially Habermas (1989) was sceptical about the capacity of the modern media to enable critical engagement in the public sphere, though more recently he and other public sphere theorists have suggested that the media can fulfil this role (Thompson 2005, Habermas 2006). Thus, the media remain central to democratic politics and public communication, by providing a forum for public deliberation (Berger 2005).

This article explores the role of the media in facilitating critical engagements in the public sphere through a focus on public debate on genetically modified (GM) maize in four southern African countries: Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It is part of a larger project based on news media texts in the period 1997–2007. The article isolates for study slippages in communication (which I term ‘babelisation’), in the rhetoric of the debate in the regional media, which hamper dialogue or critical engagement with the issues at stake, in spite of the diversity of voices at play. The article discusses these practices in relation to three key issues: hunger,

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Yizo Yizo: sowing debate, reaping controversy

Litheko Modisane

To cite this article: Litheko Modisane (2010) Yizo Yizo: sowing debate, reaping controversy, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 122-134, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903561353](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903561353)

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***Yizo Yizo*: sowing debate, reaping controversy**

Litheko Modisane

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The article critically explores the circulation and public life of television series *Yizo Yizo 1* and *2* (1999, 2001) in order to reflect on the significance of the orchestration of its publicness and what I propose to call the public critical potency of television, in particular and film, in general. Through a delineation of the circulation of discourse around *Yizo Yizo*, the article shows that the series generated relatively little debate in the news media about the issues it intended to raise. This outcome points towards the limits of orchestration in public engagements around television and shows that such engagements may exceed the orchestration effort. Ultimately, the fullest extent of the public critical potency of television becomes clear only through the appreciation of its pathways of circulation, and those of its secondary texts.

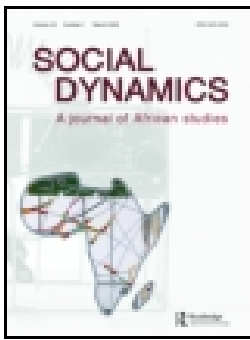
Keywords: television; public; public critical engagement; orchestration; debate; media

Introduction

Yizo Yizo 1 and *2*, two 13-part multi-award-winning television series, were flighted on the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) channel SABC1 between 3 February 1999 and March 2001. The drama was a Department of Education multimedia project, with a mandate to stimulate debate about conditions of education in South African townships (*Yizo Yizo 1* fact sheet cited in Andersson 2004, p. 2). The Department also launched *Yizo Yizo* to influence particular groups, primarily black youth, their teachers and parents. *Yizo Yizo* addresses a range of social problems, as well as the relations ostensibly at play in township schools. It treated the problem of violence in the townships in an overt and gritty manner – a strategy to draw attention to and stimulate debates on educational problems.

Set in a fictional township school, Supatsela High, *Yizo Yizo 1* charts the progress of the school's learners and teachers as they grapple with violence from an out-of-school youth (Chester), their sponsor (Bra Gibb) and school going friend (Papa Action). The violence includes rape, extortion and harassment. In the story, the school descends into anarchy, with drug dealing, vandalism and violent disorder. Grace Letsatsi, a new young female teacher, tries to turn the school around, and the parents, school governing body and Student Representative Council work together to bring back order. The hooligans attempt to reclaim the school, but the community ensures they are arrested. While *Yizo Yizo 1* is about violence, *Yizo Yizo 2* looks more at ordinary people's struggles to learn, play, change, read, love, dream and find their place in the world (*Yizo Yizo 2* fact sheet cited Andersson 2004, p. 3).

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Framing essay Circulation and public spheres

Isabel Hofmeyr

To cite this article: Isabel Hofmeyr (2010) Framing essay Circulation and public spheres, Social Dynamics, 36:1, 135-138, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562294](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562294)

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Part 4: Uncharted spaces of public deliberation

Framing essay

Circulation and public spheres

Isabel Hofmeyr*

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Analytical explanations of publics generally hinge on spatial metaphors with terms such as ‘sphere’, ‘arena’ and ‘forum’ predominating. Indeed, the previous framing essays in this double symposium spread over two issues of *Social Dynamics* have relied on this set of metaphors. This particular framing essay and the accompanying section shift the emphasis slightly by considering questions of circulation as a way of understanding publics.

Circulation itself may of course appear to imply spatiality – objects after all circulate in space. However, as Michael Warner (2002) has so influentially argued, modern forms of circulation are significant in so far as they establish social networks of a particular type, namely those between strangers. Put differently, one key feature of modernity is the way it draws together strangers in an attempt to persuade them that they share common interests. Central to this process is a modern mode of address which speaks to addressees as if they were all equal modular subjects rather than members of a chieftaincy or feudal aristocracy. Whereas lineage and descent unite the former, circulation (among other things) unites the latter. This mode of convening readers and consumers as equals acquires political meaning: by being directed towards an indefinite and apparently infinite audience, it enacts in miniature an idea of modern society as a confederacy of apparently equal strangers.

Circulation is central to these processes of shaping publics as social facts: ‘Publics are conjured into being by characterizing as a social entity (that is, as a public) the world in which discourse circulates’ (Warner 2002, p. 146). Texts must be able ‘to address this scene of circulation as a social entity’ (Warner 2002, p. 98).

Understanding how texts undertake this task requires attention to features both inside and outside the text. In Warner’s words: ‘The making of a public requires conditions that range from the very general – such as the organization of media, ideologies of reading, institutions of circulation, text genres – to the particular rhetorics of texts’ (2002, p. 14). Put slightly differently and in the terms set out by the prominent book historian Roger Chartier, we need to direct our attention to ‘the text, the object that conveys the text, and the act that grasps it’ (1989, p. 161).

Translated into methodological terms, these ideas require that we focus in closely on the materialities of circulation. The articles in this section all address themselves to this task. Drawing on different post-colonial contexts (South Africa, Kenya and Argentina) and examining different media – novels, plays, films, photographs, literary

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magazines, music and obituaries – the articles probe different dimensions of circulation and the social meanings that these imply.

In some instances, fields of circulation are well-established and can be invoked for political ends. In a paper on Kenyan music given at the conference from which these papers are drawn, Joyce Nyairo (2008) demonstrates the ways in which circulation becomes characterised and functions as a social and political entity. Long the popular university of the continent, music has been used by African politicians who incessantly borrow idioms and anthems in their political discourse. Put in Warner's terms, these politicians recognise the pathways of music's circulation as a social entity.

In other instances, pathways of circulation are not well established, but in the process of taking shape. These bring into focus a range of potential publics as well as the social contradictions entailed in their formation. Alan Finlay's analysis of a crop of literary magazines that appeared in South Africa between 1994 and 2004 illustrates these processes. As he indicates, these magazines all emerged at a moment of uncertainty as the contours of the new political dispensation started to take shape. Pre-1994, left-wing South African intellectuals had sustained a tradition of alternative publishing and oppositional literary magazines. Like much literary production under apartheid, these magazines authorised themselves by linking literature to political struggle. Literature could claim a public space in so far as it addressed political themes and concerns.

Post-1994, the new literary magazines have had to grapple with a new post-apartheid order where the contours of older publics and audiences can no longer be taken for granted. Instead, these magazines are all ongoing experiments in attempting to configure new audiences and to imagine new publics. In a changed post-apartheid world, these publications grapple with the question of how 'to address [a] scene of circulation as a social entity' (Warner 2002, p. 98).

While the magazines are all very different and take on different issues (anti-consumerism, promotion of local literature, critique of post-apartheid inequalities, promotion of indigenous languages), their modes of circulation demonstrate their attempts to create the idea of an alternative public. By tracking how these magazines circulate, Finlay demonstrates these processes. One journal proposes a Republic of Poetry (poetry on every street corner); others advertise themselves through poetry on tablecloths, T-shirts, newsletters, open mic events. Each of these media constitutes a scene of circulation that announces the alternative affinities of the journal. The artisanal quality of production and the workbook feel of the publication known as 'garage publishing' reinforces this aura.

These modes of circulation equally reveal a series of contradictions. In one case, the magazine *Timbila* takes a strongly oppositional position, claiming to present the angry voices of the poor while simultaneously being funded by the state. In other instances, state-funded journals define themselves in opposition to the state's policy of 'reconciliation' and 'rainbowism'. Some journals fashion themselves as celebrating individual experience in opposition to the master narratives of politics, but at the same time invoke those bigger stories to position themselves as alternative. Gary Cumiskey, editor of *Bleksem*, describes how the small publishers banded together at the Cape Town International Book Fair in 2006, defining themselves in opposition to the large publishers: 'It took on a very enthusiastic guerilla-political-revolutionary feel. There was almost a feeling of war' (cited Finlay this volume).

The question of materiality of circulation is also investigated by Rory Bester. He presents a biography of a book of photographs by David Goldblatt entitled *Some*

Afrikaners Revisited which appeared in 2007. The book (or parts of it) started off life in 1974 as part of an exhibition entitled 'People and Things'. This was followed up in 1975 with the book *Some Afrikaners Photographed* comprising 81 black-and-white photographs. In-between these two publications, Bester traces the different presentation formats of the photographs and the intellectual networks and circuits in which these were shaped and through which they passed. These included a series of photo essays and then a long process of experimenting with different design concepts influenced by photographers and writers before the book finally appeared. Bester also traces the different responses to the book in reviews.

The fate of the 1975 version was somewhat ignominious. It did not sell in significant quantities and was soon remaindered. It failed to attract an overseas publisher, since the book was not overtly and obviously about apartheid. The 2007 edition, which included some new photographs and omitted others alongside the addition of three essays, by Umuzi, a Random House imprint, had more international purchase. As Bester indicates, this new prominence of the second edition was enabled by the cumulative archive of the book's biography. As something that existed both in exhibition and book form, it attained a longevity that an exhibition alone could not have ensured.

Kerry Bystrom focuses on family stories or 'genealogical fiction' stories in post-dictatorship Argentina and post-apartheid South Africa. How, she asks, do such stories seek to stitch together families torn apart by state terrorism and violence? How does one narrate 'severed links between generations' or narrate 'into wholeness a family broken by state violence'? Under authoritarian and post-authoritarian regimes, the moral valency of the family becomes central to political discourse. Under authoritarian dispensations, the patriarchal family becomes a proxy for the state itself, while oppositional movements mobilise the moral outrage of the destroyed family as a key resistance strategy. In post-authoritarian situations, these genealogical stories in turn become central to creating and critiquing the new emerging democracies.

Bystrom's article demonstrates the different circuits and scenes of circulation through which these ideas move, and how these pathways are critical to their broader political meaning. Or, as she shows, how 'public action' is enabled through what she terms 'genealogical enunciation'. Central to the way in which these stories circulate is the idea of the violated body and the testimony that it produces. This configuration becomes central to the employment of transitional democracies which pivot on 'the biographies of people who have suffered human rights violations'. Their personal story in turn becomes a healing 'trope for national "catharsis" and unification'.

As Bystrom's analysis reveals, the question of personal testimony is central to the meaning of these tropes. It is almost as if narratives have to pass through this form in order to gain moral valency. These forums, like the truth commission or the trial of state collaborators, become key 'civic theatres' from which further narratives can be generated. As her analysis further shows, these stories overwhelmingly take the form of the violated family, whether these be the 'disappeared children' of Argentina or, in South Africa, the 'coloured' child born of rape, some of it state-sponsored. She examines a range of forms (activist theatre, films, novels, plays, public rallies and gatherings) and the ways in which these extend the meanings of genealogical fiction, which becomes a way of testing the boundaries of all political communities, whether old or new.

Returning again to questions of circulation, we can borrow the terms set out by Alfred Gell for an anthropology of art objects: the circulation of texts can be seen as

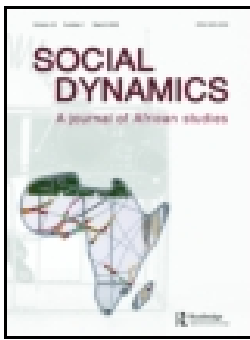
‘temporally dispersed object[s], object[s] at no specific time and place, but moving through time and space, like a thunderstorm’ (1998, p. 226). Like a dinner set, texts behave like a distributed object: ‘an object having many spatially separated parts with different microhistories’ (1998, p. 221). The articles collected in this section explore such microhistories and bring methodological clarity to questions of circulation and public spheres.

Notes on contributor

Isabel Hofmeyr is Professor of African Literature in the School of Literature and Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She has published widely on South African and African literary and cultural history. Her first monograph *We Spend our Years as a Tale that is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chieftdom* (1994) was shortlisted for the Hersovits Prize. Her monograph *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress* won the 2007 Richard L. Greaves Award. She is currently coordinator of the South Africa-India Research Group.

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The public private sphere: family narrative and democracy in Argentina and South Africa

Kerry Bystrom

To cite this article: Kerry Bystrom (2010) The public private sphere: family narrative and democracy in Argentina and South Africa, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 139-152, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562351](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562351)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562351>



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The public private sphere: family narrative and democracy in Argentina and South Africa

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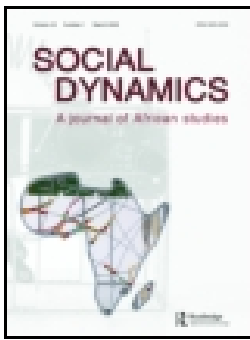
This article explores the paradoxical prominence of seemingly private family stories and memories in the democratic public spheres emerging in the wake of the ‘Dirty War’ in Argentina and apartheid in South Africa. In part because the discourse of the family was used in these cases to both uphold and protest dictatorial regimes, individuals who lost family members to state violence became powerful moral agents in the post-dictatorship and post-apartheid periods. Narratives told by and about these individuals – ranging from personal testimony given in each country’s truth commission to representations in theatre, fiction and film – have worked to constitute what may be called a ‘public private sphere’. They not only express personal grief, but also (and especially in wider cultural circulation) have been emplotted and mobilised to construct democratic publics. These may or may not correspond to the nationwide publics envisioned in state discourses of reconciliation. Using genealogical fiction surrounding ‘disappeared children’ in Argentina as a lens to analyse South Africa, this article argues that stories of children attempting to piece together their family histories reveal this dynamic as they become sites for convening democratic publics and critiquing transitional politics.

Keywords: family; public sphere; truth commissions; democracy; Argentina; South Africa

Introduction

This article takes as its point of departure a seeming paradox: the centrality of the narration of private family stories in the constitution of the democratic public spheres in post-dictatorship Argentina and post-apartheid South Africa.¹ Scholars such as Humphrey and Valverde (2008) point to the value of comparative analyses of democratisation processes in these countries, which – despite their profound differences – share histories of European settler colonialism, exclusionary ethno-nationalism and state terrorism, as well as transitions to neo-liberal democracy guided by policies of truth and (at times for Argentina) reconciliation. The telling of family narratives has been a key element in each country’s democratic transition and I focus here on the public disclosure of traumatic family histories. In what ways has this become integral to public discourse in these new democracies? How has it shaped what Anderson (1991) famously termed the ‘imagined community’ of the democratic nation state? Why, and with what effects?

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David Goldblatt's making visible: photographic strategies of rumination, orchestration and circulation

Rory Bester

To cite this article: Rory Bester (2010) David Goldblatt's making visible: photographic strategies of rumination, orchestration and circulation, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 153-165, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562393](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562393)

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David Goldblatt's making visible: photographic strategies of rumination, orchestration and circulation

Rory Bester

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

This article seeks to understand David Goldblatt's innovations within the 'documentary' photography genre. Arguing that his photographic projects seek public intellectual engagement, it proposes that an understanding of the circulation of Goldblatt's photographs is critical to grasping the public intellectual engagement of his photographic practice. The article tracks the material forms of photographic circulation, including the texts that accompany the photographs and the texts that flow from them, and argues that photographic public discursive interventions are at once visual, but in exceeding the boundaries of the visual also material and textual. This draws together the forms of circulation and the kinds of publics they address and call into being, not only at the time of the initial production and circulation of the photographs, but also in their archive and its impact on subsequent public discursivity about these photographs.

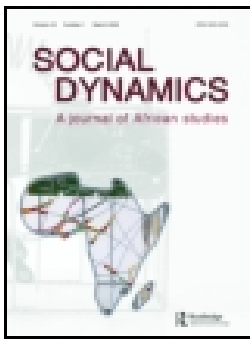
Keywords: David Goldblatt; photography; public intellectual life

Introduction

In 1975, David Goldblatt produced his second book of documentary photographs, *Some Afrikaners Photographed*.¹ Neither ethnography nor pictorialism nor photojournalism – which had been the predominant genres of 'documentary' photography in South Africa up until that time – the book distinguishes Goldblatt's practice as particular and distinct from that of other photographers. This article explores his innovative approach to the 'documentary' genre, the negotiation of politics and aesthetics in his imagery, and his efforts to engage in critical discourse by visual means. Arguing that his photographic project sought public intellectual engagement, the article goes on to propose that it is difficult to grasp the public intellectual engagement of Goldblatt's photographs without considering the circulation of the photographs. To understand these circulations, this article tracks the material forms of photographic circulation, paying attention to the texts that accompany the photographs, as well as the texts that flow from them.

The article argues that photographic public discursive interventions are at once visual, but in exceeding the boundaries of the visual also material and textual. Each form of circulation contributes to their effects, and to the kinds of publics they address and call into being, not only at the time of their production, but also in the ways that the circulated photographs have become archival and affected subsequent public discursivity about these photographs. This last point is substantiated in the article through consideration of the 2007 reissue of an expanded version of Goldblatt's

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

Alan Finlay

To cite this article: Alan Finlay (2010) Making space: the counterpublics of post-apartheid independent literary publishing activities (1994–2004), *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 166-178, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562419](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562419)

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

Alan Finlay*

Independent writer and researcher, South Africa

This article explores how independent literary publishing activities in South Africa during the period 1994–2004 sought to engage in public debate and deliberation, and thereby moved beyond purely literary concerns. It focuses on the publishing activities of five publishers – Dye Hard Press, Botsotso, Timbila, Kotaz and Chimurenga – and draws on a series of interviews with the publishers. The article considers how the publishers understood their publishing activities as acts of public engagement and contestation, and argues that they can usefully be thought of as counterpublics, a characteristic which feels unique to the post-apartheid period. It argues that public sphere theory offers a way of talking about the divergent characteristics of the publishing activities, which can be considered acts of poetic world making that position themselves in contestation with the post-apartheid mainstream. However, it suggests that their relationship to the mainstream is at times ambivalent and their independence not always assured. This is particularly felt in the reliance of some of the publishers on state and state-aligned arts bodies for funding for their survival, but also in other areas such as their difficult relationship with commercial book dealers and the mainstream media. Their proximity to the mainstream in terms of state funding also suggests the need for a theorisation of what we might call ‘embedded counterpublics’ in highly stratified societies such as South Africa.

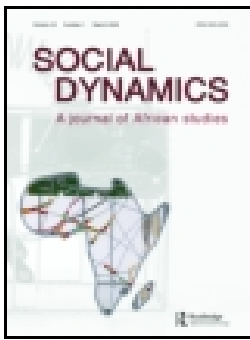
Keywords: counterpublics; literature; poetry; publishing

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

If the pile of new poetry publications I was sent to prepare this article is anything to go by, South African poetry publishing is in a healthier state now than it has been for years [...] There is also, undeniably, a sense of liberation in these pamphlets and booklets: an air of having given themselves permission to publish on themes that don't have any pedigree of political relevance in the narrowly defined sense that has influenced so many poets during the last decade. For some of these journals, this means more than reclaiming individual artistic freedom: it is part of the process of growing the new cultural energy we've always known must be lying somewhere beneath the layers of our indigenous psychoses and neuroses (Press 1994, p. 58).

Among the publications founded during the mid-to-late 1990s were: Barefoot Press's *Footprints* pamphlet series (1993–1995); *Imprint* (1993–1995); *Bleksem* (1994–1999); *Something Quarterly* (1994–1997); *Carapace* (1995–); Dye Hard Press's *Atio*

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Framing essay: Performing public wisdom

Leon de Kock

To cite this article: Leon de Kock (2010) Framing essay: Performing public wisdom, Social Dynamics, 36:1, 179-186, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562443](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562443)

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Part 5: Public performers of wisdom and affect

Framing essay

Performing public wisdom

Leon de Kock*

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The conceit is often adopted in the strategic performance of public wisdom – oracular, figurative, enunciating visions and versions of self as well as community – that truth is looming, that it is there to be embraced in self-evidently resonant forms of availability. However, in reviewing these acts in which calls to sagacity, vision and veracity are figuratively and/or performatively made in the public domain, it is necessary to distinguish between the reason or art or self-declared wisdom so brought into mediated public existence, on the one hand, and the contested context of the performance, on the other.

In the nineteenth century, no less than in the twentieth and the twenty-first, the question of how and to whom the ‘artistic’, prophetic or intellectual voice speaks, and in what manner that audience is framed, constituted and convened, has involved – as Khwezi Mkhize suggests in his article in this section – a process of ‘seaming and pairing’ realms of experience which may be quite disjunct (and I would add disjunct in ontological, cosmological, aesthetic, moral and political terms), but which nevertheless converge in spaces of public contestation.

Writing about Isaac Wauchope, poet and preacher, a leading member of the Christian African intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century, Mkhize reminds us that ‘between the African subject and the specific text he invokes, what one is meant to glean is the world of African subjectivity’, despite the fact that a significant proportion of Wauchope’s readers (both intended and real) might have been distinctly ‘disjunct’ from precisely this ‘world of African subjectivity’, given the mixed colonial context in which he was writing and publishing. Between *langue* and *parole*,¹ one might add, between the multivalent, rhizomatic tissue of semantics into which the performing subject delves for his symbolic ammunition, on the one hand, and the context into which he chooses to direct his message, on the other, the paradoxes of public sphere enunciation find their form. Because in so shaping that message and its pathway, the performer also negotiates the space to be heard among the public or publics to whom his act of effect or affect is addressed, effectively calling them into being as an audience, a group, in the particular timbre of his or her orchestration. At least, this is the performer’s mission. Alternatively, a public, oracular figure can be called into being by various groups or publics ‘consecrating’ such a figure in distinct ‘fields’ (literary, media, politics), as Anthea Garman, following Pierre Bourdieu, argues about Antjie Krog in her article in this section (see also Garman 2009). It is precisely such complexities in the conception of speaking positions, audiences, authors and modes of

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address that have characterised the public ‘performance of wisdom and affect’ over the past two centuries in southern Africa.

The ‘public’, in the colonial space, was in fact a collection of overlapping but also distinct public spheres. They can variously be metonymised in the shape of the editorial page in the local English newspaper, or the mission-sponsored African-language periodical, the *imbizo* (isiZulu for traditional gathering) or *kgotla* (Tswana for public meeting or traditional law court), the mission-school debating society, the circumcision gathering, the church schoolroom or Confirmation class (in their various guises), the rural funeral, the family visit, the mission-ground cricket match, the Cape courtroom, or many other sites where the practice of daily public life involved both culturally homogeneous configurations of people and heterogeneous, newly conjoined communities, both ‘Red’ and ‘School’ people (in the old Cape parlance for unChristianised and Christianised indigenes, respectively), and the various communities of what we might call ‘settlers’. It would be a mistake to localise any single public site, or any apparently dominant mode, as a singularly representative centre of public expression – although some sites were indeed shot through with more privilege and power than others. Rather, it is in the mediations of in-between, in the ‘seaming and pairing’ of orders of experience, and their varying, intersecting and often intermeshing modalities, that the always-partial public voice performs its songs of affect, of public wisdom, calling into being imagined and reconstituted audiences out of the Babelian swirl of actual publics in the South African *res publica*.

To be sure, as Gerrit Olivier suggests in his article on the intellectual voice of Afrikaans poet N.P. van Wyk Louw, the ‘authority, and thus legitimacy, of the intellectual voice’ – and, one might add, the artistic voice assuming oracular or vatic properties – is constructed ‘from appeals to history and tradition, and from the deliberate articulation of values such as rationality, truth and justice’. This is often true, but the circulation of such heartbeat appeals to immemorial articles of tradition, value and truth is both capillaristic and arterial, finding different purchase at different nodes in the public body, such that their valence is differently read, multiply appropriated and unevenly orchestrated.

So, to use an obvious example from the colonial public sphere, the Christian African intelligentsia, the *amakholwa* or ‘School People’ – themselves subjects in dynamic circulation between ‘old’ and ‘new’ modes of identity – had, in the late 1900s, a different interest in the orchestration of the lures of Enlightenment rationality and the political promises of modernity than did the settler communities from whose historical ranks such orchestration was instigated. This ‘transculturation’ effect, as David Attwell (2006), one of the contributors to this section, has suggested elsewhere,² means that the public ‘good’ is strategically articulated in markedly varying moments of enunciation among differently constituted publics under the mantle of calls to supposedly universal values such as Enlightenment reason, Christian equality or citizenship of the British Empire.³ Such mediatory articulations of putatively universal civic and political values tend to occur powerfully in the performative mode, where appeals to legitimacy are cast in persuasive renditions of common sense, history, tradition (the authority of immemorial practice and custom), in addition to a supposedly shared sense of what is beautiful and good, expressed in forms of verbal art. The performative is the site where struggles over meaning and identity are given the most pointed or resonant expression, where they are transposed into the powerful realms of affective rhetoric, imaginative evocation and generic literary form.

In this section, several authors seek to step up the argument from a mere rendition of the narratives in primary contestation with one another, within a multiply appropriated sense of public wisdom, to arguments about precisely the framing, circulation and orchestration of such acts of public argument and affect, so that an articulated sense can be gained of the trajectories and their different points of offset, through which public wisdom is strategically performed and directed – in literature, acts of art, testimony and rhetoric.

To start at the historical ‘end point’ of the time span represented by the articles in this section (although beginnings and endings tend to insinuate themselves into each other’s points of purchase), Garman’s treatment of Krog demonstrates succinctly how the voice of the resounding writer – that is, not just any published writer, but one who is widely heard or ‘picked up’ by audiences – far from always being self-sufficiently auto-generated and ‘original’ in her conception and acts of literary creation, can in some cases be brought into being, sculpted into shape by a configuration of market factors and a coalescing of audiences, or publics. These publics, for similar or accidentally converging reasons, bring that voice into reverberation by their need or hunger to hear it, and their interarticulation with it, in their affective immersion in the act of writing/reading, evidenced by reviews, requests for follow-ups, ratings, private and public talk, blogs, international editions of books such as *Country of my Skull* (1998), extracts in newspapers and journals, and many other networks of reception, both formal and informal. Garman’s article shows how Krog’s *Country of my Skull* was effectively called into being by overlapping sets of audiences, or publics: a newly configured, immediately post-apartheid South African Broadcasting Corporation management grouping (which appointed Krog as head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission radio reporting team); the readership of the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper (through its then-editor Anton Harber, who asked Krog to write the ‘effect and affect’, in Garman’s words, of her experience as witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s hearings); and the publisher Random House which read Krog’s powerful pieces in the *Mail & Guardian* and approached her to put together the book that became *Country of my Skull*. Notice how several increasingly widening orbits of public attention in this case overlay one another and converged on Krog as an exemplary South African voice of witness, combining local and international concerns in a transnationalising public sphere.

This transnationalising public sphere, Garman reminds us, relying on Kate Nash, consists of ‘reflexive modern subjects’, people, in Nash’s words, who ‘identify as fellow humans across national boundaries and who use transnational public spheres to crystallise the salience of events and issues with which to become involved’. Garman identifies three key factors that appear to have coalesced in the shaping (or reshaping) of the new transnational reading subject, amounting to an entirely reconstituted audience for a formerly intensely hermetic Afrikaans poet. The factors are: (1) a heightened demand for the publication and consumption of life narratives; (2) an issue, a matter of interest, with global overtones (in this case ‘dealing with the past via truth commissions’ and harnessing confession) and (3) ‘the work of a local writer with a particular public record of excellent literary output and political action’. This circumstantial and historical nexus made possible the public expression, and globally reconfigured publics’ hearing, of Krog’s voice as oracular, as representative, as witness, given to the expression of her own and others’ *enunciatory* rights – according to Homi Bhabha (cited here by Garman), ‘not just a right to speak, but also a right to make claims’ in a world, for Bhabha, of ‘jurisdictional unsettlement’ – a scene,

Garman adds in paraphrase, in which the settled ideas of nation and nationality are being rendered increasingly complex. This is a world, Bhabha suggests, in which the ‘great social movements of our times – diasporic, refugee, migrant’ – have brought about the ‘right to narrate’; hence the worldwide appetite for life narratives, for memoirs and acts of witness, expressions of pain and suffering, resolve and survival, that cut across the narrower interests and manipulations of politics and nation states.

The coalescing of *affect* and *effect* in Krog’s text is a key part of its wide reach and impact. The post-apartheid public sphere, writes Garman, is permeated by *performances of affect* which are used to surface issues and experiences that are not able to be captured by ‘logos-centred rationales for deliberative democracy’. So, Krog’s exercise of public reason is spliced with the evocation of pain and trauma through the witnessing eye of the poet, combining what people might formerly have classified as the decidedly distinct realms of subjective and objective, lyrical invocation (personal) as against objectively based reportage. The crucial difference in the transnationalising space into which Krog speaks, Garman suggests, is that a ‘different type of authority sanctions her capacity to speak’. This altered authority includes more than conventionally ‘objective’ regimes of discourse, but also the newly ascendant modes of confessional, human rights discourse in which there is a performative evocation of affectedness, a felt implication and connection to other suffering bodies, narrated from an individualised point of human situatedness.

In a sense, the post-apartheid implosion of *separation* as a principle of both legislated social organisation and discursive regulation – with commissions of inquiry, parliamentary edicts, bureaucratic pronouncements falling on the ‘official’ side of truth, and poetry, literature, ‘subjective’ and lyrical utterance relegated to the marginal end – and the breaking down of this forcible separateness allowed Krog’s work to enter into a broader, multiply constellated audience and an amplified timbre of resonance. To a newly seamed South African audience hungry for ‘truth’ in a bigger sense than just the official edict, eager to hear the formerly suppressed stories of pain and hurt (resonating as such stories did with either this new citizenry’s own pain or their own sense of redress and/or ethical conscience), was added a transnationalising global citizenry with similar inclinations as a potential audience for Krog. This audience’s trace of migrancy and mobility – that is, their border crossings – finds an equivalent in the World Wide Web, an open threshold of free expression and multiplied subjectivity, combining multiform combinations of effect and affect – exactly the performative ambit of *Country of my Skull*. It is little wonder that a great many international readers, and even an international film adaptation of *Country of my Skull*, came in tow. However, as several articles in this special issue suggest, such multiply constellated audiences, or publics, have by no means invariably opened out to each other in a fulfillment of ultimate liberal constitutionalism, or a fully open society, in the manner which Krog was seeking to prefigure, imaginatively, in her book.

If one compares the situation in which Krog found herself working as a writer with that of nineteenth-century author Magma Magwaza Fuze, with whom Hlonipha Mokoena arrestingly deals in her work *The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual: A Discursive Biography of Magma Magwaza Fuze* (2005), then it becomes apparent that multiple modalities of expression, both felt and reasoned, and in Fuze’s case directed at a more private or readerly, as well as an imaginatively ‘assembled’ audience, were certainly in play in the colonial mission fields. Channels of public enunciation were perhaps more stratified, compromised by highly restrictive colonial speaking positions, on the one hand, and by putatively regulated modes of utterance,

on the other. In some senses, compared with the post-apartheid scenario sketched above, the colonial South African setting in the nineteenth century presents an obverse case: many voices, great wells of affect, momentous and multilateral goings-on, but a public domain in which restrictively *legitimised* channels of expression tended to encourage the act of 'speaking obscurely', in Mkhize's argument, while appearing to remain within the more circumscribed modes of public voice, conditioned by colonial patronage. This of course set the scene for precisely Krog's later attempt to implode such regulated channelling and stratification of public discourse.

So, whereas the example of Krog shows the upwelling of *various* modes of expression from multiple subject positions, redolent of both affect and privation, as well as the voice of a 'seamed and paired' public reason, the challenge for writers such as Wauchope and Fuze was, while being constrained by their time and context, nevertheless to write from within the colonial stratifications *and* reach beyond the particularised forms of address and sanctioned publics hegemonised by colonial fiat, or to find a coded resonance, allowing for a variation of reception in an address to distinctly differentiated (and differently imagined) audiences (as Mkhize's article suggests). The colonial order relied on the maintenance of divisions, generic and otherwise, a rigorous order of discourse which, in Michel Foucault's language, enabled a certain 'government of individualisation' (1982, p. 781). While Krog's example enacts an explicit breaking out from the segregationist order of discourse, a revolutionary *reordering* of discourse and a refusal of earlier forms of discursive governmentalisation, such reordering can arguably be seen to have been apparent, already, in the work of writers such as Fuze and Wauchope, in forms of address that were perhaps more implicitly charged with a double-loaded effect/affect.

Mokoena argues that Fuze's attempt to make Zulu history speak to his present can be understood as a bid to 'normalise the *amakholwa*'s untenable modern condition of colonisation, acculturation and marginality by reconciling modernity with the traditional past through imagining continuity between the traditional past and their modern predicament' (2005, p. 212). Of course, how successful this 'normalisation' was is open to speculation and argument, but the fact that it occurred within an uneven and shifting constellation of publics, in evolving modes of address, speaks to the nature of the South African public sphere as always already quilted, a seamed space in which various acts of suturing are compulsively staged in attempts to create and recreate community.⁴

It is precisely the knowledge of such discursive complexity that makes J.M. Coetzee the commanding writer he has been over the more than three decades in which his allegories of authority and agency have enriched the South African public imaginary. David Attwell, in his consideration in this section of Coetzee's play on forms of authorial authority in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), reminds us that Coetzee has fought 'a long struggle with public discourse, with modern rationality, with language that pretends to know itself, with political discourse that assumes the right to determine who speaks what and to whom'. This kind of language, writes Attwell, 'propped up philosophically by [...] Descartes's *cogito* and [...] Hegel's account of the ascendancy of reason, and politically by the history of modernity, especially in its colonial manifestations, is the nemesis of many of Coetzee's characters'. Coetzee, argues Attwell, 'has sought to elaborate the traditions and generic possibilities of fiction, giving rein to what he calls countervoices, drawing attention to the positionality of his narrators, enabling the revelation of self-interest, the unconscious and desire as they position the subject *in* its history (whilst bloodless, rational discourse

parades as supra-historical, the subject transparently knowing itself'. In this respect, Coetzee offers a stark contrast to the public exercise of 'scientific' reason espoused by his famous Afrikaans counterpart, Van Wyk Louw. As Olivier explains in his article in this section, the concept of the intellectual, for Van Wyk Louw, is modelled on the scientist. In his inaugural lecture in Amsterdam in the early 1950s, Van Wyk Louw declared that an intellectual is a person 'who fairly consistently holds himself to at least the ideals of scientific thinking – objectivity and a careful assessment of well-observed facts that have been assembled as comprehensively as possible'. In this respect, Van Wyk Louw is emblematic of a manner of conceiving knowledge which serves to illustrate precisely what Coetzee's entire career as a novelist has been determined to undermine. Indeed, Van Wyk Louw's understanding of science implied a 'process of induction based on the empirical observation of phenomena'. This, Olivier argues, 'points to a pre-Kuhnian, pre-Lyotardian and pre-Foucauldian view of science as in principle being capable of producing knowledge that is uncontaminated by prior habits of thinking, legitimising narratives, factional interests or historically determined structures of power'. And yet, Van Wyk Louw nevertheless allows for the fallibility of public knowledge when he defines the 'search for truth' as a desire to see reality 'correctly', as a 'hunger for the nature of existence' ('*n honger na die aard van die synde*') which is permeated by a 'deep tragic knowledge', a sense that (in Van Wyk Louw's words) 'fullness will not be given to you – or to any other person; that with all your effort you will never escape totally from error'.

Interestingly, both Van Wyk Louw and Coetzee, despite their decisive differences, arrive at a similar point: the *aporia*, one might say, the blind spot or occluded recess from which the *authority* of felt truth emerges. Van Wyk Louw sought to capture such authority of truth, such 'plenitude of meaning' (Olivier's phrase) in terms such as '*volheid*' ('fullness'), '*volkomenheid*' ('perfection'), '*volledigheid*' ('comprehensiveness') and '*heiligheid*' ('holiness'); these terms, writes Olivier, resonating with some of Van Wyk Louw's greatest poetry (in *Tristia*, 1962), served as 'approximations of the plenitude of meaning that can only be approached by way of the poetical sign'. Coetzee approached the question of authoritative or truthful discourse differently. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee writes a split-level narrative consisting of both a series of 'public reason' essays by his writer persona, Señor C or J.C., and a thin fictional narrative in which J.C. becomes enamoured of a young woman who shares his apartment block in an Australian city. In one of his essays in the novel, J.C. asks himself: 'Why is it so hard to say anything about politics from outside politics? Why can there be no discourse about politics that is not itself political?' In addition, as Attwell argues, J.C.'s essays show an awareness that the 'African model of the State' is increasingly becoming the global norm. This colonial and neocolonial model of the State, Attwell suggests, is strongly based on *commandement* (as set out by Mbembe 2001) and the notion of citizenship as a gift (Mamdani 1996) bestowed unequally by a State whose purpose is to regulate the boundaries between elites – who receive the gift of citizenship – and 'peasants' – who don't. In view of this, for J.C. (as indeed for Coetzee, as Attwell avers), the 'Hobbesian compromise' in which 'the citizen gives up some freedom in order to shelter under the State's protection', no longer offers a workable framework within which to speak back to power, in the larger transnational world as well as in the postcolony. It 'does not ease the subject's fears; somehow the State is always an arbitrary and alien imposition', writes Attwell. 'If we are to salvage anything', he adds, 'it might as well be in *premodern* terms; frequently, the categories that J.C. brings to his reflections are pre-modern ones such as *honour* and *shame* and

the *curse*'. Alternatively, as Coetzee's practice has consistently indicated in his more recent works, there is the recourse of 'drawing public discourse into the procedures of fiction', drawing it into the vatic power of 'giving oneself over to writing's unpredictable processes'. The key for Coetzee, argues Attwell, is the question of authority. Coetzee writes that 'great authors' are 'masters of [...] authority', and asks: 'What is the source of authority, or of what the formalists called the authority-effect?' And then he avers, in a typically Coetzeean rhetorical question: 'But what if authority can be attained only by opening the poet-self to some higher force, by ceasing to be oneself and beginning to speak vatically?' While Coetzee has always been 'distrustful, even hostile to self-deceiving, self-assured language and to rational calculation', writes Attwell, his narrators have spoken 'most powerfully from strange sources – from dreams, wounded bodies and defenceless longings'. And whereas Van Wyk Louw, in Olivier's analysis, increasingly moved away from the idea of 'an immediately discerned [...] truth beyond all conscious efforts of the mind', asserting instead a 'liberal nationalism' and an 'open discussion' (*oop gesprek*) in which loyal dissidence (*lojale verset*) is key, Coetzee's work seems to raise the possibility of a more receptive attitude to supra-rational sources of authority and the vatic power of affective release.

To be sure, the articles in this section all grapple with the question of performing 'wisdom and affect' in a colonial and post-colonial public sphere which does not admit of singularities of meaning and reception, but which, instead, is constituted in overlapping and plural orbits of legitimation or authority. These complexities of public-sphere conditioning are such that the voice, mode of enunciation and particular orchestration of 'wisdom and affect' in the post-colonial public space must be carefully charted and disaggregated if one is to understand how meaning and authority are publicly constructed and by what effect, and what affect, they find their mark.

Notes

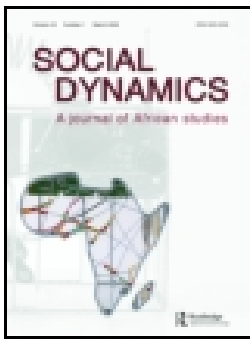
1. This famous distinction was made by the structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. *Langue* refers to the system of rules and conventions which is pre-existent and independent of individual users, a unified system shared by its speakers; *parole* refers to particular instances in which the system is used or deployed in an individual utterance or enunciation. In terms of semiotic systems in general, the distinction is one between code and message, structure and event or system and usage in particularised texts or contexts.
2. Attwell borrows the term 'transculturation' from Fernando Ortiz, who used it in relation to Cuba in the mid-twentieth century.
3. See also my argument in this regard in *Civilising Barbarians* (1996), on which Attwell partly relies, in particular Chapter 4, 'Subversive Subsistence'.
4. See my extended argument about seaming and suturing in the domain of literary historiography, in 'South Africa in the global imaginary: An introduction' (2001). On quilting, see Harris (2006).

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Global resonance, local amplification: Antjie Krog on a world stage

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To cite this article: Anthea Garman (2010) Global resonance, local amplification: Antjie Krog on a world stage, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 187-200, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562468](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562468)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562468>



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Global resonance, local amplification: Antjie Krog on a world stage

Anthea Garman

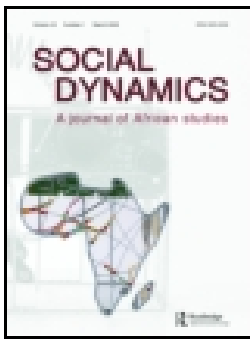
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

As a result of the publication of *Country of my Skull*, an extraordinary literary enactment of witness and confession, Antjie Krog has become internationally known as a writer profoundly engaged with the events and human drama uncovered by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Her voice is read as that of an expert witness of trauma, forgiveness and the means by which the horrors of the past may be addressed. In seeking to understand how Krog came to be taken up internationally as a representative voice of the South African transition, I focus on a particular global–local nexus for an explanation. I theorise that dealing with the past via truth commissions, a global publishing context and the work of a local writer with a record of excellent literary output and political action enabled a fit which resulted in Krog coming to prominence on a world stage. This then amplified her public status in South Africa. I argue that Krog is emblematic of a new type of representative public person who is no longer afforded a hearing just because of the excellence of their ideas, writing or speech, but who also embodies pain, suffering and affectedness.

Keywords: Antjie Krog; public intellectuals; suffering; political transition; life narrative; human rights

In April 1998, Antjie Krog's account of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), *Country of my Skull*, was released. It had an immediate and powerful impact. It was the first book to document the TRC process from a personal point of view, with the narrator operating both as a journalist (and therefore with a journalist's privileged observer status) and as a witness – a white, Afrikaans witness – to thousands of stories of atrocity. Its blend of journalistic reportage, verbatim testimony, poetry, memoir and other literary material made it a work reviewers found difficult to categorise. Literary theorist Mark Sanders (2000, p. 6) called it 'a hybrid work, written at the edges of reportage, memoir and metafiction', and fellow author Rian Malan¹ called it 'a great impressionistic splurge of blood and guts and vivid imagery, leavened with swathes of postmodern literary discourse and fragments of brilliant poetry' (1998, p. 36). It was widely reviewed in South Africa and drew substantial international attention, while Krog was interviewed countless times. *Country of my Skull* received the *Sunday Times* Alan Paton Award; the BookData/South African Booksellers' Book of the Year prize; the Hiroshima Foundation Award; and the Olive Schreiner Award for the best work of prose published between 1998 and 2000. In 1999 an American edition was released, called *Country of my Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* with a foreword by CNN (Cable News Network) Africa correspondent Charlayne Hunter-Gault.

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'Loyal resistance': N.P. van Wyk Louw (1906–1970) and the intellectual

Gerrit Olivier

To cite this article: Gerrit Olivier (2010) 'Loyal resistance': N.P. van Wyk Louw (1906–1970) and the intellectual, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 201-213, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562492](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562492)

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‘Loyal resistance’: N.P. van Wyk Louw (1906–1970) and the intellectual

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The article analyses the seminal role played by the poet N.P. van Wyk Louw in defining the intellectual in Afrikaans public discourse. It shows that Van Wyk Louw’s defence of key concepts such as ‘liberal nationalism’ and ‘the open discussion’ in the 1950s was a movement away from his earlier views on Afrikaner nationalism, in which he focused on non-rational forces. In the contested terrain of debates on Afrikaner nationalism Van Wyk Louw emphasised the need for the intellectual to ground his interventions in the tradition of European political thought, which demanded a respect for justice and an attempt at reconciling nationalism with liberalism. The article finally comments on the relevance of Van Wyk Louw’s contribution to current debates on public intellectual life in South Africa.

Keywords: N.P. Van Wyk Louw; intellectual; nationalism

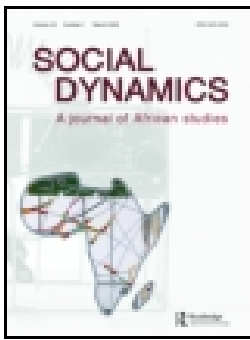
Introduction

In this article I analyse the seminal role played by N.P. van Wyk Louw,¹ the leading Afrikaans poet of his time, in defining the ‘intellectual’ in Afrikaans public discourse. I also ask how this may shed light on current deliberations around the nature of intellectual life and the role of intellectuality in South African society.

The role of the public intellectual is shaped by a combination of internal imperatives and external conditions of possibility. For the intellectual role to be operationalised, the decision to speak in public must be accompanied by the possibility of being heard – and ‘being heard’ means more than being published or broadcast; it means speaking or writing in an environment where the intellectual voice is at least potentially recognised and appreciated. The voice of the intellectual is partially constituted by the conviction or, in some circumstances, the hope or the ideal of having an influence and impact.

There are no ‘born intellectuals’, no people of whom it could be said that they naturally speak *as* or *like* intellectuals (if such people existed, they would in all likelihood be considered pseudo-intellectuals, wafflers or bores). The intellectual voice, in other words, is deliberately constructed in the public sphere, with the main building block being an appeal to authority. The outlines of this appeal are visible in the way in which the intellectual voice is differentiated from other voices. The authority, and thus legitimacy, of the intellectual voice derives from appeals to history and tradition, and from the deliberate articulation of values such as rationality, truth and justice. By

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Mastering authority: J.M. Coetzee's Diary of a Bad Year

David Attwell

To cite this article: David Attwell (2010) Mastering authority: J.M. Coetzee's Diary of a Bad Year , Social Dynamics, 36:1, 214-221, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562575](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562575)

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Mastering authority: J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*

David Attwell

University of York, United Kingdom

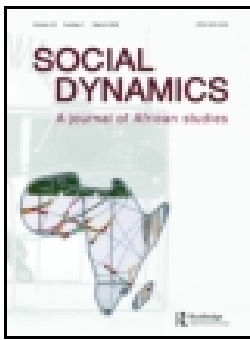
J.M. Coetzee's fiction has, from its inception, parodied language which claims to speak as the public use of reason. *Diary of a Bad Year* departs from this position to some degree by offering a series of public reflections on the times; however, these reflections are embedded within a narrative structure which disallows us from taking them at face value. Such narrative framing raises the question of authority: not only the authority of the reflections themselves, but the authority of the voice and the voice in the text. The relationship between fiction and the public sphere is such that fiction foregrounds the problem of authority in public discourse and seeks to capture the position of authority through heightened forms of mimesis and self-consciousness.

Keywords: J.M. Coetzee; autobiography; fictionality; authority

The fictional pretext for J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) is an invitation from a German publisher (Mittwoch Verlag of Herderstrasse, Berlin) to an ageing novelist to contribute to a collection to be called *Strong Opinions*. The novelist's adopted country is Australia; South Africa is his country of birth. His name is withheld, but he is referred to as Señor C by the young woman Anya who he employs as a typist, and as Juan by Anya's partner Alan.¹ The initials J.C., together with many other clues, imply that the text is meant to be taken as autobiographical, though in a sharply qualified sense. The semi-detached autobiography is well established in Coetzee, notably in the third-person memoirs *Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2002) and *Summertime* (2009); arguably, this text falls into that category while including explicitly fictional elements (certain details of J.C.'s life, such as the dates of his birth and arrival in Australia, do not match up with Coetzee's, and the narrative involving Anya and Alan is fictional).

J.C. takes the opportunity of the invitation to contribute to *Strong Opinions* to respond 'to the present in which I find myself' (p. 67), the response initially taking the form of a series of public reflections. The reflections of Part One, 'Strong Opinions', are pithy essays frequently about world affairs, particularly in relation to the war on terror, as it is known (although the topics cover a wide range, many of which come up elsewhere in Coetzee's writing). The form mimics what Immanuel Kant (1784) famously called the public performance of reason: a tradition at least as old as Michel de Montaigne, it has since the eighteenth century come to be associated quintessentially with an Enlightenment concept of the public sphere. The reflections of Part Two, the 'Second Diary', are personal – contrasting the private sphere with the earlier

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To cite this article: Khwezi Mkhize (2010) 'Shoot with your pen': Isaac William(s) Wauchope's Ingcamango Ebunzimeni and the power of speaking obscurely in public, *Social Dynamics*, 36:1, 222-234, DOI: [10.1080/02533950903562583](https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562583)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533950903562583>



Published online: 18 Mar 2010.



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‘Shoot with your pen’: Isaac William(s) Wauchope’s *Ingamango Ebunzimeni*¹ and the power of speaking obscurely in public

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This article explores *Ingamango Ebunzimeni*, a collection of poems published in the latter months of 1912 by the African intellectual and missionary Isaac William(s) Wauchope (1852–1917). Wauchope is most prominently known for having written a poem that, among other things, incites his peers to ‘take paper and ink’ and ‘[s]hoot with your pen’. *Ingamango Ebunzimeni* is a peculiar moment in the life and writing of Wauchope. In a remarkable series of events, Wauchope served a two-year prison sentence in Tokai between 1910 and 1912. In the argument that follows, I raise a number of issues regarding the circumstances leading to the writing and publication of *Ingamango Ebunzimeni*. Taking as a point of departure Wauchope’s seeming reluctance to explicitly engage his feelings about his imprisonment, I suggest that speaking ‘obscurely’ within a public context allows Wauchope to make utterances that begin to contest, in very complex ways, the fall from grace occasioned by his imprisonment. Wauchope’s poems address themselves to a context where the recent events of his life give rise to dire tensions between the dominant colonial version of his life story that holds him to be a ‘masquerading minister’ and its resistive corollary which seeks to redeem him as the unwilling victim of an unremorseful social order that, having generated a class of Christianised Africans as an example of civilisation, casts them down as a symptomatic failure of the very same process. Indeed, it is in addressing himself to both spheres of meaning simultaneously that Wauchope defines the complexity of *Ingamango Ebunzimeni*.

Keywords: Isaac William(s); Wauchope; African intellectuals; prison poetry; colonial modernity; public discourse; printing culture

Born in Doorn Hoek, in the eastern reaches of the Cape Colony in 1852, Isaac William(s) Wauchope trained as a teacher at Lovedale College, where he was ‘one of the four volunteers who were in Dr James Stewart’s (then Principal of Lovedale College and first editor of *Isigidimi Sama Xosa* [‘The Xhosa Messenger’]) expedition to present-day Malawi to carry on [...] the Lovedale “experiment” to ‘produce teachers, catechists, evangelists and skilled workers [...] for the world’ (Thompson 2000, p. 136). His tenure there was shortened by illness and he returned to the eastern Cape in 1877. Wauchope’s penchant for ‘political reflection and action’ (Thompson 2000, p. 169) was already evident in these early years as he participated in the Lovedale Literary and Port Elizabeth debating societies. As Isabel Hofmeyr (2006) has suggested, the skills of quotation, erudition and eloquence, fostered in the culture of debating, writing and speech-making of the societies, was part of a larger engagement with the culture of texts and public discourse through which African intellectuals

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