**FORGING A NEW SOUTH AFRICA:**

**PLAGIARISM AND THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY**

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*ABSTRACT*

This thesis explores debates about plagiarism in post-apartheid South Africa, focussing on two highly-publicised cases, Antje Krog’s *Country of My Skull* and Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*. Through close reading, and by presenting such reading as culturally meaningful rather than forensic, I argue that in each text plagiarism acts as a contestation of cultural authority and a type of symbolic violence. Each text consciously affiliates itself to a particular literary tradition, occluding those sources that trouble the limits of these traditions, and re-appropriating cultural prestige. Re-establishing context illuminates the violent transculturations that underwrite South African cultural production and how national literatures are fields of contestation, rather than organically developing, self-contained formations.

Chapter One considers the dispute between Stephen Watson and Krog over their respective poeticisations of |Xam narratives, contextualising it within a long history of appropriative white writing about indigenous peoples. Chapter Two considers Krog’s alleged plagiarisms in *Country of My Skull*; notes other instances of unacknowledged copying; and relates Krog’s borrowings to her use of testimony, arguing that a number of testimonies are fictionalised, and that Krog's borrowings and fictionalisations work together to lend her text a first-hand authenticity marked as specifically African. Chapter Three considers Mda’s alleged plagiarism of Jeff Peires’s *The Dead Will Arise* and notes how, contrary to Mda’s claim that there is no written record for the Khoikhoi stories he retells in his novel, there is one, Theophilus Hahn’s *Tsuni-||Goam*. Mda’s borrowings serve to reinscribe an originary Xhosa identity, relatively uninflected by Christian,colonial influence, and to affiliate his work with African orature, rather than print culture. The afterword comments on the wider cultural and ethical implications of plagiarism; the ‘counter-narratives’ that Krog and Mda’s borrowings reveal; and the relationship of their borrowings to the metaphorical ‘forging’ of a ‘new’ South Africa in post-apartheid authorship.

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*AUTHOR’S DECLARATION*

I hereby declare that this is my own work, none of which has been previously published.

INTRODUCTION

**1. PLAGIARISM AND COMPETING CLAIMS TO THE COUNTRY**

This thesis takes as its focal point a set of concerns which came to prominence with a highly publicised debate about plagiarism that arose in 2006 when the late Stephen Watson, a well-established South African poet and academic, accused Antjie Krog, one of South Africa's most celebrated authors, of plagiarism in two of her books[[1]](#footnote-1). These concerns were aptly described at the time by academic Annie Gagiano, when she wrote that: ‘underlying the present quarrel are deeper questions concerning cultural 'ownership', cultural border crossings, cultural sharing’ (‘Just A Touch of the Cultural Trophy Hunter’). Gagiano alluded here to the fact that the squabble between Watson – an English writer – and Krog – an Afrikaans writer – concerned their respective reworkings of indigenous |Xam narratives. Gagiano mentioned too that the more important issue at stake was that of appropriation, and that appropriation could occur even when there was a meticulous crediting of sources. While, as Gaganio notes, the matter of ‘appropriation’ is larger than that of plagiarism, it is through tracing debates about plagiarism, specifically, that I wish to map some of the concerns outlined by her. While plagiarism is a contested critical term (its definition is discussed further shortly), it retains currency and power. Moreover, plagiarism allegations render debates about appropriation in a particularly concrete and intensified way, and its overlapping relationship with issues of copyright allows for consideration of the material aspects and effects of appropriation. What is more, as a subject often occluded from literary criticism, and considered outside of the literary, plagiarism helps to refocus attention on literary value.

The metaphor of ‘mapping’ used above is consciously chosen, aware as I am that this thesis does not merely relate, but inevitably participates in, struggles about meaning and representation that are intimately tied up with ideas about South Africa and what it does, or should, mean[[2]](#footnote-2). The two texts which form the main case studies of this thesis, both the subject of much-publicised plagiarism scandals, concern the South African past and its representation. This is a matter of happenstance rather than selection on my part – the most prominent plagiarism scandals in recent South African letters concern two arguably ‘canonical’ works of post-apartheid South Africa, Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull* (1998) and Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2000)[[3]](#footnote-3), both of which are self-consciously concerned with cultural and historical legacies and their reinscription in a post-apartheid dispensation. Each of these texts forms the subject of a separate chapter. The chapters are similar in approach in that each reconsiders the given text within the context of the debate about plagiarism in which it has become inscribed. These two chapters are preceded by a chapter which differs slightly in approach: though it takes as its starting point another post-apartheid plagiarism scandal, that concerning Krog’s alleged plagiarism of Watson in her adaptation of |Xam narratives in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, it contextualises this within a longer history of white appropriations of indigenous literatures. Additionally, it focuses more on paratexts (particularly prefaces) than a re-reading of the symbolics of the text.

***Scope of the Study: Literary Plagiarism in Post-apartheid South Africa***

I have to chosen to circumscribe this study to what might be described broadly as ‘literary’ plagiarism in post-apartheid South Africa, and to focus in-depth on two case studies, partly because of space constraints and partly for methodological reasons. I do not intend to say anything new about plagiarism per se, or make broad theoretical claims about it, but rather to reconsider key texts and debates in light of alleged plagiarism – a subject, I argue, often ignored or occluded, because it challenges deeply entrenched ideas about authorship and the literary. Plagiarism being a fraught topic, particularly when the texts at hand are contemporary, any discussion of alleged borrowings must proceed very carefully. When Krog was accused of plagiarising from the British writer Ted Hughes in *Country,* she vehemently denied that the contested passage was taken from Hughes. I argue that it is likely that the passage is from Hughes (via whatever conduit), and, moreover, that there are a number of passages in *Country* that are taken verbatim from other unacknowledged writers. Krog also copies verbatim from a 1955 essay by Claude Levi-Strauss, a 1965 essay by Pierre Bourdieu and, most substantially, from a 1965 essay by Julian Pitt-Rivers (none of whom are credited). She also appears to excerpt a number of verbatim quotes from Ian Buruma's *The Wages of Guilt* (1995), the English translation of his *Het Loon van de Schuld* (1994), the Dutch version of which Krog cites (137). Certainly, despite her referencing of the original Dutch publication, Krog's text is remarkably close to the English translation. All of this is strange, and invites re-reading, given that elsewhere she acknowledges sources scrupulously. Krog is self-reflexive about the cost of verbal articulation in *Country*, and constantly self-dramatises her own scrupulousness. The text is peppered with careful acknowledgements. She cites the titles and authors of books on which conversations are ‘based’, cites even unpublished works (for example, an interview with Mazisi Kunene [219]) and makes a point of acknowledging someone, Stephen Laufer, whose ‘phrasing’ she uses occasionally (280). Moreover, the appropriation of the words of others is a constant theme of her text, and one much commented on in its reception.

Given the disbelief with which Krog’s alleged borrowing from Hughes was met, and the upset it produced, it is necessary to proceed delicately and argue this carefully. Moreover, my point here is not merely to itemise borrowings for the sake of it, but, by teasing out the intertextual relationships across texts, and relating them to recurrent tropes in *Country*, to read as meaningful the excisions and repetitions performed. This requires slow and careful explication. I also make the claim that Krog fictionalises testimony given by testifiers before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and that there is a clear pattern between her appropriations of published sources and her fictionalisations of testimony. Again, arguing this entails careful comparative readings of various texts.

Similarly, I proceed with care in the chapter on *Heart,* whereI suggest that contrary to Mda’s claim that there is no written record for the Khoikhoi stories he recounts in that book, there is such a record, namely Theophilus Hahn’s *Tsuni-||Goam: The Supreme Being of the Khoikhoi* (1881). Again, my primary assertion is not that Mda is plagiarising from Hahn, but that a consideration of the texts alongside each other allows for a productive re-reading and contextualisation of *Heart* and its representation of indigeneity, as well as its poetics. In all of the texts studied, the lack of acknowledgement of sources obscures material continuities which, I suggest, are pertinent to understanding the complexities of South African cultural production.

* 1. ***Critical Approach***

 Clearly, the approach taken in this thesis is one that proceeds by ‘close reading’, but not on the traditional New Critical premise that a text is an autonomous object that should be interpreted solely in view of formal properties regarded as necessarily internal. Rather, close reading is deployed to trace and tease out relationships between and across texts, and attention is paid to the materiality of texts. The language of the texts is understood to be part and parcel of its materiality, language being a multi-valent social medium, constantly in flux, whose significations are not within the control of the author, but always contested and re-interpreted. For Timothy Bewes, following Deleuze and Guattari,

Materiality describes the formal elements of a literary text, but it should not be understood as a cipher for an aesthetic formalism in which specifically literary qualities are abstracted from history. On the contrary, materiality attempts to refocus critical attention on the contemporaneity of the text – on the historical event of the work itself. (52)

Both Krog and Mda are writers who see their work as *doing* something, as meaningful acts or interventions (and Krog explicitly invokes Deleuze’s notion of ‘becoming’ in her book *Begging to be Black*). Both tend to see their work as playing a part in national reconciliation and transformation.

While I trace rhetorical strategies and narratological elements such as structure and voice within the texts (noting in both *Heart* and *Country* a peculiar tendency to self-reflexive doubling), such formal elements are taken to have historical significance, and are read generically, in relation to their literary and historical contexts. Both texts are highly self-reflexive about their own forms, and are to some degree experimental, testing generic boundaries, and engaged with their own aesthetic quandaries: attempting to find aesthetic strategies commensurate to their subject matter, what might be termed an ‘appropriate’ poetics. This reading of text in relation to contexts and intertexts often produces, or reveals, a type of double narrative. While Krog’s narrative ostensibly says one thing about storytelling (that it is healing), on another level her borrowings act out a very different story. Similarly, Mda’s borrowings of white-authored narratives of the Khoikhoi and Xhosa perform a narrative of repatriation which runs alongside, but also departs from, the ostensible narrative of ancestral reclamation that forms his subject matter, suggesting that the field of South African literary production is, as David Attwell has suggested, one of ‘transculturation’ (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter Three). Following Christopher Miller’s observations about Yambo Ouologuem’s plagiarisms in his novel *Bound to Violence*, plagiarism might be said to enact a ‘symbolics’ (Miller 218) of the text. Strikingly, what is symbolised, or gestured to, is a broader literary history in which these texts self-consciously take their place. These texts thus self-consciously engage with questions of South African literary historiography.

The critical approach taken in this thesis is also informed by perspectives most closely associated with book history. The approach is book historical insofar as, in considering matters of plagiarism, I attend specifically to material continuities and in that historical, material and institutional contexts are basic to the interpretations offered in this thesis. As Andrew van der Vlies argues in the introduction to his forthcoming edited collection on South African book history, book history has developed from its beginnings in bibliography to a consideration of how material specificities shape readings and interpretations. Van der Vlies quotes Roger Chartier to the effect that

[r]eaders, in fact, never confront abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality. They hold in their hands or perceive objects and forms whose structures and modalities govern their reading or hearing, and consequently the possible comprehension of the text read or heard. (1992, 50)

Van der Vlies himself offers a useful, if broad, description of approaches that might be described as book historical:

while literary criticism has always been concerned with the meanings of texts, book history is concerned with how these meanings are influenced by factors often beyond the control of authors themselves, with how they are intimately connected with (amongst other pressures) those exercised by the publishing industry, agents and editors, the ruling discourses of reviewing and the economics of bookselling and advertising, censorship or other kinds of state control or public moral or political pressure, the exigencies of popular reception, serialization or abridgement (and also educational institutionalization), by the valorizing economics of literary prize cultures and, indeed, academic study. (‘Print, Text and Books in South Africa’)

Crucially, both *Heart* and *Country* are texts aware of their own institutionality and commodification as items of sale that trade in national and ethnic identities. A book historical approach thus seems particularly appropriate to a consideration of these texts. It also seems to me that book history makes a necessarily materialist intervention into questions of South African literary historiography and ‘traditions’, or, into the impasse of the question of what might constitute a ‘South African’ literature. As Lewis Nkosi commented (albeit in 1994), literature produced in South Africa, and so often gathered under the loose rubric ‘South African’, is very far from representative of the country at large, because the conditions of production and reception have been so skewed towards white writers and readers (a legacy which persists even today, despite the intentions of publishers and policymakers otherwise) (38-40). Any discussion of ‘South African’ literature that wishes to avoid bracketing the majority of the country's populace in discussions of the ‘South African’ necessitates a consideration of the material conditions of authorship, then.

One material consideration that this thesis does not closely pursue is the question of sales and profits, although I would consider this pertinent to the questions that arise from this research. Something that has gradually emerged during the research is how the matter of literal profits and the economic is routinely sidelined and effaced from discussions of the literary. At the same time, though, in the texts considered here, figures of trade and theft recur again and again, frequently in conjunction with figures of indigenous storytelling. These scenarios hint at a ‘literary’ substrate in which questions of land, nation, narrative and property are intimately intertwined.

* 1. ***Debates about Plagiarism, Originality and Authenticity in the ‘New’ South Africa***

I have circumscribed this study mainly to plagiarism debates in post-apartheid South Africa, and have focussed on *Heart* and *Country* in particular, as it seems to me there is an overdetermined link between the plagiarisms in these texts and their investments in what might be described as the ‘forging’ of *new* South African identities or indeed a new South Africa. Indeed, there may be a more general connection between plagiarism and nationalist discourse (this has been touched on by academics working on debates about plagiarism in other historical contexts, and I will return to their observations in due course). By ‘nationalism’ I mean ethno-nationalism, which Walker Connor argues is nationalism proper -- that is an appeal to a common ethnic identity. As we shall see, a consideration of plagiarism in writing from South Africa suggests that it very often operates in the service of such nationalism. There are perhaps links between plagiarism, which often entails a denial of hybridity, and nationalism’s prizing of what might be termed authentic difference (a reified, and static, rather than temporal, difference – that is, an essentialism). Interestingly, Kevin Pask notes how plagiarism becomes a matter of pressing concern in the first English texts concerned with tracing a specifically national literature – Gerald Langbaine’s *Momus Triumphans* (1687) and *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691) (728).

As has often been noted, the language of nationalism is obsessively concerned with origins and authenticity. This is evident in the governing nation-building discourse of post-apartheid South Africa, which has stressed pride in indigeneity and positioned Africa as a place of authenticity and origins (perpetuating what we shall see in Chapter One is a long, but troubled, discourse of it as such). Thus, for instance, the establishment of the ‘Origins Centre’ at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the government-sponsored launch of *Baobab*, a literary magazine that declares it is bringing storytelling ‘home’ to Africa, described as its birthplace[[4]](#footnote-4). The government has quite literally invested in the securing of a new post-national South African identity by encouraging indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and indigenous literary production, and by conscripting writers into a specifically national framework, via the establishment of a national laureate post, literary magazines, and new literary orders and awards. Thus writers as various as Credo Mutwa and Nadine Gordimer are together designated ‘national living treasures’ who have contributed to the making of indigenousknowledge. The post-apartheid appeal to indigeneity is most clearly seen in the use of a fragment from the Bleek and Lloyd archive (an archive discussed in this thesis), in an indigenous language, as the motto for the new national coat of arms, unveiled by then President Thabo Mbeki in 2000. But while the post-apartheid government has described the promotion of IKS as crucial ‘in the face of globalisation’ (IKS Policy Document 12), its neoliberal economic policies have opened South Africa up to globalisation. There is a split here between the economic and cultural which is awkwardly gestured to, and negotiated, by Krog and Mda in their books – in which questions of ownership, profits and commodification are variously addressed and alluded to. It is also important to note that this is not the first time that such appeals to authenticity have been made – though this current appeal differs in that it is made by a democratically elected African government – there are echoes of such mobilisations in previous, colonial eras. Thus, Shane Moran notes that the Khoikhoi and San were conscripted into the ‘new’ South Africa in 1910, with the union of the colonies and republics (126).

There are a number of points of overlap between *Heart* and *Country* that appear symptomatic of their common cultural moment – their foregrounding of orality; their gendering of the nation; tropes of parthenogenesis and autochthony; and their appeal to a specifically African authenticity, or, rather, the allying of the authentic with the African. Both are English language texts, published internationally, by writers whose identities are not English South African and who promote a distinctive identity that is determinedly anticolonial. Both texts, manifestly products of a particular nationalist moment, to some degree concern themselves with nationalism as subject. The TRC, the subject of Krog’s book, was established in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, and was concerned as much with nation building as justice or truth. Krog casts herself as trying to find a new language for a new South Africa, as voicing and contributing to a new nation. Mda, too, in his book addresses matters of national heritages, memory and reconciliation, and attempts to create a new, authentically African aesthetic form appropriate to his subject and moment.

* 1. ***‘White Writing/Writing Black’: Constructing National Literatures***

Although the thesis has a strictly defined national scope, namely literary plagiarism in post-apartheid South Africa, part of the work done by the thesis is, I hope, the troubling of the idea of national literatures as natural formations or unproblematic critical categories. There has been much debate about what constitutes a South African literature, particularly post-1994, and whether one can identify or meaningfully discuss a distinctive South African literary tradition. Malvern van Wyk Smith, in ‘White Writing/Writing Black: The Anxiety of Non-Influence’ (1996), argues that attempts to celebrate a unified South African tradition are overly optimistic; drawing on Harold Bloom’s model of the ‘anxiety of influence’, van Wyk Smith argues that the same conduits of re-writing – and of *intentional* dialogue – that Bloom traces between writers within what he perceives as *the* canon (one comprised almost solely of male, European poets), cannot be found in South African writing. That Bloom’s theory – explicitly defined as a theory of poetry – should not be transposable to a multi-generic national field should not be surprising. There is a sense though, in which van Wyk Smith’s reaching for a theory of poetry in response to a question of how to write a national literary history is apt – for poetry is the privileged genre of nationalism, and the idea of a national literature per se is not questioned by van Wyk Smith. Bloom’s model is also suggestive in that it traces creative *agons* – contestations of power – that are conceived as familial (as the nation is). As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, Freud’s Oedipal model occludes all social dimensions and contexts, centring them into the family unit (Young, *Colonial Desire* 171); Bloom’s Oedipal model is appropriately ahistorical and ostensibly depoliticised. For van Wyk Smith, though, Bloom’s model of poetic influence is an instance of ‘genuine interextuality, of texts resonating intentionally to one another’ (75), an intertextuality not discernible across South African literatures. Bloom’s model of intertextuality (or the one ascribed to him by van Wyk Smith) is very different to that elaborated by Julia Kristeva, who first proposed the term ‘intertextuality’ and who explicates it in more nuanced terms. For Kristeva (whose theory is discussed in further detail shortly) intertextuality is neither intentional nor purely linguistic. What van Wyk Smith asserts is that South African writers do not seem to be influenced by one another, or to consciously inscribe themselves within a broad national tradition, conscious of themselves as national writers working in a common tradition, keen to define themselves in relation to one another. But South Africa, even post-1994, lacks a sense of unified nationhood; arguably, writers do work with a sense of national consciousness, but not all of those under the law of the South African state see each other as fellow citizens, feel accountable to one another, or experience what Benedict Anderson describes as a ‘sense of deep, horizontal comradeship’ (7). South African writers have not been reading each other, van Wyk asserts. In particular, white English South African writers have not been reading their national counterparts. Also, the firm link proposed between oral literature and contemporary black literary production is erroneous (74–75) (I will return to this in Chapter Three).

I suggest that Bloom’s model is inappropriate to the South African context (as David Attwell and Derek Attridge argue in their introduction to *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* [6]). Rather, any discussion of an ostensibly national literature is best undertaken empirically or historiographically – as a discussion of texts contingently bound by politics, place, history, with intertexts as much material and real as literary, and not necessarily *intentional*. All national literatures are fictive. There is no ‘authentic’ or ‘organic’ self-contained national tradition to be found – or one based on simple, linear ‘inheritances’ – anywhere. Writers respond to events and writings across national boundaries and historical periods; nevertheless, there are still valuable readings to be had from engaging with the specific political, geographical and historical contexts of a text’s articulation.

I argue that both *Country* and *Heart* are invested in ideas of national authenticity and that their plagiarisms act in the service of cultural nationalisms and as disavowals of ‘cultural translation’ (discussed in further detail shortly). If anything, close archival readings of the texts suggest that, as Pascale Casanova argues, literatures are ‘not a pure emanation of national identity; they are constructed through literary rivalries, which are always denied, and struggles, which are always international’ (36). Van Wyk Smith argues that South African writers have not been reading each other; I suggest that perhaps at times they have, but that there are vested – indeed, national – interests in disavowing and obscuring such dialogues. There is another ‘anxiety of influence’ discernible in South African writing, and one specifically bound up with national identities. While I disagree with van Wyk Smith’s idea of ‘genuine intertextuality’ as intentional, his observations about South African writers, drawing on his own extensive research, are pertinent, as is his call for archival work to establish such overlaps and intertexts. He himself notes possible ‘intertextual’ connections, usually between a South African writer and a metropolitan one, worth pursuing – but these are discounted from a national tradition or survey, because inspired by an extranational source. Arguably, tracing such connections is valuable for the way in which they show up the fallacies of a purely national tradition.

* 1. ***Cultural Translation and ‘Bad English’***

In contradistinction to a naturally bounded, self-perpetuating national literary tradition, we might propose to read South African literary production through the lens of cultural translation, or even, following Attwell, as a field of transculturation (*Rewriting Modernity*), with South Africa as a mobile fiction, or changing map. Cultural translation has become an increasingly frequent term to describe transnational processes of cultural exchange and transformation, and is to some degree apposite to the South African situation, with its eleven official languages. In a 1981 essay, ‘Some Problems of Writing Historiography’, Stephen Gray identified cultural translation or ‘trading’ of ‘literary forms’ as fundamental to South African writing; according to Gray, for the South African writer, ‘the basic act of writing is of carrying information across one or other socio-political barrier, literally of “trading’” (20). Gray contends that

trading of literary forms – like the lullaby, the praise-poem, the elegy, and the letter – is shown to be part of the continuing business of a shared literary system that is bigger than the sum of its parts. (20-21)

Gray’s model of ‘trade’ certainly seems apt to ‘literary’ and linguistic exchange in South Africa from the time of European incursion onwards, for, as Linda Evi Merians notes, all the early verbal exchanges Europeans had with peoples of the Cape concerned, trade, or rather exchange (47). But the scenario proposed by Gray is somewhat idealistic – not all South African writers have written with this sense of a local audience to whom it wishes to reach out. When there has been a sense, on the author’s part, of what Lewis Nkosi calls the ‘cross-border reader’, this cross-border reader is frequently a metropolitan (English-speaking) audience. Moreover, the ‘trades’ gestured to by Gray are unequal, and, taking place in a field of unequal power relations, are never simply reciprocal exchanges. In *Heart* there is a vignette in which the white trader, Dalton, is struck on the head by a Xhosa customer, Bhonco, an action which is explicitly figured as ‘pay back’ for Bhonco’s debt to Dalton. Arguably, Bhonco’s action allegorises what are the text’s own symbolic violences towards white-authored texts about indigenous peoples. Mda, ‘indebted’ to colonial authors for accounts of Xhosa and Khoikhoi culture, now heavily and violently transculturated, rectifies the balance sheet by appropriating a heritage denied him.

Part of the argument of this thesis is that the pressures of national authorship continue to exert a distorting influence on South African writers even after the end of apartheid, as seen in the disguised borrowings of Krog and Mda, both of whom are constructed as representative national authors. These distorting pressures of national authorship are made all the more fraught, or placed under increased strain, by the use of English by writers (Krog and Mda) who are read as in some sense representative of particular South African groups – Afrikaners and amaXhosa – who have been subject to English cultural domination. At the same time, their use of English to articulate quite particular non-English identities displays the fallacies of nationalist thinking that poses a determinate link between nation, language and people – a type of Herderian thinking recently critiqued in Bill Ashcroft’s *Caliban’s Voice: The Transformation of English in Postcolonial Literatures* (2009). Yet, this seemingly ‘natural’ relationship between language and nation remains an implicit assumption in both *Heart* and *Country*, and indeed is held as widespread assumption, a spectral haunting of nationalist thinking in a post-colonial world.

 Krog, commenting on language politics in contemporary South Africa, resonantly suggests that ‘our national language is bad English’ (‘Literature Enables You to Examine Your Life’), English being the first-language of only a small minority of South Africans yet the default second-language of postcolonial South Africa. Arguably, South African English is ‘bad’ in another way, carrying, as Njabulo Ndebele suggested in a 1986 essay, a legacy of cultural domination that renders it far from ‘innocent’ or neutral (‘English and Social Change’ 110). Ndebele suggested that English would have to accept being changed by its users, less precious about its particulars (112). Arguably the plagiarisms in *Heart* and *Country* might be read as registering, and responding to, the historical violence of imperial English, marking their distance from it. While Krog writes of ‘bad English’ as the language of South Africa’s future, Mda, responding to Gray’s critique of his mastery of English, notes that his is an English which is deliberately subversive, affiliating itself with Xhosa culture (‘A Charge Disputed’).

**2. CRITICAL DEBATES ABOUT PLAGIARISM**

What constitutes plagiarism, and whether it is a worthy subject of critical consideration, is often contested. As Marilyn Randall points out, the allegation of plagiarism has been used, over the centuries, in multiple contexts, to describe various practices. In her book *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit and Power*, Randall treats plagiarism ‘pragmatically’ – that is, she asserts that plagiarism is not an objectively identifiable textual feature but instead exists ‘in the eye of beholder’ (vii). Randall’s reading of plagiarism as primarily a matter of reception rather than an objective textual phenomenon allows for rich theoretical readings which are often lacking in discussions about plagiarism disputes, and for the tracing of the term’s cultural imbrications – rather than a narrow focus on the author’s culpability. Nevertheless, Randall’s bracketing of authorial agency is problematic in that the primary definition of plagiarism, as it is commonly understood, is of an authorial *act*: in the definition provided by the OED, plagiarism is ‘[t]he action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft’. Arguably, plagiarism, being definable, *may* be identified as a phenomenon, even if it is rarely possible to do so with absolute certainty. As Christopher Ricks notes, ‘that the supporting evidence for the accusation of plagiarism may on occasion be elusive, insufficient or uncertain is not the same as thinking that the definition of plagiarism is uncertain’ (22). Nevertheless, it should be noted that even the relatively simple OED definition provided above begs a number of questions and is open to interpretation. What constitutes literary ‘theft’? Or indeed literary property? As Ricks himself states, words can’t properly be *stolen* – the words taken remain where they are, and their worth is not diminished. The issue at hand in plagiarism is rather one of authorial ‘fraud’ or dishonesty, the deliberate obscuring of a text’s provenance and presentation of it as specifically one’s own. The model of theft is also inadequate insofar as the relationship understood to be transgressed by plagiarism is not only that between two writers, but between writer and reader. The reader proceeds on the fiction of the writer’s honesty or good faith – not necessarily the fiction of the writer’s originality, as such – but of a certain consistency of orders of meaning (or on a certain contract, or exchange – into which reader and writer enter, its parameters established by literary conventions). The author, as signatory to the text, becomes a site of accountability.

In this thesis plagiarism is understood to be verbatim copying of another text and the passing it off as one’s own work (it is closely related to forgery insofar as in both there is a reascription of accountability). It is understood as a conscious act, in which the source text is hidden or denied. It differs both from allusion – understood as a conscious reference to another text (rather than one denied; indeed allusion depends on the reader’s recognition) – and intertextuality, which is not necessarily intentional or conscious. I use the term ‘plagiarism’ to describe an act the virtue of which is always open for re-reading, contestation and contextualisation, but I read it as a rhetorical figure, as potentially fruitful for literary critical discussion as any other. This is not to deny the ethical conundrums raised by plagiarism, but rather to open space for their consideration.

 The reading of plagiarism offered in this thesis follows Randall’s work on plagiarism in that it reads what is valorised as ‘literary’ as, at least in part, institutionally determined, and in its concern with the intersection between plagiarism accusations, power struggles and literary authority. As Randall argues concerning the intimate relationship between plagiarism and the literary:

If the construction of literature is a function of institutional, that is, extratextual, constraints and criteria, and their intersection – happily or not – with discursive forms, a most compelling reason for focusing on literary plagiarism is its functioning as a barometer of shifting literary norms and aesthetic conventions, and of the power struggles to institute authority that attend the construction of the literary field. (8)

She continues, drawing on Foucault, to argue that ‘disputes about plagiarism can be seen as instances of power struggles within the literary or, more broadly speaking, cultural field’ (8).

The appropriative authorial practices described in this thesis do not always tally exactly with the basic definition of plagiarism cited earlier and used in this thesis, yet have been described variously as ‘plagiarism’ by writers and critics. Thus, for instance, in the chapter on Mda’s *Heart*, I consider Andrew Offenburger’s description of Mda’s use of Jeff Peires’s *The Dead Will Arise* as plagiarism (despite the fact that Mda acknowledges Peires), and the stakes in doing so. In the first chapter I consider Watson’s allegation of plagiarism in Krog’s *the stars say ‘tsau’* and how he builds an argument that allows him to consign Krog’s work to an ‘extra-literary tradition’ on account of its alleged plagiarism . If there is a constant of plagiarism allegations it is that they tend to work to define the literary from the non-literary, and the authentic from the inauthentic. As we shall see, in Offenburger’s critique of Mda’s use of Peires, Offenburger draws firm, indeed quite defensive, lines between ‘literature’ and ‘history’. Mda’s work, which Offenburger construes as straying across these borders, is consigned by him to the inauthentic and ‘duplicitous’ (164). Offenburger constructs an argument in which the dishonesty of Mda’s alleged plagiarism comes to signify, or act as proof of, the ‘inauthenticity’ of a text that does not respect, or challenges, the distinction between history and literature, a distinction which Offenburger appears concerned to protect. In the chapter on *Country*, I also devote considerable time to discussion of Krog’s manipulation of testimonies given before the TRC. Her manipulations do not constitute plagiarism, but they do perform a certain ventriloquism, an act aptly described by A. E. Malloch as plagiarism’s ‘inverse’ (166). As we shall see, her borrowings from various writers and her changes to the testimonies fall into a pattern, working together in the service of constructing a particular national narrative and casting it as indigenously African.

**2.1 *Cultural and Legal Contexts***

It might be argued that plagiarism is culturally specific – and that it is a meaningless term in cultures in which there is not a strong concept of authorial ownership, especially in traditionally oral cultures. Thus for instance, the publishing consultant Eve Gray, in the wake of the allegation of plagiarism by Krog, posted on *Litnet* an article in which she cited a comment by Nigerian academic Kole Omotoso:

Omotoso made the point that the African literary tradition is one that does not have reservations about 'borrowing' - he cited, amongst other examples, the use of a multiplicity of traditional tales embedded in the work of Ben Okri.

But if one is to take this generalisation at face value, Okri's voice must be exempted from those who articulate ‘the African literary tradition’, for in 1996 Okri publicly objected to the plagiarism of his book *The Famished Road* by Calixthe Beyala, as well as to her excuse that as an African writer she works out of an oral tradition which legitimises the practice, responding ‘I don’t buy that. It’s not part of the literary tradition. . . . I want people to read me, but I don’t want people to steal from my work’ (qtd. in Hitchcott 104). Moreover, the works of Okri and Beyala are part of an international print marketplace, rather than a local oral community. Recently, Chinua Achebe stopped the African-American rapper 50 Cent from calling his film ‘Things Fall Apart’. Here we have Achebe laying ownership to a phrase from W.B. Yeats. As we shall see, Mda, far from suggesting his appropriation of Peires was part of an ‘oral’ tradition, rather suggested that Offenburger’s casting of him as a specifically African writer was racist, and turned the tables on Stephen Gray, by dismissing him as ‘at best a local hero’, commenting, from the USA, that ‘here in the academy we understand intertextuality’ (‘A Charge Disputed’). What is crucial in debates in which African tradition is described as one in which questions of literary property are extraneous, is who gets to speak for such traditions. This is particularly so given that, as we shall see in Chapter One, there is a long history of white writers justifying their own appropriations of indigenous cultural productions by casting them as pre-modern and thus beyond the domain of property. Critics should be wary of claiming that concepts of property and ownership do not pertain to traditionally oral cultures simply because such property structures differ from Western structures. What is classed as ‘common property’ and what as ‘literary property’, protected by property rights, and the power relationships that structure these classifications, is part of what is explored in this thesis, rather than taken for granted. Similarly, who counts as an author (Homer, not ||Khabbo), and what material is worthy of being attributed with ‘authorship’. Western critics should also be wary of dismissing as ‘inauthentic’ strategic attempts by indigenous writers or groups to commodify their own identities. To do so entails taking it upon oneself to legislate or authorise the other’s identity. The language of ethnic authenticity is deeply suspect, bound up with colonial legislation and control. But for authors or communities to market their own authenticity can entail a remastering, or authorisation, of identity that shows up authenticity as a politics with its own ideological content rather than the natural order of things. Again, authorial positionality is key.

 It is also important to note that while plagiarism is quite probably a term with more currency in the west, nevertheless, within western tradition it is not a phenomenon with currency only after the institution of copyright or even inaugurated with print. The etymology of the word may be traced to Roman times, to Martial’s use of *plagius*, ‘kidnapper’, to describe a man who had recited Martial’s poems as his own (Randall 62). As Randall writes,

concepts of *ownership* and of *authenticity* clearly pre-date the copyright legislation that sets out to regulate them, and they form the basis for the continuing existence of plagiarism since the beginning of recorded history in the West. (15)

Generally speaking, plagiarism – as distinct from copyright infringement – is not a legal matter. As Randall notes, ‘the discourse surrounding literary plagiarism is itself often the only court wherein the greatest number of putative cases are tried’ (7). Copyright is concerned with protecting ownership rather than authorship, and can rest with whomever the author alienates his property to. (Copyright law most often serves the interests of large corporations rather than individual authors.) This thesis is concerned primarily with plagiarism rather than copyright infringement, and with questions of authorship rather than ownership, although clearly these are intimately related. None of the case studies I discuss at length were the subject of litigation (although Krog did consider suing Watson for libel [Bower, ‘Krog’s Publishers Might Sue’ 11]). Questions of ownership and material profits (the ‘material interests’ of the author) are pertinent, though – particularly as economic metaphors filter through the texts discussed, in their own figurations of the literary – or of literary ‘exchange’ or ‘trade’. Krog speaks repeatedly of the ‘price’ and ‘cost’ of words. Mda, I suggest, invokes a literary model of ‘debt’ and ‘credit’.

**2.2 *Plagiarism and the Literary***

Most discussions of incidents of plagiarism in South Africa have been confined to newspapers and websites, with the imputation that the matter, being scandalous, is not of literaryinterest. In discussions of Krog and Mda the matter is generally bracketed or sidestepped. Notable exceptions include articles by Ashleigh Harris and by Michael Titlestad and Mike Kissack on *Country* and by Michael Wessels, Elwyn Jenkins and Helize van Vuuren on the dispute between Krog and Watson regarding the Bleek and Lloyd collection. Two unpublished dissertations also consider recent plagiarism debates in South Africa, Claire Verstraete’s MA dissertation in English Literature, ‘Plagiarism: The Cultural Outbreak’ (UCT, 2007) and Sunelle Geyer’s PhD thesis in Law, ‘Determining Originality in Creative Literary Works’ (University of Pretoria, 2006). At the close of this introduction, when I briefly discuss what is covered in each chapter, I outline the arguments made concerning the case studies of this thesis, and articulate how my discussion builds on them.

In the sidestepping by critics of issues of plagiarism there is a latent sense that a consideration of alleged plagiarisms might threaten the authority not just of the texts at hand but of the literary. There is this sense too in high-theory dismissals of plagiarism as passé – of interest only to those who are not in the academic know. (At the same time as the democratic reign of the reader is invoked with reference to ‘The Death of the Author’, reading is made something arcane.) K.K. Ruthven, in *Faking Literature* (2001), contends that plagiarised works and literary forgeries are either viewed as apart from the main canon or turned a blind eye to because of the institutional investment in seeing literature as the preserve of authenticity and as allied with ethics rather than rhetoric. Ruthven writes that: ‘to install authenticity as a foundational value is to legitimise ‘authentication’ as a disciplinary practice, particularly as it relates to questions of authorial attribution and the establishment of ‘correct’ texts’ (160). Ruthven’s is perhaps a slightly cynical reading, or, at least, one that attributes a certain cynicism to literary critics, suggesting that the task of authentication follows not from a respect for the authentic, or an interest in truth, but vice-versa: that literary critics invent their values to suit their tasks/discriminate according to their own personal interests. Certainly, though, plagiarism appears to operate as the limit of the literary – and in both case studies I consider how the literary is evoked, and its domain reinscribed, in the given allegations of plagiarism. Both Watson and Offenburger, in their respective articles, appear concerned to secure the boundaries of the literary.

 Closer to home, one might argue that critics of South African writing have a vested interest in the authenticity and authority of Krog and Mda (and turning a blind-eye to questions of plagiarism) because of particular desires, not merely pedagogical or professional, in relation to literary production in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus critics’ occlusion of Krog’s manipulation of testimonies tends to go hand in hand with a validation of – or desire for – story-telling as ‘healing’ or reconciliatory (as suggested by the TRC and authorised by Krog). In the case of Mda, *Heart* was welcomed as the work of a black voice, in a field still dominated by white writers (there is a clear need for the balance of power to be shifted to a black voice). More generally, ‘authenticity’ is a prominent feature of nationalist discourse, and plagiarism imperils this.

**2.3 *Plagiarism and Romanticism***

 One argument that frequently surfaces when plagiarism is discussed, and which recurred in letters and blogs and short articles in the wake of the dispute between Krog and Watson, is the idea that plagiarism is an outdated critical term and a product of a ‘Romantic’ conception of the author and of the originality of texts. The unspoken assumption here is that the contemporary moment could be easily disentangled from such Romanticism. But arguably post-apartheid South Africa, with its overtly nation-building project, is itself shaped by certain ideas that came to prominence with European Romanticism, aptly described by Tom Nairn as ‘the cultural mode of the nationalist dynamic’ (93). Moreover, there are a number of problems with readings which seeks to dismiss notions of authorial originality and authenticity as simply a Romantic aberration. As Robert Macfarlane observes, ‘no unified or consistent doctrinal position towards originality and literary resemblance can easily be abstracted from contemporary Romantic documents’ (29). Indeed, Tilar J Mazzeo notes that ‘[o]riginality is a difficult term, because during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it did not exclude the possibility of imitation’ (*Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Nineteenth Century* 9). Mazzeo warns that

the term *Romanticism* largely denotes in its conventional modern usage...an aesthetic fantasy, the efficacy of which is affirmed by a determinedly nostalgic posture that posits its origins in the (distant, inescapable) history of the early nineteenth century – a history that often appears astonishingly similar to our own cultural horizons (*Plagiarism* 187)

Indeed, ‘by granting such cultural power to the distant, historical, and self-generated bogeyman that the “Romantic cult of the individual genius” represents, we fail to recognise that we are fighting our own demons’ (Mazzeo *Plagiarism* 187).

 Interestingly, Mazzeo argues that in late Georgian England plagiarism is less an ethical issue than an aesthetic one, concerned with artistic unity, specifically the ideal of *organic unity*:

In the early nineteenth-century, plagiarism was viewed as a primarily aesthetic problem, which hinged upon the failure to incorporate the borrowed material. Plagiarism was problematic not because it was intellectual theft, but because it jeopardised the organic unity of a work and its status as ‘literary’. (*Plagiarism* 161-62)

Notably, Romantic theories of language which exalt originality and organic unity tend to stress the natural origins of language; thus Edward Young, whom Robert Macfarlane describes as the ‘heresiarch’ of originality, describes ‘originality’ as such, as of ‘*vegetable* matter’, that is not made, but ‘grows’:

an Original may be said to be of a *vegetable* matter; it rises spontaneously from the vital roots of genius; it grows; it is not made: imitations are often a sort of manufacture wrought up by those mechanics, art, and labour, out of pre-existent materials not their own. (qtd. in Macfarlane 18)

This aesthetic ideal of ‘organic unity’, rooted as it is in the idea of language as natural, has a specifically nationalist inflection. Herder’s ideal of the organic unity of the nation develops out of the idea that each nation is bound by a language which is in some sense formative of the person’s mind and being – a common language thus unites a group of people into the seemingly ‘natural’ formation of the nation.

As mentioned, the relationship between the political and the aesthetic has tended to be overlooked in discussions of romantic-era plagiarism; generally the period is described as one obsessed with the virtues of originality because of the enactment, in the eighteenth century, of copyright laws and the emergence of ideas of the possessive individual and personal property and the Lockean tenet of a natural right to personal property in which one’s labour is invested. In an article on Shelley and plagiarism, though, Mazzeo considers plagiarism through the dual political contexts of nationalism and colonialism. Mazzeo asserts that ‘as a critical discourse, Romantic plagiarism was concerned with legitimising strategies of unilateral appropriation and with identifying national literary characteristics’ (‘“A Mixture of All the Styles”163). Strikingly, she describes plagiarism in imperial-romantic travel narratives as constituting ‘a nationalist fantasy of appropriation without hybridity’ (‘A Mixture’ 155).

In her discussion of plagiarism and travel writing, Mazzeo suggests a dialectical tension between embattled self-definitions of the nation and the expansion, and to some extent fragmentation, of this nation through imperialism. Similarly, Robert Young argues that the organic metaphors ‘so beloved’ of the nineteenth century emerge in relation to this fragmentation, diaspora and ongoing work of transculturation: ‘The need for organic metaphors of society or identity implies a counter-sense of fragmentation and dispersion’ (*Colonial Desire* 4). A similar tension between the national and imperial (or neo-colonial) might be said to pertain in a contemporary postcolonial nation like South Africa, which emerges as a democratic nation at a time of increasing globalisation. Jean and John Comaroff argue that the celebration (even fetishisation) of the indigenous and of nature (a type of ‘eco-nationalism’) in post-apartheid South Africa is partly attributable to its occurrence within a context of globalisation in which notions of belonging are increasingly fraught (‘Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse and the Postcolonial State’).

Notably, the texts discussed here – *Country* and *Heart* – demonstrate a concern with national origins and authenticity that might in some sense be described as Romantic, or as bearing an affiliation with Romantic-era texts. Both texts demonstrate a striking desire to *naturalise* relations between communities and land, thus granting these relationships a certain power and authority, and also a desire to naturalise the relationship between the body of the speaker and the national language, through the figures of orality, voice and the ‘mother tongue’. But these discourses of naturalisation, even in these ostensibly laudable books, are shadowed by more troubling discourses of race. As Stuart Hall notes, the language of race, itself a discursive construct, is always bound up with that of nature (‘Race: The Floating Signifier’).

Importantly, the point of this brief consideration of Mazzeo’s recent work on Romantic-era plagiarism, and the contiguities between these plagiarism debates and contemporary South African ones, is not to assert a Romantic ‘inheritance’ (a schema in which European culture has historical priority, and all South African cultural production is seen through this lens), but to complicate certain assumptions about Romantic-era plagiarism. As Mazzeo suggests, taking for granted certain clichés about the Romantics allows us ‘to fail to recognise...our own demons’ (*Plagiarism* 187). As we shall see, ‘race’, aptly described by Hall as a ‘floating signifier’, and intertwined with questions of hybridity and nation, persists as a South African demon, emerging in the plagiarism debates concerning *Heart* and *Country*.

**2.4 *Theories of Authorship***

Frequently in discussions of plagiarism, opposed to an allegedly Romantic conception of authorship is one described as postmodernist and intertextual. Thus novelist and academic Barbara Adair, in a piece in which she critiques the terms of debate used in the Krog Watson affair (which she sums up as ‘Did she or didn’t she? A thief or not a thief? An honest writer of integrity or a dishonest plagiarist?’), claims that the question that needs to be asked is ‘Can a writer ever do anything that is unique and original?’. She goes on to rebuke critic Shaun de Waal for only briefly touching on postmodernist literary theory in his comment on the affair, asserting that de Waal

appears to be writing this with gritted teeth. ‘Do I have to put this in?’ you imagine him asking his editor. ‘I am a romantic, I believe in the inspirational powers of the imagination of a genius’.

Although Adair states that the Krog-Watson affair ought to raise the question of whether the artist can produce anything new, she closes the matter by providing, in the same piece, a firm answer: ‘there are only a limited number of so-called unique combinations, if there ever were any at all, and they have all been taken. Stylistic or even word innovation is not possible’. In a self-knowing gesture, Adair then goes on to repeat, without citation, Barthes’s famous assertion in ‘The Death of the Author’ that the text is ‘a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’ as well as Julia Kristeva’s celebrated statement, in ‘Word, Dialogue and the Novel’ that every text is a ‘mosaic of quotations’. Adair raises these claims to the status of axiomatic truths rather than seeking to contextualise them, to gesture at their own historicity. She does, however, attach her own name (which performs the act of signature) to her article, thus grounding and contextualising her own piece.

Adair’s short piece makes a series of sweeping claims, as she seeks to identify a concern with culpability with a concern with ‘the transcendent poet’ and individuality, and then to locate a concern with individuality in modernity, described as having its ‘root ideology’ in capitalism. Having thus located these ideas, and cast them as contingent, she can presumably dismiss their valency. In this view of history, the present always takes precedence and the past is simply superseded. If something can be fixed to a particular period, it can be demystified, its power explained away rather than simply contextualised. Readings which simply locate the idea of authorial originality in the rise of copyright law suffer from a similar historicism.

‘The Death of the Author’, alluded to by Adair, is frequently referred to in discussions of plagiarism, as is the notion of intertextuality. Somewhat ironically, the essay itself is not granted much scrutiny, its argument only cursorily gestured to, as if Barthes’ authorship were enough to grant it authority. ‘Intertextuality’ is often referred to in a similarly off-hand manner. It is worth briefly considering Barthes’ influential essay and its context, including the coining of the term ‘intertextuality’ by Kristeva, who attended Barthes’s seminars in the late 1960s. Kristeva was led to the notion of intertextuality through her study of Bakhtin and his notion of dialogism. Kristeva takes from Bakhtin the idea that language is situated historically, and should be read as such, and that texts can engage multiple signifying systems. For Kristeva, ‘translinguistic’ doubleness ‘situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them’ (qtd. in Friedman 147). According to Kristeva, any text ‘is the absorption and transformation of another’ (‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’ 66), a ‘permutation of texts, an intertextuality’ (‘The Bounded Text’ 36).

In ‘The Death of the Author’, Barthes proposes a way of reading that is a corrective to author-centred criticism, with its desire to verify and ascertain the author’s intentions, and match meaning to them, on the understanding that the text is a ‘line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning" (the "message" of the Author-God)’ (128). Barthes proposes instead that the text is a 'multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings…blend and clash' (128). Crucially, Barthes’s essay was informed by advancements in linguistics; what he proposes is a view of language as performative rather than simply representative[[5]](#footnote-5). Barthes notes that the ‘I’ is a discursive position which the subject temporarily occupies when speaking (1323). Barthes consequently declares of the writer who wishes ‘to *express himself,* [that] he ought at least to know that the ‘thing’ he thinks to ‘translate’ is itself only really a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely’ (1324). There is no such thing as ‘original’ expression, only iteration. (As we shall see, Barthes’s essay is pertinent to considering both Krog and Mda – in *Country*, Krog is determined to tell ‘*my* truth’ [170; original emphasis]; for Mda, the writer is a ‘god’ in the text.) ‘The Death of the Author’ is an expressly, self-consciously hyperbolic essay, a manifesto of sorts. Barthes’s essay opens up new ways of reading, and provides a theoretical basis for this approach. But it risks a certain grandiose indifference to the material conditions of authorship, and an ahistoricism. In some ways, Barthes furnishes his own limit to the reading by installing the reader in the Author’s place – asserting that all meaning might instantaneously cohere, or find an anchor, in the reader.

 In his essay ‘What is an Author?’, Foucault offers a tacit engagement with, and corrective to, Barthes’s somewhat transcendental approach in ‘The Death of the Author’, insisting on the persistence of the ‘author function’. As Randall writes,

in contradistinction to the particular author that Barthes sees as having died, the function of *authorship* is a historical constant that refers to the capacity of particular writers, or perhaps designated communities of writers in historical contexts, to appropriate the attributes of authority, authenticity and originality – a capacity that varies and is displaced over time. (57)

As Randall argues, ‘the reality of contemporary accusations of plagiarism attests to the durability of the attributes of the author: especially to the authority, authenticity, and originality that define authorship both as a privilege as a transhistorical function’ (39). Even while contemporary critics might eschew hagiographical author-centered literary criticism, authors continue to enjoy celebrity. The scandal provoked by plagiarism attests to this. Foucault’s account of authorship is particularly useful in trying to grapple with plagiarism – both as a literary phenomenon (a Foucauldian reading allows for a consideration of plagiarism as a contestation of authorial power, rather than merely the general condition of all writing, as in Barthes) – and as subject of scandal (Foucault allows us to take seriously continuing notions of authorial authenticity brought under pressure by allegations of copying by established authors).

**3. CHAPTER OUTLINES**

**3.1 *Chapter One – ‘White Writing and the Annals of Plagiarism’***

The first chapter begins by discussing the dispute between Watson and Krog over their respective uses of the |Xam narratives in the Bleek-Lloyd archive.Michael Wessels has provided a clear and detailed overview of the exchange between Krog and Watson regarding the Bleek and Lloyd archive and the various criticisms they level at each other, and many of the comments I make endorse his observations, following his skilful negotiation of the intricacies of the dispute. In particular, I wish to pick up on and extend Wessels’s contention that both Krog and Watson, in their treatment of the |Xam narratives subscribe to what Derrida calls in *Of Grammatology* ‘a metaphysics of presence’

 Elwyn Jenkins, in his article ‘San Tales Again’, has also considered the debate between Krog and Watson. Jenkins contextualises the dispute by noting that most of those who adapt the |Xam narratives do not acknowledge their predecessors. Here I extend Jenkins’ consideration of appropriations of the |Xam narratives in the Bleek and Lloyd collection to a broader history of appropriations by white authors of indigenous Khoisan literatures and the way such appropriations are put to different uses. As we shall see, the Khoisan narratives that are collected and reproduced in collections of folktales and in early travel accounts are frequently plagiarisms of previous publications, but presented as first-hand, oral accounts; in a recurrent trope they are described as from ‘the lips of natives’. In Chapter Two, we see how Krog’s use of what she calls ‘the black voice’ helps to authorise, or lend power, to her own voice, building on the idea of the authenticity of that which comes from ‘the lips of natives’. The consideration of colonial appropriations and representations of indigenous African lore and customs in Chapter One also helps to lay the groundwork for a discussion, in Chapter Three of Theophilus Hahn, one of Bleek’s circle, whose work, I suggest, informs Mda’s, and his own somewhat problematic representation of African authenticity.

Chapter One also offers a brief outline of various post-apartheid plagiarism scandals which have caught the attention of the media but which are not considered in this thesis with the same in-depth focus as *Heart* and *Country*. It is against the backdrop of these plagiarism scandals that Watson framed Krog’s transgressions, writing her into what he called ‘the annals of plagiarism’, described by him as comprising a ‘local, extra-literary tradition’ (‘Annals 48’). Watson classed Krog with contemporaries Darrow Bristow-Bovey and Pamela Jooste, both accused of plagiarism, and asserted that South African writers had ‘lately become adepts in the arts of plagiarism’ (48). I suggest that both Watson and Krog’s adaptations form part of a much longer history of white appropriations of indigenous literatures, and that this tradition is not merely ‘local’, but shaped by global constructions of Africa, and of the idea of a single dominant centre from which the local always seems secondary, in effect ‘plagiarised’.

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**3.2 *Chapter Two – ‘Forging a New South Africa: The ‘Black Voice’ in Antjie Krog’s* Country of My Skull’**

The second chapter takes as its starting point Krog’s alleged plagiarisms in *Country*. In ‘Hospitality in Karel Schoeman’s *Promised Land* and Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull*’ (2008) Kissack and Titlestad argue that Krog’s appropriation of academic texts by Elaine Scarry and by Isobel Hofmeyr, and their transposal into the mouth of a pseudonymous black Xhosa intellectual, constitute a questionable type of ventriloquism, and express their ‘reservations about the practice of the fictional masking of a white female academic as a “Xhosa intellectual” (75). In ‘Accountability, Acknowledgement and the Ethics of "Quilting" in Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*’ (2006) Harris discusses Krog’s acts of borrowing in relation to her project of creating a national ‘quilt’ of voices in *Country*. In her discussion of Krog’s trope of the ‘quilt’, Harris turns to Leon de Kock’s notion of the ‘seam’, ‘a site of a joining together that also bears the mark of the suture’(de Kock, ‘South Africa’ 276). De Kock argues that ‘it is highly problematic to shift from the first-person singular to the first-person plural when talking South African—to move from ‘‘I’’ to ‘‘we’’ or ‘‘us’’’ (272). A poetics of the seam marks this attempt to ‘suture’ the gap between ‘I’ and ‘we’, the seam marking the ‘crisis’ of its own inscription (276). Harris argues that Krog’s practice of ‘quilting’, her transposal of different texts into a single national ‘fabric’ is jeopardised by her erasure, or flattening out, of the ‘seam’, so that fragments cannot be traced to their origins. As Harris notes, there is the danger here of ‘effacing’ the traumatic past rather than ‘archiving it’ (51). Harris writes that

 the danger of the trope of the quilt, then, as opposed to de Kock's more sophisticated notion of the seam, is that in its "flattening-out" and universalising, of individuals' voices and testimonies, as well as its muddying of the distinctions between genres, the mark of the suture which traces, in this instance, traumatic histories - the *scar* - is erased. The invisibility of the suture and/or the scar leads to the problem of re-enacting the discursive erasure of the traumatic past... Thus, while the trope of quilting might seem an appropriate one to represent the multiple voices, perspectives, and versions of the past in post-apartheid South Africa, like all national metaphors of reconciliation, it is in danger of effacing, rather than archiving, the traumatic past. (50–51).

Harris contends, correctly I think, that Krog’s erasure of her literary borrowings, her recasting of them, is ethically questionable, and is right to draw a link between Krog’s creation of a national fiction and her erasure of literary origins or contexts. In the chapter on Krog I extend the work done by these critics by more closely considering Krog’s use of testimony from the TRC hearings on human rights violations, arguing that she fictionalises some testimonies. Their citation as documentary, rather than fictionalised, creates a series of errors, or a sense of dizzying disorientation, as critics build their own interpretations on these testimonies. As we shall see, even Harris, sceptical of Krog’s methods of attribution, in her critique of Krog quotes testimony in *Country* to support her argument, not realising that the relevant quotation is Krog’s invention. These fictionalisations of testimonies, or ventriloquisms, I argue are directly related to Krog’s borrowings. Krog’s alteration of testimony I suggest constitutes a type of ventriloquism that is continuous with her plagiarisms in that both demonstrate an usurpation of the voice of the other in the service of a particular, romanticised conception of poetry that has a specifically nationalist affiliation.

**3.3 *Chapter Three – ‘(Dis)avowals of Tradition: Forging a Usable Past in Zakes Mda’s* The Heart of Redness’**

The third chapter deals with the debate concerning Mda’s use of Peires’s history *The Dead Will Arise* in *Heart*; I first consider Mda’s use of Peires, and Offenburger’s argument concerning it. In the second half of the chapter, I consider Mda’s use of Khoikhoi tradition, as mediated by his mother. Mda claims that there is no previous print record for the Khoikhoi stories he relates in *Heart*, and that his source for them is the oral lore of his mother’s people (‘Justify the Enemy’). I point out that there is such a record, namely Hahn’s *Tsuni-//Goam*, and explore how the stories retold in Hahn and Mda compare to each other.

 There has been no academic consideration of Mda’s alleged borrowings from Peires beyond Offenburger’s initial article in which he accused Mda of plagiarism and Mda’s response to Offenburger. Presumably this is partly because Offenburger’s claim of plagiarism was to some degree spurious – after all, Mda does acknowledge Peires – and because critics had already considered Mda’s use of Peires. As Offenburger notes (174), Andre Brink writes that Mda, reliant on Peires, does not fully re-imagine the cattle-killing. Meg Samuelson has offered a trenchant critique of the gender politics of *Heart* which argues that Mda’s reliance on Peires is a weakness in his reinterpretation of the cattle-killing (*Remembering the Nation: Dismembering Women*). Offenburger suggests that Mda’s plagiarisms cannot be considered as akin to those of Ouologuem and Beyala, with whom he groups Mda, all three read primarily as authors of ‘postcolonial African literature’ (174). I suggest that Miller’s reading of Ouologuem’s plagiarism as enacting symbolic violence helps to illuminate how we might read Mda. I also contextualise Mda’s borrowings from Peires within a long history of plagiarism and appropriation in retellings of the cattle-killing (while Offenburger notes the overlap of history and fiction in the historiography of the cattle-killing, he does not touch on these appropriations). Here I draw heavily on the archival work of Jennifer Wenzel, who in her book *Bulletproof: Afterlives of Anticolonial Prophecy in South Africa and Beyond* (2009), traces the many literary permutations of the story of the cattle-killing. As Wenzel notes, the story of the cattle-killing has from the start been curiously marked by plagiarism, ventriloquism and various contestations of authorial voice (37).

# CHAPTER ONE

# WHITE WRITING AND THE ANNALS OF PLAGIARISM

## 1. THE ‘ANNALS OF PLAGIARISM’: ANTJIE KROG, STEPHEN WATSON AND THE BLEEK AND LLOYD COLLECTION

This chapter takes as its starting point a highly publicised dispute between Antjie Krog and Stephen Watson about their respective adaptations of indigenous |Xam testimonies from the Bleek-Lloyd collection. In a review essay of *the stars say ‘tsau’,* Krog’s collection of poems adapted from the |Xamnarratives, Watson declared that the book ­– which he contended stole from his own similar collection, and dishonoured the legacy of the |Xam, and of Lloyd and Bleek – belonged to the ‘annals of plagiarism’. These annals, he claimed, comprised a ‘local, extra-literary tradition’ (‘Annals’ 48), and he placed Krog’s work together with that of contemporary post-apartheid writers Darrell Bristow-Bovey and Pamela Jooste, both of whose work had recently been subject to plagiarism allegations. In this chapter I contextualise Watson’s allegations against Krog, arguing that what Watson calls the ‘annals of plagiarism’ have a much longer history than he suggests. Indeed, the debate between Krog and Watson over the legacy and ownership of the Bleek and Lloyd collection calls up a lengthy history of transcription, translation and adaptation of Khoikkhoi and San narratives in which anxieties about originality, plagiarism and authenticity recur. As we shall see, indigenous literatures are frequently mobilised towards political ends – notably the securing of the teller’s own authority – and their retellings and adaptations are marked by remarkably persistent tropes (concerned with authenticity, originality and ownership) – particularly the figure of stories being taken down directly ‘from the lips of natives’; of indigenous lore being the natural inheritance of every ‘child’ to have grown up in Africa, itself pictured as a cradle or ‘nursery’ of mankind, and thus its literatures the ‘common property’ of all; and of there being ‘always something new out of Africa’ . What is more, the same set of tropes, and anxieties, emerge in the post-apartheid texts discussed in this thesis. By retracing the material and textual continuities that subtend the division between ‘new’ and ‘old’ South Africa(s) – continuities that have been obscured by the inscription of the new – this first chapter, I hope, lays the groundwork for providing illuminating historical contextualisation for the alleged borrowings of Krog in *Country of My Skull* and Mda in *The Heart of Redness.*

### *The Bleek and Lloyd Collection*

At the heart of the Bleek and Lloyd collection are some 138 notebooks of *kukummi*[[6]](#footnote-6) transcribed by Bleek, a German philologist based at the Cape, and his sister-in-law, Lloyd, from a group of |Xam narrators in the 1870s, chief among them |A!kúnta (Klaas Stoffel), Diä!kwain (David Hoesar), |Han≠kass’o (Klein Jantje), ||Kabbo (Oud Jantje Tooren) and Kweiten-ta-||ken (Griet) (Twidle 20). In its most rudimentary form, the story of the archive runs as follows. In 1870, Bleek, then the curator of Sir George Grey’s library in Cape Town, arranged for |Xam convicts from the Breakwater prison to live at his home in Mowbray so that he might interview them for his philological research. Bleek devised a|Xam orthography, and he and Lloyd, his sister-in-law, proceeded to take down numerous *kukummi* from the |Xam narrators who resided with them over the following years; each would transcribe narratives in |Xam on one side of a notebook and on the other would render an English translation. Lloyd is responsible for two-thirds of the notebooks; of the 138 notebooks only 28 are Bleek’s, even though it is his name which is generally associated with the collection. Bleek died in 1875, but Lloyd continued collecting material and also worked at the Cape Library, editing the material collected by Bleek and herself, until she was replaced by Theophilus Hahn (who will be discussed later in this chapter). Lloyd, after considerable struggle, succeeded in having some of the narratives published, in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (1911). She also saw to the publication of George Stow’s *The Native Races of South Africa: A History of the Intrusion of the Bantu and the Hottentots into the Hunting Grounds of the Bushmen, the Aborigines of the Country* (1905), the manuscript of which she had bought from Stow’s widow[[7]](#footnote-7). After Lloyd’s death, Dorothea Bleek continued the work of her father and aunt, and went on to publish various fragments of the material collected by them, as well as her own research. The collected researches of Lloyd, Wilhelm and Dorothea Bleek, and George Stow make up the present day Bleek-Lloyd collection, housed at the University of Cape Town.

*Specimens,* and latterly the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks (which until 1973 were considered ‘lost’[[8]](#footnote-8)), has been the most useful resource for those interested in the |Xam, and often for those interested in San cultures more generally. Arguably, the Bleek-Lloyd collectionhas shaped representations and interpretations not just of the |Xam, but of the San per se. The work of Bleek and Lloyd, together with that of Stow has also been instrumental in the figuration of the Bushmen as exemplars of what might be called ‘native authenticity’, and they are, according to the colonisers, conveniently, the ‘authentic’ natives – resident in Southern Africa before the ‘Bantu’ (the term was coined by Bleek [Banks 27]). Both Stow and Bleek elevate the Bushman above the Bantu. As has often been pointed out, the description by white settlers and colonists (such as Stow) of the Bushman as the true ‘aborigines’ of South Africa clears the way for black and white inhabitants of South Africa to appear equally belated. It is also, as is often noted, only once Bushman resistance had effectively been destroyed, and they no longer posed a significant threat, that they became objects of romance, rather than hatred and violence, to white South Africans[[9]](#footnote-9).

The Bleek-Lloyd archive, and the scene of exchange that gave rise to it, has received increased prominence in the last twenty years, with a number of scholarly, popular and creative works addressing and responding to it. Only fairly recently, with work by Andrew Banks, Michael Wessels and Shane Moran, have the *kukummi* come to be treated as *texts*, shaped by their contemporary, colonial contexts, rather than windows into a ‘prehistoric’ way of life, or indeed the San ‘mind’. As Banks argues, there are significant differences between the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks; each has shaped the notebooks and narratives – in terms of language and content – according to their differing authorships. (Like the transcripts of testimonies from the TRC, the *kukummi* are shaped by the questions asked, the contemporary setting, and any number of contexts.) Banks also argues that Bleek’s notebooks are skewed by his specific interests as a philologist and hence there is an overdetermined focus in those notebooks on myth (158), a bias which, Wessels suggests, has shaped the reception of San culture generally. Most readers and interpreters of the narratives have, Wessels notes, tended to overemphasise aetiologies and ‘creation myths’ (*Bushman Letters* 69). Bleek’s own concern with aetiology was typical of his era and the contemporary discipline of philology, concerned both with the origins of language and with the origins of humankind, to which language, presumably, would provide a clue. Bleek’s *Essay On the Origins of Language* (1867 in German, 1869 in English ), in which he sets out his theory of language, is one of innumerable essays of the European eighteenth- and nineteenth-century so named, probably the most famous being those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1750), Herder (1770), Jacob Grimm (1851), Ernest Renan (1848)[[10]](#footnote-10).

As Robert J. Thornton has shown, Bleek’s work was substantially influenced by German romantic nationalism, and he subscribed to the Herderian idea of language, race and nation as an organic whole, although sometimes tempted by the more ‘radical’ idea that these might in fact be more disparate (2). Bleek formed part of an international network of scholars whose concern with ideas of origins overlapped with theories of race and natural history; his cousin was the zoologist Ernest Haeckel (who wrote the preface for Bleek’s *Essay on the Origins of Language*), and he corresponded with Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, Max Müller, and Charles Lyell, among others (Wessels 178-79). As has been pointed out by various scholars[[11]](#footnote-11), the ‘science’ of philology was bound up with emergent discourses of race and the work of empire. Bleek’s work, then, has a curious legacy. While his work on |Xam is justly celebrated, his ideas about race, as Saul Dubow has shown, also contributed towards the development of scientific racism in South Africa (*Scientific Racism* 78-81), and the justification of white domination.

Comparative philology was split into at least two camps – one arguing for a common origin for various human ‘races’, the other for disparate origins. Either way, philologists generally subscribed to evolutionary hierarchies, wherein the Bushman was figured as among the most primitive, or ‘childlike’. For Bleek, the San were defined partly in relation, and contradistinction, to the ‘Bantu’; the crucial distinction between the San and Khoikhoi (referred to by him as Hottentots) on the one hand, and the ‘Bantu’ races on the other, was that the Khoikhoi and the San, as speakers of sex-denoting languages, were of a distinctively ‘poetic’ mindset, whereas the ‘Bantu’, apparently, were prosaic. For Bleek, the San were ‘poetical in their ideas, with an extensive mythological traditionary literature’ (‘Dr. Bleek's Report…1871’ 435), while the ‘Bantu’ were ‘eminently prosaic in their ideas and literature’ (‘Dr. Bleek's Report…1871’ 435; see also ‘Report Concerning Bushman Researches… 1873’ 444-45). For Bleek the ‘poetic’ is allied with the ‘mythological’ and this poetical mindset is enabled by the grammar of their language, or, rather, his suppositions about it. Bleek’s theory held that only sex-denoting languages enabled mythic thought, but this was challenged by the evidence of |Xam, which is a genderless language. Bleek’s suggestion was that |Xam had ‘*lost* its sex-denoting qualities’ (‘Report Concerning Bushman Researches… 1873’445; my emphasis). In *The Native Races*, Stow repeats Bleek’s idea that sex-denoting languages enable poetic and mythological thought, declaring that the Bantu are

almost entirely devoid of the myth-forming faculty, and possess hardly any myths or true fables, excepting where, by contact with sex-denoting languages, these have, to small extent, been adopted from the latter. (17)

 If the Bantu are without an indigenous claim to the land, as argued by Stow, who believed the ‘stronger races’ without exception to have expropriated what was the land of the Bushmen, they are also, it would appear, in the view of Bleek and Stow, without a ‘traditionary mythological literature’ which might ensure a claim to such land. Stow himself suggests that representation, acts of local inscription, might perform ownership when he declares that the Bushman rock paintings are their ‘title deeds to the country’ (qtd.in Skotnes *Unconquerable Spirit* 14).

Given the racially marked way in which the |Xam were categorised as ‘poetic’ by Bleek, and conscripted by Stow into what can be read as a justification for the violent white expropriation of black-occupied territories, it is striking that adaptations of the *kukummi* have without exception been by white writers, and that they most often take the form of verse[[12]](#footnote-12). Most poets who adapt the *kukummi* show little reflexivity concerning this legacy, or regarding questions of property and appropriation more generally. Indeed, Watson, in his critique of Krog, is quick to dismiss ‘property fundamentalism’ (‘Annals’ 57-58). It was somewhat surprising, then, when Watson took such umbrage at Krog’s alleged appropriation of both his work and Lucy Lloyd’s. Let us consider the debate between Watson and Krog, before resituating it in a wider historical context.

## *‘The Annals of Plagiarism’: A ‘local, extra-literary tradition’*

Krog's alleged plagiarisms were announced in one of South Africa's largest weekly papers, the *Sunday Times*, on 19 February 2006. The news story was based on Watson’s article, shortly to be published in *New Contrast*, a local literary journal. In his article, titled ‘The Annals of Plagiarism: Antjie Krog and the Bleek and Lloyd Collection’, Watson takes to task Krog's *the stars say ‘tsau’: |Xam Poetry of Dia!kwain, Kweiten-ta-||ken, |A!kunta, Han#kass'o, and ||Kabbo* (2004), a selection of poems described by her as ‘selected and adapted’ from the Bleek and Lloyd archive (‘Stephen Watson’ 72) .

Watson critiques Krog’s volume for the quality of its poetry, for its use and representation of the Bleek and Lloyd collection and of the |Xam narrators, and for what he argues is her unacknowledged use of his own, earlier volume of poetry derived from that collection, *Return of the Moon: Versions from the |Xam* (1991). Watson declares that Krog’s book belongs to a *local* and ‘*extra-literary*’ tradition of ‘plagiarism’ – writing her into its ‘annals’ (and thus into history rather than a supra-historical literary canon). He accuses Krog of ‘filching’ from him, passing off the linguistic translations of Lucy Lloyd as her own ‘poetry’, and more generally of ‘authorial deceit’ (‘Annals’ 57). He appends to his discussion of *the stars say ‘tsau’* an instance of what he claimed was plagiarism by Krog of a 1976 essay, ‘Myth and Education’, by the late English poet laureate Ted Hughes in her book *Country of My Skull*. Although the contentious passage in *Country of My Skull* was incorporated with a flourish, sealing, as proof, his general contention that hers was a ‘plagiaristic spirit’ (‘Annals’ 50), it was not news. Robert Kirby had made the same observation the year before, in a column in the *Mail & Guardian* (‘Cheats’) which had not elicited any public response from Krog, or caused much discussion in the print media. [[13]](#footnote-13)

The claims in Watson’s article, on the other hand, caused a national media controversy, spilling out across the *Sunday Times*, the *Mail & Guardian* and the literature website *Litnet,* and even made international news – being reported in the *Guardian*. On the day of the *Sunday Times* article, Krog posted a response on *Litnet* (later reprinted in *New Contrast*)in which she furiously denied the allegations. Regarding *the stars say ‘tsau’*, she asserted that Watson accusing her of plagiarising him was like ‘having Walt Disney studios accuse one of plagiarism for making poems out of the stories of the Brothers Grimm’ (‘Stephen Watson’ 72). For Krog, the Bleek-Lloyd archive was a common national legacy (akin to the folklore collected by the Grimms), to which Watson did not have exclusive rights. In the course of her argument she pointed to her own credentials as a South African – specifically her knowledge of ‘more than one South African language’ ‘unlike Watson’ (72) – in turning to these archives and seeking to make them more widely known. In so doing, Krog implicitly raises the question of whether South Africans can claim a common cultural legacy, or of who has the right to draw on what ostensibly are South African heritages. The very ‘implication’ of ‘plagiarism’ of Hughes, she described as ‘absurd’ (74) and ‘ludicrous’ (75). Once again pointing to her South African identity, she asserted that Hughes in ‘Myth and Education’ was writing about a ‘particular’ type of myth that informed ‘the Western mind’ (74), whereas she was elaborating a home-grown insight prompted by her experiences reporting on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Krog’s alleged plagiarism in *Country of My Skull* will be returned to in the following chapter. For the moment, I will focus on Watson’s allegations concerning *the stars say ‘tsau’*, and the local tradition of plagiarism to which he consigned it.

Watson’s denunciation of Krog fed into a wider national debate about plagiarism, by picking up on, and referring to, two previous allegations of plagiarism which had caused a rucus in the South African press, though not to quite the same extent. Watson prefaces his critique of Krog with the statement that

A few years ago there was the Darryl Bristow-Bovey affair; it has been followed by others, most recently the case of the novelist Pamela Jooste quietly pillaging whole paragraphs from articles by the Wits academic, Lindsay Bremner, and using them in her latest novel. (‘Annals’ 48)

It is worth briefly examining these plagiarism ‘affairs’, with which Watson associates Krog’s alleged improprieties, claiming that they should be classed together.

In July 2003, popular satirical columnist Darrell Bristow-Bovey was accused by Rob Boffard, a student intern at the *Saturday Star,* of having plagiarised Bill Bryson’s *Notes from a Big Country* (1998), a collection of columns on American life, in his book *The Naked Bachelor* (2002). Bristow-Bovey at first denied intentionally copying Bryson, claiming he had a very good memory and that any repetition was accidental (qtd. in Boffard, ‘Darrel’). A few months later Bristow-Bovey admitted to plagiarising from Bryson, saying he regretted it deeply: ‘I was foolishly careless, and I regret it deeply’ (qtd. in Krüger 73). A few days later, though, he produced a column for the *Cape Times* which borrowed from Jeremy Paxman’s book about English national identity, *The English: Portrait of a People* (1999). After this, Bristow-Bovey was forced to resign from his work as a columnist for *Business Day* and the *Cape Times*, although he resumed work as a columnist some time later. The Bristow-Bovey affair garnered a fair degree of publicity, presumably because of his popularity; the blurb on the back of a book of his columns, *But I Digress* (2003), describes his work as ‘among the most sparklingly original in South African journalism’. His originality might be related to his position as a columnist, a position which entails having a distinctive voice. Notably, one of the journalists reporting on Bristow-Bovey’s apology for plagiarising also framed the incident as of national relevance, noting, as if it were a matter of national pride, that ‘Bovey realises plagiarism is taken seriously in South Africa’ (‘Bristow-Bovey Pleads Guilty’). As Kevin Pask notes, not only are originality and distinction closely related criteria, but they are also bound up with the emergence of national literatures (727). That Bovey should borrow from two books concerned specifically with national attributes and transfer them to a South African setting suggests the behaviours described by Paxman and Bryson are not so quintessentially English or American, and is curiously apposite to the concerns of this project.

 In 2005, plagiarism again made the news. This time Pamela Jooste, a popular prize-winning novelist, was accused of lifting a 400 word piece from a *Sunday Times* article by academic Lindsay Bremner, and reproducing it in her novel *People Like Ourselves* (2003). Bremner’s article was one of a series written while she was *Sunday Times* Bessie Head writing fellow, working on her book *Johannesburg: One City, Colliding Worlds* (2004). As Charlotte Bauer notes, despite Jooste’s claims that Bremner’s article was ‘purely factual’, ‘Bremner's intensively researched articles were insightful, provocative, creative’. Both *Country of My Skull* and *People Like Ourselves* are published by Random House, and when their authors were accused of plagiarism, Stephen Johnson, the managing director of Random House South Africa, defended both Krog and Jooste in similar terms – choosing to protect the ‘reputation’ and assert the ‘integrity’ of each respectively.[[14]](#footnote-14) The implicit slippage between integrity of work and writer bears consideration, suggesting that a work’s worth is directly related to, reflective of, and validated by, the writer’s own moral authority. As Marilyn Randall notes, following Foucault, frequently a mimetic relationship is understood to exist between writer and work, so that the ‘authority’ of the two are interdependent (28).

 Jooste was unusual in that she offered a formal apology for the plagiarism, rather than denying the resemblance. Perhaps significantly, this was a caseof copyright infringement, with potential legal consequences. Although Jooste apologised, as she put it, repeating the language of her interviewer, ‘sincerely’, she detracts from this by going on to belittle the offence and indeed Bremner’s piece:

I must say I feel myself to have been unfairly and harshly treated. The pieces I used were of minor descriptive nature only and had no impact on the book, the story line or the characters. When I apologised I also offered to have the pieces removed in any future edition because, as I say, it was clear to my publisher and indeed to anyone who had read the book, that such a deletion would not have affected the novel at all. (Interview with Loots)

Curiously, she offers to withdraw the material not because she believed her action to be wrong (which a sincere apology would suggest) but because it was negligible. Jooste also contended that Bremner’s piece, published in a national newspaper, was 'in the public domain' and thus 'susceptible to quotation without acknowledgement' (qtd. in Jacobson, ‘Top Novelist’). But as Mary Eileen West notes, Jooste does seem to acknowledge, in the same book as her plagiarism occurs, that her action is in some sense 'improper' – bizarrely, in *People Like Ourselves* a narrator notes that an article had been 'picked up off the wire, [and] reprinted with all proper acknowledgements' (qtd.in West 60).

In Jooste’s case, apology and admittance seem to blur – the latter enough to ensure the former. It is a dynamic curiously apposite to the post-apartheid (and post-TRC) scenario in which Jooste’s books gain their popularity. It was the ‘deep-fried sincerity’ of Jooste’s apology that Kirby attacked in his column, relating it to the apparent sincerity of her books, described by him as ‘spine-chilling accounts of how deeply she suffered watching the cruelties of apartheid take place’ (‘Darrel Bristow-Bovey’). Academic and novelist Michiel Heyns wrote to the *Mail & Guardian*in protest at Kirby’s column. As is often the case, blame was shifted from the person accused of plagiarism to the accuser: Heyns accused Bremner of having a ‘moral hissy fit’ (29). Heyns’s claims presented the opportunity for Kirby to drop into his own column, what – presented later, in Watson’s article – would create a far larger stir: that Krog had allegedly plagiarised from Hughes in *Country of My Skull* (‘Cheats’ 28). Kirby went on to ask, using a metaphor with a curious valency in the debates about Krog’s plagiarism which followed: ‘Only 15 words. Would Michiel Heyns therefore classify this as a case of Antjie Krog being only slightly pregnant?’ (‘Cheats’ 28).

Kirby also described plagiarism as a ‘new infection’ (‘Cheats’ 28). This metaphor of contagion would be used by other South African commentators on plagiarism: Fred Khumalo speaks of a ‘virus’, Claire Verstraete of a ‘cultural outbreak’[[15]](#footnote-15). (There is also a sense that the debate itself replicates like a virus – proliferating, or rather snowballing, amassing, as it goes). As Rebecca Howard points out, plagiarism is frequently described as an infection or virus (481). In fact, the word is used to describe the replication of viruses in scientific discourse too. At the heart of the metaphor of contagion is, arguably, fear *–* a fear of infectibility. This fear of contagion does suggest that ‘plagiarism’ – or, rather, what is, or has been, called plagiarism *–* in a very loose sense might be inherent to language use and literary creativity. All language use is metaphoric and intertextual, deriving its meaning from previous language use, in Bakhtin’s term, ‘hybrid’. Language is never wholly private or governable; in some environments this might be seen as threatening. The idea of plagiarism as contagious, produced by contiguity, was gestured to by Watson in his classing of Krog’s work together with that of Bristow-Bovey and Jooste and other unnamed ‘South African writers’ whom Watson describes as ‘adepts in the art of plagiarism’ (‘Annals’ 48).

The other affairs to which Watson presumably refers are those concerning Wilhelm du Plessis and Melanie Grobler, less well-known writers (especially the former), and incidents which, accordingly, garnered less media coverage. Wilhelm du Plessis’s Afrikaans short-story ‘Die Redding van Vuyo Stofile’ (1999) is aptly described by Helize van Vuuren as a South Africanisation of Bernard Malamud's 1954 short story ‘The Magic Barrel’ (‘Plagiaat, Navolging’). Du Plessis’s story purports to offer a view into Xhosa culture, transferring a parody of Jewish culture into a new South African setting. Du Plessis flatly denied ever having read Malamud's story (Geyer 96), but *Die Mooiste Liefde is Verby*, the book in which his short story was anthologised, was recalled by the publishers. Van Vuuren notes that simply by alluding to its origin, with a subtitle like ‘Malamud in Africa’, this might have been avoided (‘Plagiaat, Navolging’). But such an allusion would point to the way in which this was *not* a distinctively South African scenario, and, arguably, would detract from the story’s subject matter and its perceived originality, and indeed from the ‘originality’ and distinction of South African culture(s). As with Bristow-Bovey’s borrowings, we have stories ostensibly illustrative of a particular culture or nation transplanted into a new South Africa setting, and, certainly in the case of du Plessis, represented as illustrative of that culture.

Melanie Grobler, whose poem ‘Stad’ (‘City’), collected in her 2004 collection *Die Waterbreker* is a straightforward translation of Anne Michaels’ 1999 poem ‘There Is No City That Does Not Dream’ into Afrikaans, also denied plagiarism, saying that she could not remember whether she had read the poem. When confronted with the original, Grobler claimed that her lack of acknowledgement was unintentional, a matter of ‘negligence’ (qtd. in Breytenbach). Grobler's Eugène Marais Poetry Prize for the volume in which it had appeared was rescinded, and she voluntarily returned the cash-prize, and Tafelberg publishers placed an embargo on the book. Jacques van de Elst, chief executive of the body that awards the prize wrote to the sponsors of the award that ‘it is very difficult in an ocean of literature to identify alleged cribbing from a remote literature such as the Canadian’ (qtd.in Breytenbach). The fates of Grobler and du Plessis, or, rather, of their books, contrast sharply with those of better-known writers. Du Plessis, a creative writing student when he published ‘Die Redding van Vuyo Stofile’, has had no further literary career. As Geyer points out, less-established writers seem susceptible to harsher censure for their alleged plagiarisms (97). This tendency is noted also by Randall, who contends that less established writers are more likely to be censured because of the axiomatic idea that ‘great authors don’t plagiarise’ (28).

This, then, is the context in which Watson situated Krog’s alleged plagiarisms: as part of a tradition at once local and ‘extra-literary’. Although Watson goes on to mention instances of plagiarism by other, European, writers, he is careful, at the opening of his essay, to place Krog’s work in a local tradition of plagiarism. Further into his argument, he turns to the borrowings of Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Luigi Pirandello, Bertolt Brecht and Goethe (58). Krog is not to be admitted to this literary company. Watson seems to be in sympathy when he notes that ‘Pirandello, the Italian dramatist, lifted whole pages from other, distinctly lesser writers as and when he felt it necessary, i.e. useful to his purposes’ (58). The key here, what redeems Pirandello’s actions, is that those he lifts from are ‘lesser’. Watson turns to an argument articulated by American writer Malcolm Gladwell as to what marks the limit between acceptable and unacceptable (or ‘proper’ and ‘improper’) borrowing. The distinction he asserts, citing Gladwell, is between ‘borrowing that is transformative [which Gladwell considers acceptable] and borrowing that is merely derivative’ (58). Gladwell’s story is of being plagiarised from himself, but forgiving the transgressor because he believes the value of her work outweighs the gravity of the infraction. There is a certain irony in Watson drawing on Gladwell when he is so clearly unforgiving of what he deems is Krog’s misuse of him. But this is perhaps understandable, for by Watson’s logic, her use of him would only be justified if he were a ‘lesser’ poet than her. This he does not believe to be true, and he spends a considerable amount of time criticising the quality of her verse.

As Ashleigh Harris notes, Watson does not condemn plagiarism as an ethical infraction so much as an aesthetic one. Or, rather, he suggests that the ends might justify the means – an aesthetic triumph might redeem ‘shamelessness’ (58). In his introduction to *Return of the Moon*, Watson makes a similar argument for his own possible authorial transgressions: ‘if there is any excuse at all for one’s betrayals, it is to be found only in the type of end one seeks to achieve’ (11). For Watson, I will argue, these ends are universalising, entailing the transformation of the *kukummi* beyond the culturally specific into a seemingly universal realm that belies a certain ethnocentricity. Watson, translating them into English – a hegemonic *lingua franca* – aims to ‘disinter’ the poetic, and bring the dead to life (*Return* 13). The figure of disinterment presupposes that they have been long buried, and, indeed, Watson does not mention any of his own poetic predecessors. Watson is perhaps to a certain degree justified in this insofar as his was the first collection of the poems to work from the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks, rather than *Specimens*. Nevertheless, a number of his poems were derived from *kukummi* in *Specimens*, several of which had been versified by other writers.

 But, as we shall see, in *Return of the Moon*, Watson ignores local literary contexts and affiliates his work with a different, European literary tradition. Watson’s dismissive description in ‘The Annals of Plagiarism’ of plagiarism as a ‘local’ tradition comes to carry the sense of the colony as belated, derivative and secondary – after all, the implicit assumption is that, for there to be a local, extra-literary tradition, there must be, somewhere else, a great single literary tradition. In Watson’s critique, then, plagiarism and the local come to be interchangeable as terms of approbation (the plagiarisms of Brecht, Pirandello etc are fine because, apparently, artistically superior). As Leon de Kock notes, in a different context, ‘the study of South African literature’ has long been ‘stymied’ by ‘emotionally laden perceptions of local writing as being second-hand and “colonial” – derivative, imitative, presumptious, non universal’ (‘Naming of Parts’ 18).These descriptions – derivative, imitative etc – are also those traditionally attributed to plagiarism, when decried aesthetically. It is as if, from a certain perspective, plagiarism were the *de facto* condition of the colonised and colonial, and Watson consigns Krog (as it happens a figure of considerably greater international fame than him) to this sphere. Arguably, the appropriations of Krog and Mda (both second-language English speakers) are formed in response to this sense of local literatures as peripheral and secondary, and work to disrupt and reconfigure the sense of a single, and dominant, English-language literary tradition.

### *1.3* *Watson’s allegations of plagiarism in* the stars say ‘tsau’

 Watson’s focus, in ‘The Annals of Plagiarism’, on aesthetic criteria and hierarchies in adjudicating who may borrow from whom perhaps helps explain what is an anomaly in his own article, namely that the section regarding Krog’s use of Hughes is itself lifted verbatim from elsewhere, without acknowledgement. According to the *Sunday Times*, Watson said that he had learnt about Krog’s alleged use of Hughes from a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Jacobson, ‘Top Writers’ 5). (And Krog’s publishers noted that the allegation had already been made in a letter to her; Krog also wrote that she had been ‘confronted by a student known to Watson about similarities between these lines [the lines in Hughes] and my own work’ [‘Stephen Watson’ 74].) This is not quite true. Watson had been made aware of the alleged plagiarism by seeing a letter that I had written to Krog in which I pointed out her use of Hughes. I was not a student at UCT – and did not know Watson. An acquaintance, the writer Damon Galgut, hearing that I had encountered what seemed to be a plagiarism of Hughes by Krog asked if I would point out the passage to him as he had a friend who was a scholar working on Krog and who would be interested in this. I obliged, but on the condition that the scholar did not make the knowledge public until Krog had been informed. I therefore wrote to her and gave a copy of the letter (pointing out the passages and overlaps) to Galgut. No sooner had I received a response from Krog than Robert Kirby’s *Mail & Guardian* column appeared. I later discovered from Galgut – who apologised for the fact that my request that the alleged plagiarism not be made public before Krog had had a chance to respond had been ignored – that the scholar was Watson and that he had given the information to Kirby. While this was upsetting, the publication of Watson’s article was more so, because, most curiously, he simply lifted and transcribed my letter, even repeating an error (see the Appendix). Reading a section of the letter within Watson’s article – on plagiarism, ‘typing’ rather than ‘writing’ (56), and a lack of respect for sources – was uncanny. What little truth there was in his claim as to the source of his information was that I was a student, occupying a particular position – though not a student at UCT.

My reading of the article, then, was shaped by private knowledge, of the material context of Watson’s claims, which tended to disrupt its surface narrative (as we shall see, plagiarisms inevitably point towards such double readings and contradictions). It made Watson’s concerns about, or objections to, copying and a lack of respect for sources seem rhetorical and inconsistent – as if he was using the allegation of plagiarism less because it was an issue which concerned him generally than, as a highly charged term, a means to dethrone Krog – to contest her authority and assert his own. Even without the knowledge of Watson’s own copying, though, this becomes evident through closer reading of the article and the claims made in it, and his ambivalent attitude to plagiarism expressed in it. (Closer consideration also suggests that Krog and Watson are less different in their approaches than they might care to admit.)

Watson’s article, though it starts off as a review essay in which merely the book *the stars say ‘tsau’* is consigned to the ‘local and extra-literary’, moves to a broader condemnation of Krog’s status, closing with the image of her as ‘the pre-eminent copy-typist in contemporary South African letters’, ‘harboured’ by seemingly unwitting academics and the literary establishment (61). Although Watson declares that these academics could not have been aware of Krog’s ‘copy-typist’ credentials (61), ‘harboured’, with its suggestion of protection and complicity, acts as jibe and rebuke, spreading the scandal from Krog to a broader academic and literary community, in which Krog is held in considerable esteem.

How solid are Watson’s allegations of plagiarism in *the stars say ‘tsau’*, though? Watson’s description of Krog’s use of his work as ‘plagiarism’ in the sense of unacknowledged verbatim copying is weak (and complicated by their use of common sources), but he uses an example of verbatim copying in another text – *Country of My Skull* – to colour her work as generally ‘plagiaristic’ (50), deploying the definition of plagiarism as verbatim copying towards a general discrediting of Krog as writer. Watson also notes that she copies nearly ‘verbatim’ from Lloyd and Bleek, asserting that

Given the number of extracts in Krog’s book which run very close to being verbatim copies of the original records—nearly a half according to my count (and I have not checked them all)—it would be fair to say that much of this book is not an “adaptation” or any such thing. (56-57)

 Watson here pre-empts Krog’s defence that her work cannot be said to be plagiarism in that, even though reduplicating and changing little, she openly states her source and does not attempt to hide her verbatim repetitions (Krog states in her introduction that sometimes the *kukummi* presented themselves to her as poetry, in want of little change). Watson instead casts her description of the poems as ‘adaptations’ as a dishonest exaggeration of her authorial labour. Notably, Watson himself had been accused of self-aggrandisement in calling his poems ‘translations’ (Gagiano, ‘By What Authority?’ 169) and Krog, perhaps familiar with Gagiano’s criticisms of *Return of the Moon*, had not referred to her own poems as such.

It is true that, in its broad conception, Krog’s collection resembles Watson’s[[16]](#footnote-16)*.* And perhaps Krog would not have undertaken such a project, or produced such a collection, had she not first encountered Watson’s work. Moreover, the ways in which Krog differs from Watson suggest that she was familiar with critiques of *Return of the Moon* and had taken them into account. In her 1992 review of *Return of the Moon*, Annie Gagiano had noted that:

Missing from the cover of this book are the names of those three men, poignant witnesses to their vanishing culture, and one has to search for the information that the cover photograph actually depicts one of them. (‘Just A Touch of the Cultural Trophy Hunter’[[17]](#footnote-17))

As Krog asserts in her response to Watson:

The front cover of *Return of the Moon* bears only Watson's name. In contrast, on the cover of my book, the names of the people whose work was selected and adapted appear with mine. Unlike Watson's book, mine provides their photographs and a short biography of each. Unlike Watson's book, mine has never been presented as my own work, but as translations into Afrikaans and adaptations in English. (‘Stephen Watson’ 72-73)

She also notes a further way in which her work differs from Watson’s, ‘unlike Watson's all-male renditions, *the stars say 'tsau'* also includes the work of ||Kweiten ta|ken [*sic*], the sister of one of the four poets in my edition of Bleek and Lloyd’ (73). Krog, rather than acknowledging Watson’s claimed relationship of his work with her own, builds up her distance from Watson, and his accusation of over familiarity with his work, with the refrain ‘unlike Watson’.

 It seems it is Krog’s lack of acknowledgement of Watson as poetic predecessor that upsets him more than any alleged copying. Watson writes that he would view Krog’s use of *Return of the Moon* more kindly had she acknowledged the part his work played in the formation of hers; asserting that the offence is not in the alleged copying – ‘After all, one mark of a good idea is that more than one person (its discoverer) finds it useful and wants to recycle it’ – but that ‘the debt is never made public’ (49). But as Elwyn Jenkins notes, in *Return of the Moon* Watson himself had not acknowledged previous adaptations of the *kukummi*, andhis own lack of acknowledgement of previous adaptations (poetic or otherwise) helps clear the way for the claim of ‘concept theft’, the exaggerated claim that he is the ‘discoverer’ of an idea (49). Watson’s critique of Krog, then, served not just to de-authorise her work, but to reinscribe the originality of his own collection, and to draw renewed attention to it. ‘Plagiarism’, while a powerful charge, was arguably somewhat secondary to Watson’s grievances regarding Krog’s treatment of *Return of the Moon*. Krog homed in on this in her response, stating that the ‘fact that I didn’t give Watson the recognition he thinks he deserves does not make me a plagiarist’ (‘Stephen Watson’ 73).

While Watson contends that Krog is in ‘debt’ (49) to him, he is also sure to disaffiliate his project from hers, to assert the linguistic and poetic superiority of his work. A closer examination of the introduction to *Return of the Moon* suggests, though, that a number of criticisms he directs at her collection might be applicable to his own. Most obviously, although he is scathing of Krog’s lack of acknowledgement of his book, his own work, as noted, was similarly silent on previous adaptations of the *kukummi*. As Nèlleke de Jager, Krog’s publisher at Kwela Books, stated in her response to Watson’s allegation, there is ‘a long and complex history of the use of Bleek and Lloyd’s collections’ and the collections ‘have inspired a wide variety of publications’. De Jager suggested that the ‘earliest poetic interpretations of these texts are probably contained in the Penguin edition of *South African Verse*, compiled by Jack Cope and Uys Krige in 1968’. Krog in her response to Watson also mentioned adaptations by Eugène Marais, Arthur Markowitz and Alan James.

A writer who has gone unmentioned in the debate, but whose work, at least at one point, has direct overlap with Watson’s is expatriate South African academic and poet Peter Sacks, whom Watson thanks as a friend in his Acknowledgements. The title poem of Sacks’s *In These Mountains* (1986) includes a rendition excerpted from the celebrated *kum* ‘||Kabbo’s Intended Return Home’ (*Specimens* 299-317)[[18]](#footnote-18). Watson had discussed Sacks’s poem previously, praising it as ‘an authentic act of reclamation, a means through which a past that has been all but lost may be repossessed’ (*Selected Essays* 95). A fragment from Sacks’s rendition of ||Kabbo’s *kum* resurfaces in Watson’s ‘Prayer to the New Moon’ (*Return* 25): ‘Oh moon, give me the face/ with which you, having died, return’ (Sacks 51; Watson 25). The coincidence might be trifling, depending on one’s viewpoint, but, strikingly, Krog’s own adaptation of these lines is one singled out for ridicule by Watson in his review.

Somewhat similarly, Watson accuses Krog of copying his description of his work method in *Return of the Moon*, but this description, as van Vuuren has noted (‘Plagiaat? Appropriasie?’ 96-97), is itself reminiscent of Markowitz’s introduction to *With Uplifted Tongue* (1956). Some of the comments in Watson’s introduction also directly recall those made by the scholar Matthias Guenther in his 1989 book *Bushman Folktales: Oral Traditions of the Nharo of Botswana and the |Xam of the Cape*. While Watson cites Guenther in his Acknowledgments as, together with Roger Hewitt, an ‘indispensible guide’ (n.pag), he acknowledges him as scholar rather than a literary adaptor or fellow translator. Guenther had himself offered versions of fourteen previously unpublished *kukummi* in his book, though, and indeed had posed some of the same problems that Watson does concerning the translation of the *kukummi* for contemporary audiences and the stilted Victorianisms of the Lloyd and Bleek translations. As if to shore up both the authenticity of his ‘translations’ and the originality of his art, Watson cites only scholars, not other poet-adaptors of the *kukummi*, and provides a scholarly apparatus to the poems in the form of his introduction and endnotes[[19]](#footnote-19).

In his critique of Krog, Watson again stresses the scholarly. He is keen to insist that the |Xam narrators were not poets (as Krog refers to them) and that Bleek and Lloyd were scholars, invested in the literal rather than the literary. Noting Krog’s tendency to import odd syntactical constructions from the notebooks into her adaptations, Watson asserts that the

sometimes contorted syntax that appears in their [Bleek and Lloyd’s] English transcriptions of |Xam narratives is undeniably there because they were concerned, above all, with providing accurate *literal* translations. It was never because they laboured under the delusion, clearly entertained by Krog, that such contortions were actually a form of poetry, only waiting to be discovered in the twenty-first century. (‘Annals’ 53)

But in *Specimens* Lloyd herself listed some of the *kukummi* under the heading of ‘poetry’ and translated them accordingly. (The *kukummi* collected in *Specimens* are divided into two categories: ‘Mythology, Fables, Legends and Poetry’ and ‘History: Natural and Personal’.) Remarkably, Watson’s own collection does not mention Lloyd as an antecedent in this respect – he merely notes that ‘[m]ost of the transcriptions in the Bleek and Lloyd collections are not cast in verse forms’ (*Return* 16) and explains why he chose to render the *kukummi* as such, as a means of getting to the ‘poetic idea’ (16) in various narratives. (As such he redeems the literary from the literal, or transforms the latter into the former.)

Curiously, when he critiques one of Krog’s poems, ‘the broken string’, for being insufficiently transformative of the ‘original’, he contrasts it with a version which can be found in the notebooks[[20]](#footnote-20) (although Watson asserts it is in *Specimen*s), and not with the poetry version given by Lloyd in *Specimens*, ‘Song of the Broken String’ (236), with which Krog’s version is practically identical[[21]](#footnote-21). Watson writes that

In *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* there is a justifiably renowned extract, whose beginning, in the Bleek and Lloyd’s original translation into English, runs as follows:

The people were those who broke (took hold and broke)

 for me

the string/thong. Therefore, the place became/was like

 this to me

on account of it, because the string/thong was that which

 had broken

 for me. Therefore, the place (country) does not feel to

 me as the place

 (country) used to feel to me, on account of it. (*Return* 54)

But this ‘original translation’ is to some degree a composite of Watson’s own – the bits in parentheses and which follow the slashes are versions indicated as deletions (i.e. ruled through) in the notebooks. Perhaps Watson gives the version from the notebooks so as not to impugn Lloyd after his belittlement of Krog’s versification (here also Lloyd’s).Watson writes that ‘there is no rhythmical (i.e. poetical) logic determining the lineation adopted’ (54). (Watson is generally caustic about Krog’s allegedly ‘tin ear’ [52] for English – suggesting that she writes by the ‘“carriage-return” principle of poetry-writing’ [53], the work produced a simulacrum of poetry.)

Watson, stressing Lloyd’s interest in *literal* translation, appeals to the authenticity of the documentary and occludes the ‘literariness’ of her own approach. But as Wessels argues, *Specimens* should be seen as ‘nineteenth-century literature’. In so doing, Watson obscures the sense of Lloyd as a poetic predecessor and thus the sense that he might be working in the tradition of nineteenth-century literature, and reworking that (rather than participating in a cosmopolitan modernity). Given Watson’s own occlusion of Lloyd as literary predecessor (and the primary ‘translator’ – the word he uses to describe his own role), it is striking that he should pose his critique not as concerned primarily with Krog’s appropriation of his work, but of Lloyd’s: ‘Hers is a book which is even more blatantly stolen firstly from the |Xam informants and, above all, from Lucy Lloyd, W.H. Bleek’s co-worker who was responsible for transcribing the greater part of the Bleek and Lloyd archive’ (‘Annals’ 57). This is one of Watson’s most sound criticisms of Krog’s project – for, despite her concern for questions of gender indicated by the inclusion of a female narrator’s *kukummi*, Krog barely acknowledges Lloyd, whose immense contribution to the archive has only recently been acknowledged by scholars. But if it is true that Krog is working from Watson to frame her project, she could be construed as perpetuating his own blindnesses here in relation to Lloyd.

Watson is particularly scornful of Krog’s claim in the introduction to ‘*the stars say tsau’* regarding ‘the Afrikaans sub-structure of the material’, as evident in certain syntactical orderings (‘Annals’ 51). (Indeed, Krog had not only asserted that the |Xam testimonies had an Afrikaans ‘sub-structure’, but that this ‘made it easy’ for her ‘to identify with the original voices’ [*the stars* 10] of the |Xam speakers). According to Watson, this is an instance of fancifulness on Krog’s part, and he reinscribes the odd syntactical arrangements in the translation as

(Victorian) English translations that have nothing to do with Afrikaans syntax, and everything to do with the grammatical structure of the |Xam language—and, not least, with the fact that Bleek and Lloyd were philologists concerned above all with linguistic and historical accuracy. (52)

Krog’s response serves to bolster her authority by referring to her ‘eye-witness’ knowledge of the archival manuscripts, and at the same time to counteract Watson’s accusation of sloppy scholarship, and to cast aspersion on his own acquaintance with the manuscripts: ‘Unlike Watson, apparently, I have seen the original Afrikaans words and questions in the margins of the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts’ (73). As Banks has noted, Afrikaans was initially used as a mediating language between Lloyd and the narrators, although after a while she became proficient in |Xam and could translate more directly (180). Certainly, the narrators knew more Afrikaans (or Cape Dutch) than English.

 Notably, Krog also asserts in her rebuttal the influence on her of the Bushman poems of Marais – known as the first Afrikaans *volksdigter,* as if to stress the rightful place of the *kukummi* in Afrikaans literary tradition:

I grew up with the poetry of Eugène Marais who, in his book *Die skepbekertjie*, explicitly acknowledges Wilhelm Bleek as an inspiration for his famous free-verse Bushman poems...In fact, to bring the |Xam voices back into Afrikaans after so many years was the sole motivation for my initially undertaking the project. (72)

Krog thus responds to Watson’s allegation that she is in debt to him by placing her work in a distinctively Afrikaans tradition, and arguing that its genesis was in her desire to make a contribution to Afrikaans language and literature. (*The stars say ‘tsau’* is a translation by her of a simultaneously published Afrikaans volume, which had its genesis in a broader project of engaging with black African literary production, namely her 2002 collection *Met Woorde Soos Kerse*.) In this scenario, Watson’s work becomes less pioneering and formative than incidental, and her English book an after-effect of the Afrikaans work, rather than Watson’s project.

As Tom Eaton noted, the debate itself tended to pan out over English/Afrikaans lines, which Eaton satirised as a ‘cream pies’ versus ‘koeksisters’ slanging match (‘Koeksusters [*sic*]’ 5). All of this touches on more fraught language politics. Krog, in the wake of the allegations, took umbrage at a perceived English cultural arrogance, stating in an interview that

Party keer het ek die vermoede dat die Engelse gedink het as ons net hierdie boere uit die pad kan kry, kan ons ten einde laaste Engels vir onsself hȇ…Dis asof ek vasgevang sit in ‘n kolonial houding…Erens bestaan hierdie voortrefflike, netjiese, eerlike mense met hulle goeie fokken Engels. Hulle sal my nou op my plek sit.

(I sometimes suspect that the English think if we can just get this boer out of the way we will have English to ourselves… It's as though I were trapped by a colonial attitude … Somewhere there are these exemplary, impeccable, honest people with their good fucking English. They will put me in my place.) (‘Krog: “Met Hierdie Liggaam Is Ek”’ 15)

Significantly, Watson had ridiculed Krog’s mastery of English, claiming that her adaptations made the |Xam narrators sound like ‘rank beginners in some or other TEFL course’ (53). Gagiano, in her review of *Return of the Moon*,had described Bleek and Lloyd’s translations (on which Watson’s adaptations were partially based) as ‘Englished laboriously’ (‘Just A Touch’), the verb ‘Englished’ aptly suggesting a translation as much cultural as linguistic. Arguably, in Watson’s collection, a process of (cultural) ‘Englishing’, or perhaps ‘globalising’ or ‘universalising’ is extended. Certainly, he displayed a lack of self-reflexivity about his own position as white English-speaking South African in relation to the |Xam, and the collection bears the mark of his own (unreflected on) ethnocentrism . Let us consider the cultural sphere into which Watson translates the *kukummi*, and the rationale for his work as set out in his introduction to *Return of the Moon*.

### 1.4Return of the Moon*: Making it New*

The only fellow poets with whom Watson affiliates himself in the introduction to *Return of the Moon* are canonical twentieth-century Anglo-American figures – Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein and Robert Lowell. Suitably, the first three are exemplary figures of high modernism *–* for Watson’s project seems, in accordance with Pound’s famous credo, an attempt to ‘make it new’. It is their poetic battles with which he feels affinity rather than those of others who had worked on adapting the *kukummi.* Indeed, he specifically compares his task to Pound’s in translating Chinese poetry (in *Cathay*)with scant knowledge of the language or culture (*Return* 14). It’s an odd comparison to want to make, but seemly. As we shall see, Watson’s approach to poetry is high modernist – premised on a transcendental, universal poetic order, and a particular understanding of myth as one with poetry. Watson does not unequivocally state this; rather, it becomes evident through his comments on Pound and Eliot, and, in particular, his ascription of the |Xam to a vaguely ‘mythic’ realm, despite his disclaimer that he does not see the narrators as inhabiting some sort of ‘mythical-poetical Eden’ (16).

In his recounting of the destruction of |Xam society, Watson describes the |Xam as naturally inhabiting a ‘mythical’ dimension, but being forced out of this by colonial incursion. He identifies, via his reading of the *kukummi*, the sense of a clash between a ‘mythical’ and a ‘historical’ dimension (16): ‘the mythical being doomed to disintegrate and then vanish under the onslaught of historical forces’ (16). Here the |Xam appear to operate as contemporary man’s ‘primitive’ other, rather than coeval beings, in a logic of othering well described by Johannes Fabian in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983). The insistence with which Watson refers to the |Xam and the |Xam narratives as ‘fated’ and ‘doomed’ to silence is striking. This teleological and Hegelian scenario runs the risk of naturalising the destruction of the |Xam, as the inevitable product of ‘history’. Whereas history is doom-laden, condemning the *kukummi* to silence and obscurity, poetry (in which it is set in implicit opposition) revitalises.

As such, Watson claims to be able to infer from the *kukummi* a transhistorical ‘poetry’ that can be brought to life: ‘Above all, I have wanted to disinter this poetry, guided by a principle quite simple in all but practice: to make the dead live, to bring back to life’ (13). For Watson, the |Xam provide narratives from which a ‘poetic idea’ can be made to ‘speak’, seemingly across languages. Watson offers himself as a type of ventriloquist or spirit medium:

The |Xam believed that the dead spoke to the living. Without in any way believing that I, as a translator, could speak with the tongues of the dead in turn, I have tried to hear the words of Bleek and Lloyd’s three main informants – ||Kabbo, Dia!Kwain, |Han-Kasso – and create poems which work in the English language. (11)

There are echoes here of Eliot in ‘Little Gidding’: ‘the communication/ Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the/ living’ (Part I, lines 52-54), and, arguably, Watson is channeling Eliot here as much as any ostensibly universal poetic idea. The modernist idea of the universality of myth (and with it the availability for appropriation of any number of narratives from ‘primitive’ cultures as the common inheritance of all) not only goes unchallenged by Watson, but is ascribed by him to the |Xam. Watson claims of the |Xam that

It was through myth, above all, that they endowed the world with meaning and, moreover, forged that correspondence between human meaning and a presumed universal order that assuaged their deepest fears, their unanswerable needs. (19)

Watson presumes here for the |Xam – declaring that it is they who presume a ‘universal order’, hold a conception of such – but this is an assumption for which he provides no substantiation. In effect, he transposes onto the |Xam what appears to be his own understanding of poetry, with its ability to ‘speak’ across languages, culture and time to ensure universality. The verb ‘forged’ here is striking: connoting both craft and artistry, but also the misappropriation of an authorial signature, and authority. It occurs at the very moment when Watson himself effects a transposal of authority, finding in the allegedly ‘ancient’ ways of the |Xam validation for a ‘mythic’ worldview which is more properly a modernist construction than a |Xam one. One thinks of Stephen Dedalus, in Joyce’s *Portait of the Artist as a Young Man*, declaring that he goes forth ‘to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race’ (318). Joyce’s linking of ‘forging’ with the creation of a ‘racial’ – or ‘national’ – conscience is telling – for such awarenesses are things of art rather than nature (even if the figure of the ‘primitive’ appears to provide a proof of the ‘naturalness’ of such ‘ethnic’ ties). Watson’s reference to Eliot is apt for Eliot himself transposed ‘primitive’ ‘myth’ into his art, making particular use of James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (first published in 1890[[22]](#footnote-22)).

Watson’s allying of himself with a modernist poetics also serves to cast his work as new and original *–* at one point, Watson tellingly quotes Eliot to the effect that Pound, in *Cathay*, was the ‘inventor of Chinese poetry for our time’ (14). This suggests that the Chinese inhabit a different time, not ‘ours’. Indeed, Pound’s injuction to ‘make it new’ depends on a binary of old and new that objectifies contemporaries of ‘primitive’ cultures as remnants of a different time. By affiliating *Return of the Moon* only with *Cathay*, and making no mention of previous adaptations from *Specimens*, Watson reinforces the sense that he is ‘making new’ the *kukummi* and that he is working within a canonical, seemingly universal, but more properly European, literary tradition, bypassing South African adaptations, as if freakish deviations from a central evolutionary path.

### 1.5 *Storytelling as gift, weapon and commodity*

In *Return of the Moon,* Watson claims that there is no way of getting away from the fact that the *kukummi* are ‘doubly dead’ (11) and that one should resist the temptation to ‘exploit’ (17) the elegiac, thus giving the sense that the |Xam were concerned only with their impending doom, rather than that they were living beings telling of daily life (17). Watson does not directly confront the idea that he might be exploiting the suffering of the |Xam for his own gain by rendering it into poetry per se, but this is implicit (as we shall see Krog encounters similar issues regarding the poeticisation of TRC testimonies). Crucially, both Krog and Watson are confronted with the problem of trying to perform acts of elegy, but in relation to a people in whose destruction they are historically complicit. (That is, the dominance of their own position, historically, is premised on, or bound up with, the destruction of the |Xam.) As white South African authors, they cannot properly claim or accept – render as gift – what is bequeathed by their black counterparts, without appropriation.

Although Watson poses the double ‘deadness’ of the material as an impediment to his poeticisations, arguably whatever power his (or Krog’s) adaptations have is inextricable from the story of the |Xam’s destruction – in effect from their silence, and the paradoxical authority of their powerlessness. Moreover, Watson despite warning against the temptations of the elegiac, does overplay the elegiac and transformative power of poetry: the ability of poetry to make the dead ‘speak’. In his poem ‘||Kabbo Tells Me His Dream’ (68-69) Watson more or less follows the content of the *kum* described as ‘Jantjie Tooren Tells Me His Dream’, but where Lloyd records ||Kabbo as saying ‘I have been teaching here’ (Lloyd’s Book II-22 p. 1956), Watson has

“I have been teaching here, telling my stories

that others might know them, one day, from a book.”

I was telling her this – that I told our stories

that the stories might live, not die with my death. (*Return* 69)

In her preface to *Specimens,* Lloyd writes that ||Kabbo ‘much enjoyed the thought that the Bushman stories would become known by means of books’ (x). In Watson’s poem, the words are put directly into ||Kabbo’s mouth. Here Watson ascribes his idea of writing as ‘resurrection’ (and his intentions) to ||Kabbo, thus authorising the notion that ‘to translate is to resurrect *–* linguistically, literally’ (*Return* 13). Watson in effect construes himself as a rightful inheritor of the stories. (And ||Kabbo becomes, in effect, ‘possessed’ by Watson, a ventriloquist’s doll). (As we shall see, in *Country of My Skull*, Krog alters a piece of testimony given before the TRC Human Rights Violations hearings in a strikingly similar way, authorising her own appropriations as acts of elegiac reparation.)

For Watson, writing down the *kukummi* is a way of ensuring some sort of after-life for them (or indeed for the |Xam), but the complicity of ethnographic records, the English language, books and print culture more broadly, with colonialism and with the destruction of the |Xam, is erased. (As indeed is the mythicisation of San peoples, described by filmmaker John Marshall as ‘Death by Myth’ [the working title of what was released as *A Kalahari Family*], and by Robert Gordon in *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass.*) Watson states that he ‘does not pretend to any political role for myself. No series of poems could ever begin to right an historical wrong as total, irredeemable, as that inflicted on the |Xam’ (*Return* 20). But he also elides that his own role, or positionality, as a white English-speaking South African has a political dimension regardless. Such unchosen complicities are simply glossed over. He opposes the slightness of the poems to the totality of the destruction of the |Xam – making the matter one of scale, rather than querying whether writing really can be ‘redemptive’, or asking for whom it might prove so, who stands to profit from it.

Watson is not alone in the claims he makes for his appropriation of |Xam narratives. Indeed, Pippa Skotnes takes her cue from the same reference in Lloyd’s introduction. Skotnes, in *Claim to the Country*, a book in which she asserts that ||Kabbo’s wish to see the stories in books motivated her own work, posits print culture as a ‘gift’ from colonisers to colonised. She wonders what it was like for the narrators to ‘see them [the stories] inscribed in books – giving them a permanence that their own lives no longer had’ (73). She comments that ‘Jonathan Lear in his remarkable book *Radical Hope* suggests…that in a time of cultural collapse “the most important artifact the white man could offer the Indian – much better than guns – was writing and printing” (Lear 2006: 52)’ (73).

Skotnes points here to a pairing of guns and books, with their different (sometimes seemingly interchangeable) forms of violence and mastery, that recurs in South African writing. In I.W.W. Citashe’s famous poem ‘Zimkile!’ (1882) (discussed in the chapter on Mda), books and writing are understood as analogous to guns, as weapons. As we shall see in the chapter on *The Heart of Redness*, Mda, a Xhosa writer, responds more ambivalently to the legacy of the book and print culture, in a sense writing against it, trying to shift his story to a primary tradition of orality (through his own acts of textual violence). Plagiarism here acts as a type of symbolic or surrogate violence, a form of power, or even force; writing becomes weapon, a tool for (re)possession.

One of the most oft-adapted passages in *Specimens* contains a vignette in which writing – or rather storytelling – and guns are again set in implicit parallel, as objects of exchange. This is ||Kabbo’s celebrated *kum* titled ‘||Kabbo’s Intended Return’, the source of the much-recycled phrase ‘stories that float from afar’. In this *kum ||*Kabbo expresses his desire to return home, to his community, where he is able to share stories that ‘float from afar’, and notes that he awaits boots and a gun promised him by Bleek before he can set out home. As Moran notes, it is a *kum* with particular resonance in post-apartheid South Africa, concerned as it is ‘with belonging, home, property – what is closest to us’ (116). In her foreword to Brown’s *To Speak of this Land*, Krog describes the *kum* as one of ‘our country’s oldest stories’ (‘From ||Khabbo to Zapiro’ xiii), reading it as timeless, and inscribing it as foundational, rather than an individual’s story of his recent past (Walder 69). The phrase ‘stories that float from afar’ operates ambivalently, to suggest both difference – these are stories ‘from afar’, suggesting resistance to appropriation – and availability to appropriation (they ‘float’, and are not context-specific). The passage in which ||Kabbo utters these sentiments about stories floating from afar is often reproduced, but most often without the passage that immediately follows, in which he declares that those around him (most immediately, Bleek and Lloyd) do *not* possess his stories, despite their transcription of them. Near the close of his *kum*, ||Kabbo also states his desire for a gun, seemingly promised to him (together with a pair of boots) in payment for his tenure at Mowbray (‘Therefore, I lived with him, that I might get a gun from him; that I might possess it’ [*Specimens* 293]), and whose receipt he awaits. Here, the scene of the transcription of the *kum* can be read as an act of dispossession (entailing, as it does, keeping ||Kabbo at Mowbray, his promised payment of a gun, in exchange for his stories, being delayed), but ||Kabbo’s ‘giving’ of it, at the same time, as an act which registers resistance to the idea that the transcribers ‘possess’ the *kukummi* in a meaningful sense, despite transcribing them.

David Lewis-Williams, in his collection of stories adapted from the *kukummi,* *Stories That Float From Afar* (2002), is rare in discussing the trope of stories floating from afar within its immediate context. Lewis-Williams asserts that for the |Xam, kinship beyond the immediate family unit came about through gift exchange (5) and suggests that *kukummi* were instrumental in creating and maintaining bonds of kinship, suggesting that they operated in a gift economy: ‘*kukummi* moved invisibly from place to place...they were the essence of |Xam communal life, a bond between scattered camps’ (9). Lewis-Williams continues, with reference to ||Kabbo’s statement about ‘stories that float from afar’, that ‘for ||Kabbo, that bond had been broken, and he was cut off from his own people. The white people with whom he was living in Cape Town did not, he said, possess his *kukummi*’ (9). Lewis-Williams does not fall into the trap of asserting that because the stories ‘float from afar’ they are up for grabs, and that by re-telling them one enters a viable, reciprocal, bonding, gift-receiver exchange with the narrators, a relationship of deserved literary filiation. Presumably something would have to be given back for such an exchange to occur and be meaningful. Lewis-Williams’s own hope, expressed in his preface, is for the retelling of the *kukummi* to find significance in the work of post-apartheid reconciliation, and he offers his adaptations to this end. Lewis-Williams further avoids appropriating the *kukummi* for private gain (beyond academic prestige and its material benefits), by donating all the royalties of his book to a public cause (The Rock Art Institute). He is the only adaptor to donate any royalties. Strikingly, he is also the only adaptor to object to the ‘poeticisation ‘of the *kukummi*, arguing that rendering the *kukummi* into verse, is a ‘very real temptation to resist’, as it entails ‘prettification’ that does not take proper cognisance of ‘the tragedy that permeates the whole collection’ (38). The relationship that Lewis-Williams poses between kinship and the *kukummi* – and to some degree enacts himself, offering a ‘gift’ of his labour in the service of the formation of the nation – offers a model for considering relationships of literary filiation and exchange beyond the purely commercial (as in the model of cultural translation as ‘trade’ offered by Stephen Gray [‘Some Problems’ 20]). Importantly, it is premised by a recognition on Lewis-Williams’s part – via his consideration of what to do with the royalties – of his book’s status as a commodity, participating in a different economy to that which he describes, yet wishes somehow to honour and contribute to.

A different approach to the matter of commodification is taken by James in his collection of poems *The First Bushman’s Path: Stories, Songs and Testimonies of the |Xam of the Northern Cape* (2001). James returns to Lewis-Williams's warning that the versifying of the *kukummi* entails a ‘prettification’ and implicitly relates it to issues of commodification. James explicitly considers, in an introductory section headed ‘Use of Poems’, ‘Whether it is not appropriate through transforming texts of a once-living people into a poet’s intellectual property’ (21), thus bringing together questions of property and material gain with poetry (so often considered to be unrelated). But James goes on to justify his position by describing |Xam storytelling as ‘a kind of foraging, a hunting, a taking of stories that moved about from elsewhere’ (22), thus casting his own project in a |Xam tradition. Here the |Xam’s alleged nomadism implicitly supports the idea that they are without a claim to territory or property. There is an unfortunate echo here of a familiar colonial justification for the appropriation of indigenous resources. As J.M. Coetzee notes in *White Writing*, one of the ‘arguments by which expansive imperialism justified itself’ was that of ‘double right’ , by which ‘the rights of cultivators, who clear and settle land, always take precedence over the rights of nomads, who merely hunt over it’ (3). James sees his appropriation of the *kukummi* as similarly ‘productive’; according to James, poeticisation is ‘a productive way of holding the stories in trust’ (23). James’s metaphor of ‘in trust’ hints at questions of monetary recompense and profit that are not fully explored by him, as well as to the ‘good faith’ necessary for any ethically informed adaptation. James, justifying what are (willy-nilly) his own appropriations in putting together his poetry collection derived from the archive asserts that the |Xam did not seem to have a ‘concept of intellectual property’:

And because stories ‘floated’ from community to community (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 301), and because there was an overlap and sharing of community within the wider Khoisan community (Schmidt 1996), of which the |Xam were a part, and *because there seems to have been no concept of intellectual property among the |Xam*, no narrator could easily claim to be the owner (as opposed to the originator) of a story, and no story was not freely subject to change and development and adaptation in the mouth of another narrator. There was, then, a freedom of use and remaking of stories and a generosity in sharing them. (22; my italics)

A lot here rests on ‘and because it *seems*’ and on the vagueness of ‘a concept of intellectual property’. It would be strange to expect the |Xam narrators of the nineteenth-century Cape to have the same understanding of ‘intellectual property’ (with its legal sense) that is prevalent today. This does not mean, though, that the |Xam, or other San peoples, would not take seriously an unjust appropriation of resources, or that the consideration of intellectual property is thus irrelevant to the contemporary adaptor (and all the adaptors choose to assert their own copyright and moral rights over their adaptations). As it happens, *Specimens* contains !Xun narratives dealing with theft that propose strikingly harsh sentences for it, namely death or banishment (417-425).

Both Krog and Watson portray their poetic adaptations as elegiac continuances of a |Xam tradition, attempts to revive and memorialise the |Xam. Curiously, neither Watson nor Krog, despite their claimed familiarity with *Specimens*, and all their self-reflexivity as poets, takes on, or grapples with, Bleek’s conception of the differentially ‘poetic’ mindset of the |Xam, versus the ‘Bantu’, a theory outlined in two of Bleek’s government reports included in *Specimens* (‘Dr. Bleek's Report…1871’ [435] and also ‘Report Concerning Bushman Researches… 1873’ [444-45]). Indeed, both Krog and Watson might be said to follow Bleek and Lloyd in regarding the *kukummi* as inherently poetic (and in what is arguably an attendant focus on the ‘poetic’ to the exclusion of the economic and material). Watson does attempt to critique a sentimental poeticisation of the |Xam, and to distance himself from primitivist positions, refuting the suggestion that the |Xam inhabited a ‘mythical-poetical Eden’ (*Return* 16). But he does not connect this primitivism with the modernist poetics he appears to endorse (rather, he sees the *kukummi* as uniquely susceptible to modernist poetry for adaptation, comparing their verbal texture to Stein’s ‘word salads’ [12]). There are also, I suggest, issues of appropriation set aside by both Krog and Watson. Neither’s approach translates into a consideration of the material profits of poeticising the *kukummi* (despite Watson’s use of the monetary metaphor of ‘debt’ to describe Krog’s relation to him). Notably, Watson, in his discussion of Krog’s alleged plagiarism is quick to dismiss matters of ‘property fundamentalism’.It is difficult to generalise about such patterns, or coincidences, but it seems feasible to suggest that the dismissal of questions of property goes hand in hand with an understanding of poetry as particularly immaterial, an-economic. It also occludes what arguably is at work in both Krog’s and Watson’s reinscription of the *kukummi* – the claims of authority and propriety (and rightful belonging) they make through their identification with the |Xam, and as heirs of the |Xam. As A.E. Voss notes, ‘the desire to identify with the San represents an ideological claim to status other than intruder' ('Die Booshie Is Dood: Long Live the Bushie!’, qtd. in Moran 117).

As noted, the racially marked way in which the |Xam were categorised as ‘poetic’ by Bleek, and then Stow, is deeply bound up with matters of property and ownership – providing a justification for white appropriation. (A ‘traditionary literature’ acts as a ‘claim’ upon a territory – the ‘Bantu’, not having such a literature, do not have an originary or natural claim to the local territory; the colonial who records the literatures of the disempowered indigenes does, though.) What we see in Krog and Watson is also the assumption of this position of rightful heir – elegiac adaptor and continuer of ‘lost’ traditions – but also, then, a contestation of poetic ‘territory’ between the two of them. It is a contest ‘racially’ marked insofar as Watson’s contestation of Krog’s poetic authority suggests a proprietorial attitude towards English and gestures to a long history of English cultural arrogance towards Afrikaners, in which the English and Afrikaners, with their competing languages, were described as ‘races’.

## 1.6 *‘The Narcissism of Small Differences’*

There is, then, in Watson’s harsh critique of Krog, the sense of what Watson, following Gladwell, calls: ‘the narcissism of small differences’ (‘Annals’ 58): the need to articulate such differences so as to disaffiliate oneself from a mutual tradition in which one is imbricated with the other. The ‘narcissism of small differences’ is itself a tweaking of a phrase coined by Freud. He used the term to describe 'the phenomenon that it is precisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, who are engaged in constant feuds and ridiculing each other – like the Spaniards and Portuguese, for instance, the North Germans and South Germans, the English and Scotch, and so on’ (305). He related it, psychoanalytically, to envy.

 The phrase used by Watson is surprisingly apt in its allusiveness – especially since Watson sees plagiarism as a ‘local’ condition, and, as Eaton noted, the debate fell along English/Afrikaans lines (‘Koeksusters [*sic*]’ 5). Both Krog and Watson, as white South Africans adapting |Xam narratives, share a certain uncomfortable positionality, despite their attempts to distance themselves from each other’s projects. Both are *de facto* in an appropriative position, by virtue of the unearned cultural power and authority they wield, partly dependent on the dominance of their languages. Although both describe themselves as trying to secure a place of permanence for the |Xam – in South African letters or more generally – both might be read as, by so doing, trying to gain, or author, a particular position of authority for themselves (and, via their ‘translations’, furthering the cultural authority of those languages). Affiliation with the |Xam, as an aboriginal people of Southern Africa, can entail either self-inscription into a national South African identity and tradition (that is seen to have an ‘ancient’ lineage), or, in the case of the modernist poet (Watson), an appeal to the |Xam’s supposedly ‘mythic’ qualities, and thus the inscription of one’s own work into a universalist tradition and the assurance of one’s own modernity. Thus the |Xam, San, and peoples regarded as generically ‘primitive’ or African have been conscripted in what might be described as the ‘forging’ of a European art that declares itself ‘modern’ in relation to its ‘primitive’ other. Thomas Dowson notes in particular the use of African art by artists such as Picasso and the justification of its appropriation on the basis of the understanding that it was ‘common cultural property’ (316), ‘primitive’ man being understood as an avatar of universal man. It would seem that the texts of subjects not considered ‘modern’ are precluded from authorship and thus seen as fair game for appropriation.

 Michael Wessels argues convincingly that both Krog and Watson fall prey to what Derrida describes in *Of Grammatology* as a ‘metaphysics of presence’ (289–303). Wessels argues that while Watson is more self-reflexive about the scholarly tradition in which he works, and tries (if not always successfully) to circumvent the romanticisation of the Bushmen as avatars of the stone-age, outside history, Krog wholeheartedly subscribes to the ‘myth of presence’. But while Watson is more self-reflexive about the problems of the representation of the Bushmen, he nowhere reflects on his own positionality as a white South African, only asserting that he ‘claims no political role’ for himself (truly a ‘claim’, indicative of wishfulness). Krog neither comments nor reflects on her position as a white South African trying to adapt |Xam texts, although her paratextual remarks make it clear that she does conceive of a political, or at least, national, role for herself. (She responds to Watson that she was seeking to bring the *kukummi* back into Afrikaans via her adaptations.)

Both Krog and Watson’s representations of the |Xam narrators might be contextualised within a larger history of white representations of indigenous San and Khoikhoi peoples, one in which the Bleek and Lloyd collection has played a major role.

## 2. ‘THE ANNALS OF PLAGIARISM’: INDIGENOUS LITERATURES IN WHITE WRITING

It is not only Krog and Watson who fail to acknowledge prior adaptations of the *kukummi*. Jenkins observes, in an article on the reproduction of the |Xam tales in South African children’s literature, that there is a long history of a lack of acknowledgement of previous adaptations of the |Xam narratives. Indeed, most writers who adapt the *kukummi* do not acknowledge their predecessors in the field (Jenkins 24-25). It is as if the originary status of the Bushmen were reiterated, and capitalised on, with each new reinterpretation, with any cultural mediations glossed over. Indeed, this analysis will show that the originality of the Khoikhoi and the San (and with that the authenticity of Western authority over—and on – them) is constructed, or built up, through a process of eliding textual mediations, and sometimes even reascribing a textual source to a first-hand oral account. Not only do writers not acknowledge their predecessors, they tend to fetishise the testimonial, and treat the transcripts as offering a direct portal to the |Xam ‘mind’, glossing over their textuality (and mediation as translations). Bleek himself described the *kukummi* as transcribed directly ‘from the lips’ of the narrators (‘Report Concerning Bushman Researches…1873’ 444). In this section of the chapter I explore appropriations not only of the *kukummi*, but of and in Bleek’s *Reynard the Fox in South Africa; Or, Hottentot Fables and Tales* (1864), and stories published in the short-lived South African *Folk-lore Journal*, which Lucy Lloyd helped found and edit. I also consider representations of indigenous Khoi and San peoples in colonial travel accounts, many of which are marked by plagiarism, or anxieties about it.

As Sigrid Schmidt notes, in her 1983 article ‘[Khoisan Folktales: Original Sources and Republications](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db%3Dall~content%3Da770002699)’, much extant Khoisan folklore is taken, often unacknowledged, from these texts collected by Bleek and Lloyd. I do not attempt a thorough survey of such appropriations, but focus on a few bodies of work which help to contextualise the plagiarism debates concerning Krog and Mda, or which share certain features with them. Thus, I consider the use made of *Specimens* by Sir Laurens van der Post, whose racial ventriloquism and generic blurring in his very popular books anticipate Krog’s, and who is probably most responsible for popularising the figure of the ‘mythic Bushman’ for an international audience (Barnard 104). I also consider Marais – whom Krog mentions as a specific influence (‘Stephen Watson’) – and Gideon Retief von Wielligh, and their co-option of the *kukummi* into a specifically Afrikaans national literary tradition. I begin by discussing van der Post, Marais and von Wielligh, as well as two early twentieth-century collections of children’s stories based on indigenous folklore in order to demonstrate that remarkably similar tropes and narrative strategies that cross-hatch these supposedly distinct Afrikaans and English literary traditions.

### 2.1 *Laurens van der Post’s use of* Specimens

Van der Post’s use of *Specimens* is particularly pertinent for its foregrounding of authenticity, and his treatment of ostensibly archival material to some extent prefigures Krog’s *–* in particular, her reading of the *kukummi* as ‘originals’ that speak directly to her, and also what I argue is her treatment of the TRC testimonies in *Country of My Skull*. I will briefly consider Van der Post’s use of *Specimens* in two ostensibly non-fictional texts, *The Lost World of the Kalahari* (1958) and *The Heart of the Hunter* (1961), and one novel, *A Story Like the Wind* (1972).

For Van der Post, *Specimens* was his ‘stone age bible’ (*The Heart of the Hunter* 12). Suitably, he treats the *kukummi* as largely unmediated, timeless, and as having an unassailable authority that remains wherever they are transposed, despite decontextualisations. Thus, he closes *The Heart of the Hunter* with an invocation of ‘the authentic voice of renewal’, that of the ‘Mantis’:

It is as if I hear the wind bringing up behind me the voice of Mantis ... calling from the stone age to an age of men with hearts of stone, commanding us with the authentic voice of renewal: ‘You must henceforth be the moon. You must shine at night’. (256)

Van der Post quotes from Dorothea Bleek’s book for children, *The Mantis and His Friends* (1924)*.* He glosses over the mediation of Bleek, who in her book created composite narratives from different *kukummi*, constructing them ‘from several pieces in the notebooks, none of which contains all the elements found in the stories as they appear in her published version of them’ (Wessels 75). The ‘voice’, created by Bleek in the 1920s, from *kukummi* recorded in the late nineteenth century, is described by van der Post as timeless, calling from ‘the stone age’.

Van der Post’s *A Story Like the Wind* makes a similar appeal to the ‘authentic voice’ of the |Xam. The book’s epigraph is titled ‘Testament’ and is taken from ||Kabbo’s famous *kum* about returning home[[23]](#footnote-23). ||Kabbo goes unnamed and van der Post instead attributes it to ‘a Bushman convict’, and, somewhat aptly given his appropriation, declares it ‘my testament’:

I begin with the extract from a statement made by a Bushman convict a hundred years ago, which appears as my Testament on the page opposite because it shows that he was sick even more for stories than for home and people. (9)

Van der Post’s assertion that the convict had a hunger for stories even more than family or home is an odd misreading and separating out of stories from the latter, given their inextricability in ||Kabbo’s statement. The statement is described by van der Post as ‘Testament’ to the power of stories, even as the author’s name is erased, and transposed into a fictional realm – Van der Post’s novel has as its hero one ‘Xhabbo’. This necessity of storytelling becomes the justification of his own novelisation (and further alienation, in the service of the ‘universal’) of what he claims are authentic voices of Africa – his introduction closes with the claim that his story is a ‘thing not so much of pen and pre-determined pattern, as of the spoken word I once had direct from their [a Matabele clan’s] burning imagination’ (11). The blurb declares that the character ‘Xhabbo’ teaches the young protagonist that ‘the living spirit needs a ‘story’ in order to survive’. While van der Post takes the words of ||Kabbo as ‘testament’, they are read as universal rather than specific, as spoken by a type of authentic everyman: in Krog we will see a somewhat similar reinscription of specific testimony into a representative ‘black’ voice.

Elsewhere, van der Post legitimises his appropriations as a type of natural inheritance of his childhood. His *The Lost World of the Kalahari* is dedicated (thus posing itself as ‘gift’) ‘to the memory of Klara who had a Bushman mother and nursed me from birth’; van der Post thus inscribes himself as a ‘natural’ and privileged conduit of Bushman memory. (As we shall see, similar tropes of maternal transmission and the ‘mother tongue’ are evident in Hahn’s notion that one imbibes the ‘*muttersprache*’ when nursing; in Mda’s emphasis on his mother’s Khoikhoi heritage; and in Krog’s assertion of ‘growing up’ with the Bushman poems of Marais). Van der Post describes the Bushman as the ‘First People of *my native land*’ (9; my emphasis), continuing the trope of nativity, and goes on to claim of the Bushman that ‘He was present in the eyes of one of the first women to nurse me, her shining gaze drawn from the first light of some unbelievably antique African day’ (9). Van der Post continues this trope of nativity in *The Heart of the Hunter*, claiming of the Bushman stories, described as a common legacy – ‘perhaps the oldest *we have’* (175; my emphasis) *–* that they come, ‘as it were warm from the lips of the nursing spirit in the first nursery of the world’ (175). Van der Post also constructs himself as uniquely situated, because of his ‘fate’ – his birth in Africa (he uses the term generically), and his being nursed by a woman of Bushman descent – to tell the story of the Bushmen:

The Bushman used images and idioms which would be incomprehensible to the civilised man without interpretation. I cannot claim that I have done this well or with complete accuracy. I had no guide in this endeavour, for I do not believe anyone has ever attempted it. But I had a feeling that I was possibly the only person who could start this kind of interpretation; who could be this kind of improvised little rope-bridge over the deep abyss between the modern man and the first person of Africa...Through my childhood in Africa, through my mother’s family who have been there since the European beginning, I had a link with the past, with the Bushman and his world, which perhaps no one else possessed today. (*The Heart of the Hunter* 10)

This assertion, ostensibly humble (offering ‘a little rope-bridge’ over the deep abyss), serves as an extraordinary act of self-authorisation for what is clearly a problematic project. Strikingly, elsewhere, van der Post does comment, though he doesn’t reflect on it at great length, that ‘We Europeans in Africa, America, Australasia and the South Pacific have been great stealers of stories of the first peoples. We have killed off whole races by taking their story of creation from them’ (*The Heart of the Hunter* 169). Van der Post is arguing that stories are vital for life, and in effect is claiming that the destruction of |Xam people has led to a destruction of their culture (their stories), and hence their ‘race’, by the imposition of European stories (by cultural adaptation). But it could hint to another story – that the story of Bushman creation that the European has imposed on the San – namely that it is a ‘race’ of people doomed to destruction because too childlike for the forces of modernity *–* has contributed to the destruction of the |Xam.

### 2.2 *The* kukummi *in Afrikaans literary tradition*

In her article ‘Mythic Bushmen in Afrikaans Literature: The *Dwaalstories* of Eugène N Marais’, Sandra Swart notes that the image of the San as mystical indigenes and figures of primal innocence that is generally regarded as attributable to van der Post does not suddenly emerge in the 1950s with his work, but was already popularised by Marais:

Although white settler images of the Bushmen in popular writings have received historiographical analysis, there is a striking lacuna in this analysis in that Afrikaans writings which achieved popularity have been omitted and the chronology and content of the historiography have been distorted. (‘Mythic Bushmen’ 92)

Swart reconfigures some of this historiography by discussing Marais’s representations of the Bushmen, and places van der Post in an ‘Afrikaner nationalist tradition’ (‘Mythic Bushmen’ 103). There is perhaps a slight difference between the projects of Marais and van der Post, though – for van der Post, the San is an everyman, for Marais, he is a national being, though not quite human. Perhaps discernible here are differing traditions of nationalism and liberalism that tend to fall along English/Afrikaans lines, that to some extent mark the differences between Krog and Watson’s projects too. As noted, in her response to Watson’s allegation of plagiarism, Krog placed herself within a broader South African tradition of adaptations of the *kukummi*, enabled by her knowledge of Afrikaans, and noted Marais as a formative influence:

 I grew up with the poetry of Eugène Marais who, in his book *Die skepbekertjie*, explicitly acknowledges Wilhelm Bleek as an inspiration for his famous free-verse Bushman poems, among them the well-known “Dans van die reën” and “Hart van die dagbreek. (‘Stephen Watson’ 72)

 By referring to Marais, Krog inscribes her work into a proud Afrikaans literary tradition. Marais is known as a preeminent ‘*volksdigter*’ (people’s poet), and N.P. van Wyk Louw described the *Dwaalstories* as among the best works in Afrikaans literature (qtd. in Swart, ‘Construction’ 863). Swart, in her essay ‘The Construction of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner Hero’, has shown that despite his more recent reputation Marais was best known in his own day for his involvement in an international plagiarism scandal after he accused Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian Nobel Literature laureate, of stealing his idea of the ‘organic unity’ of the termitary[[24]](#footnote-24), expressed in *The Soul of the White Ant*, and transposing it to his 1926 book *La Vie des Termites* (*The Life of the Termite*) (Swart, ‘Construction’ 853)*.*  Swart notes that he was ‘supported by his coterie of Afrikaner Nationalist friends’ and that he

gained a measure of renown as the aggrieved party, and as an Afrikaner researcher who had opened himself up to plagiarism because he published in Afrikaans out of national loyalty. Thus, despite the use of his poetry for the *taalstryd*, Marais was better known for the plagiarism scandal than for his 54 published poems, in any language or under any pseudonym. (‘Construction’ 853)

For Swart, Marais’ position as *volksdigter*, and construction as ‘Afrikaner hero’, relies on the erasure of certain complexities, including that his home language was English (‘Construction’ 848). Gustav Preller, a champion of Afrikaner nationalism, and of Marais, his friend and contemporary, at first promoted Marais as an ‘unlettered Boer’ (qtd in Swart, ‘Construction’ 851), ignoring Marais's education in London, and his publication of a number of Romantic English poems before ‘Winternag’ (1905), the poem for which he is most famous.

Marais has remained a hero of a distinctively Afrikaans literary tradition, and it makes sense that Krog should nod to his poetic responses to Bushman tradition when describing herself as wanting to bring the |Xam ‘voice’ ‘back’ into Afrikaans. But when, in her response to Watson, Krog cites Marais’s ‘*Die Skepbekertjie*’, she presumably means Marais’ *Dwaalstories* (‘Wandering Tales’), a selection of |Xam stories allegedly told to him by Ou Hendrik (Old Hendrik), a Bushman whom Marais claimed to have known. *Die Skepbekertjie* is a children’s story, and does not include any poems. Nor does it reference (or seem to draw on) the Bleek and Lloyd archive, although there is mention of ‘*ons* ou Boesman’ (‘our old Bushman’; my emphasis) and their folklore, specifically a story about a ‘skepbeker’ (a beaker or jug) (9)[[25]](#footnote-25). This reference to ‘ons ou Boesman’ is congruent with what appears to be a generally appropriative attitude towards the Bushmen on Marais’s part. In a posthumously published essay, ‘The Yellow Streak in South Africa’, Marais draws the Bushmen into a nationalist framework, but as less, or other, than human; he declares that

it is a singular thing that this ape-like being...the first cousin to the chimpanzee, should yet be the only true native South African artist. He was the first and only engraver and painter; the only musician; a poet and story-teller whose genius would compare favourably with that of any of the human race of a far higher degree of culture. And wherever the yellow streak has polluted the stream of “higher” South African blood it has prepotently carried with it this masterful strain of artistry. (40-41)

Marais in effect poses the ‘artistic’ as primal, or inherently natural, carried by ‘blood’, as if a ‘pollutant’, and appropriates it to an indigenous South African art. National identity, or incorporation, here is based on something more mystical than citizenship, a particular relationship to the land, and the San are ‘naturalised’ as a variety of local fauna, thus inscribed into a South African identity.

Marais’s *Dwaalstories*, like *Die Skepbekertjie*,were published first as children’s stories[[26]](#footnote-26), and his preface indicates that children are his intended audience, perhaps explaining why Krog’s should have mistakenly cited *Die Skepbekertjie* instead of *Dwaalstories*. In *Dwaalstories* Marais does not ‘explicitly acknowledge’ Bleek ‘as inspiration’, as Krog asserts; rather, he mentions Bleek at the outset of his preface, as if in an aside. He makes a curious assertion that Bleek claimed that within |Xam (what he terms the ‘Bushman language’) stories, each animal had its own language[[27]](#footnote-27). Marais also claims that the stories told by Old Hendrik were in a linguistic amalgam that he describes as a ‘peculiar Afrikaans-Bushman’ which he cannot properly recall or reduplicate (7). Given that Marais believed the Bushmen not to be human (as he states in ‘The Yellow Streak’), it is as if he transfers to Bleek, and his professorial authority, his own sense of magical ‘speaking animals’, indeed the stuff of fable. In Marais, the Bushman are naturalised as a type of magical, speaking South Africanfauna (in a scenario in which flora and fauna are cast as eminently national). From this are wrought stories which become canonical in Afrikaans literature, seen as an artful purification and Europeanisation of a determinedly *natural* and organic *volksgeist*.

 The ‘authenticity’ of the *Dwaalstories*, and the existence of Ou Hendrik, has long been a subject of contention (Swart, ‘Mythic Bushmen’ 103). Swart asserts that Ou Hendrik did exist, but that Marais was ‘not averse to using fictional narrators’ (‘Mythic Bushmen’ 96) and admitted (in a 1926 letter which Swart cites) that in composing his poems he drew on both Bleek and Lloyd and on von Wielligh (‘Mythic Bushman’ 103’). If this is true, these prizes of Afrikaans literature are worked up from, or inspired by, Bleek and Lloyd’s nineteenth-century English transcriptions as much as direct contact with a Bushman speaking ‘Afrikaans-Bushmen’. Discernible here is a matrix of cultural imbrications that is often occluded in both nationalist and colonial accounts of South African literary production.

Such messy, indeed hybrid, ‘origins’, are also occluded in the work of von Wielligh. Von Wielligh, like Bleek and Lloyd, collected |Xam narratives in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Some of these were published in four Afrikaans volumes, collectively titled *Boesman-Stories*, between 1919 and 1921. Von Wielligh was a popular writer, whose project, as a leading member of Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (The Association of True Afrikaners), an organisation established in the mid 1870s to promote Afrikaner interests, was an overtly nationalist one. According to Hewitt, von Wielligh

sought to encourage poor Afrikaaners to read. His simplified stories, published in Afrikaans, were remodeled by him to these didactic ends and, unfortunately, cannot be taken as reliable versions of |Xam narratives. (9)

 Hewitt instead describes von Wielligh’s work as an ‘often illuminating supplement’ (9) to the Bleek-Lloyd collection. Moreover, most of von Wielligh’s stories in *Deel 1: Mitologie en Legendes* repeat those collected in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*[[28]](#footnote-28). In a postscript to the foreword to the second volume of *Boesman-Stories*, von Wielligh notes that he only came across *Specimens* as he was finishing the first two volumes of *Boesman-Stories*, and, asking how it could be that he and Bleek and Lloyd recount the same stories, reasons that it must be because they collected |Xam stories during a similar period (while von Wielligh was a land surveyor in Calvinia, from 1880-83) (*Boesman-Stories: Deel II* iv)[[29]](#footnote-29). Given that only a small selection of *kukummi* were collected in *Specimens*, it seems extraordinary that von Wielligh’s tales should coincide so exactly with those published in *Specimens*. Moreover, as Schmidt notes, while

he also published a number of tales not in Bleek/Lloyd... it is a strange coincidence that twenty-two of his versions correspond to the Bleek/Lloyd edition of 1911, but only one rather vaguely to a motif in D.Bleek 1923, i.e. the Bleek book published after von Wielligh. (‘Khoisan Folktales’ 211)

 In a familiar trope that works to secure the natural authority of the narrator, von Wielligh recounts first encountering the Bushmen while a child, during an expedition with his father through ‘Namaqualand, Bushmanland and the Hantam’ (*Boesman-Stories: Deel 1* i). Given that this would have been in about 1870, when there was considerable hostility between Bushman and Boers, the picture he presents of his interaction with them is surprisingly comradely:

During the evenings, and also during the day, many of these chaps would join us around the campfire and talk. There were still many of them that lived solely from hunting in the wilds. For a small reward they were willing to tell the little master stories, which we absorbed with mouths agape. (*Boesman-Stories: Deel I* i; translation by Koorts and Slotegraaf, and qtd. by them).

Note that the stories are items of exchange, procurement: ‘for a small reward’. Von Wielligh also employs the trope of hearing the stories ‘direct from the lips’ of his interlocutors: he describes his stories as ‘van die lippe van Boesmans [‘from the lips of Bushmen’]’ (*Boesman-Stories: Deel III* 27; qtd. in Traill 182) and anticipates that one day readers will ‘luister na sprokies en vertellings asof die woorde direk en duidelik afkomstig is van die oorspronklike lippe wat hulle vertel het [‘listen to fairytales and stories as if the words come directly and clearly from the original lips that told them]’ (qtd. by Hennie Aucamp, Introduction [9]). The scene of ‘fireside tales’, with its odd sense of communality, the breaking of bread, is another recurrent trope.

Swart asserts that ‘the iconic figure of the Bushman as storyteller is discovered by von Wielligh’ (‘Mythic Bushmen’ 95) and that from this grows what she notes is a popular Afrikaans genre of children’s stories based on indigenous tales. ‘Discovered’ is a strong, if resonant, word for von Wielligh’s use of the Bushman as storyteller. The figure of the Bushman as ‘story-teller’ is very clearly present in *Specimens*, particularly in the figure of ||Kabbo. There is also the figure of the elderly ‘Hottentot’ telling stories to children in ‘English’ literature, in Captain Arthur Owen Vaughan’s *Old Hendrik’s Tales* (published in London in 1904)[[30]](#footnote-30). The ‘kitchen boy’ Old Hendrik speaks in a curious pidgin, lamenting to the English-speaking children of his employers that they do not know Afrikaans:

If you little folks only knowed de Taal,” said he plaintively. “It don’t soun’ de same in you’ Englis’ somehow.” He shook his head sadly over English as the language for a Hottentot story handed down in the Boer tongue. (2)

 The curious pidgin that Vaughan affects is presumably partly for comic effect, encouraging the reader – white English reader? – to regard the teller patronisingly, and to see in him, and his relationship to the children, the same genial and indulgent paternalism he likes to imagine in himself in relation to the ‘childlike races’. He does so in a manner directly reminiscent of Joel Chandler Harris’s internationally influential ‘Uncle Remus’stories, the first volume of whichwas published in 1881. Indeed, Vaughan uses much of the same language – words like ‘aint’, ‘dat’, ‘den’ and ‘mo’ – and the book carries illustrations by J.A. Shepherd, who also was used to illustrate Uncle Remus stories[[31]](#footnote-31). Here we see a transnational transposal of supposedly distinctive characteristics, a floating (racial) stereotype of the ‘black’ races (from whom, in Vaughan’s scenario, the Afrikaner is one step away).

Sanni Metelerkamp’s *Outa Karel* (1914) also figures an ‘Outa’ relating stories to ‘baasjes’ (little masters), and Meterlekamp laments in her preface that the stories are told by her in English:

I greatly regret that they appear here in what is, to them, a foreign tongue. No one who has not heard them in the *Taal* – that quaint expressive language of the people – can have any idea of what they lose through translation, but, having been written in the first instance for English publications, the original medium was out of the question. (viii)

Meterlekamp’s stories are viciously racist, while also syrupily sentimental. She acknowledges her debt to ‘that monument of patient labour’ (vii), *Specimens*, for inspiration for the ideas of two of the stories, and goes on to say that she does not claim originality for any of the stories told: ‘They are known in some form or other wherever the negro has set foot, and are the common property of every country child in South Africa’ (vii-viii). (Arguably they are ‘common property’ insofar as their tellers are already considered the subordinate dominium of their little ‘masters’.) She then goes on to imply that Outa Karel was someone she knew rather than a fictional figure; someone, who, conveniently, is now dead. She effects this partly through the blurring of fictional and non-fictional frames in her introduction. In her foreword, she moves into a reverie, about cold Karoo nights, throbbing stars etc – ‘scenes which flit across the lighted screen of Memory [rather than imagination]’ (viii) *–* and closes with a wistful and enigmatic reflection on her own reverie:

And always, part and parcel of the passing panorama, the quaint figure of the old Native with his little masters…It is nearly three years now since “Old Friend Death” took him gently by the hand and led him away to that far, far country of which he had such vague ideas, so he tells no more stories by the firelight in the gloaming. (viii)

At the close of the stories ‘Outa Karel’ discusses ‘Old Friend Death’ with his charges, and the narrator tells us of his death. The implication is that he is a real person, rather than a figure of fantasy. Meterlekamp defamiliarises Outa Karel, describing him, when we first encounter him, ‘emerging into the firelight’, as covered in a strange light as he tells his stories – fantastical stories of ‘talking animals’. Given that Karel is himself expressly compared with an animal (he is described as a ‘gorilla’ walking upright on hind legs, and as having ‘snake’ like eyes), he becomes one of these talking animals. Meterlekamp, by writing in English removes the taint of her own possible hybridity (notably she has an Afrikaans name), through ‘Englishing’ and ‘translating’ the stories, employing a distancing device, that serves to mark difference – much is lost in language, told in the ‘taal’, the stories, we are led to believe, are essentially other. Though Meterlekamp does mention *Specimens* as ‘inspiration’ for two of the stories, many are recycled from the Khoikhoi tales collected in Bleek’s *Reynard the Fox*, which she does not mention. *Reynard the Fox*, the first published collection of ‘Hottentot’ folklore, was ostensibly aimed at children – offered to them as their ‘belonging’. Its dedication declares that ‘This Book Belongs to Children in South Africa and Elsewhere and to Their Friend Sir George Grey [also, the ‘friend’ of the ‘native’]’, at once a ‘proper’ national legacy and a global one, appropriated from, and appropriate to, ‘children’ (in terms of ‘races’ or age).

## 2.3 *Khoisan Folklore and Fakelore*

 If the tales recounted in Volume One of Von Wielligh’s *Boesman-Stories* (and by Meterlekamp) are largely lifted from elsewhere (chiefly Bleek) and re-presented as told to him in person, he is far from alone. Schmidt compiles an extensive list of works that retell Khoi and San stories already published, but without acknowledgment, noting that:

The number of such works is larger than one might suppose. Many a writer in the last century, when back at home composing a book on his adventures in southern Africa, realises that he had not recorded specimens of traditions which might be of interest to his readers, and so he turned to the existing literature...However, only a few might be judged guilty of outright plagiarism, for most of these writers directed their work not to a scientific but a general public, for whom bibliographical references were considered a hindrance to the reader. (‘Khoisan Folktales’ 203)

Schmidt’s distinction between the scientific public and the general public reinforces a sense of folklore as ‘authentic’ (she also talks of ‘specimens of traditions’, as if discussing natural history specimens). But as Alan Dundes notes, folklore as a discipline is less ‘scientific’ than it imagines itself, and historically inseparable from ‘fakelore’. Dundes borrows the term from Richard M. Dorson, but subjects it to scrutiny, suggesting the ‘fake’ and the ‘authentic’ are not always easy to disentangle in folklore (6). Dundes notes, for instance, how the tales collected by the Brothers Grimm, which helped institute folkloristics as a discipline, are less genuinely popular or oral than generally purported. Not only did the Grimms at times misrepresent the identities of their informants, but they destroyed all their notes, thus instituting the stories reworked by them as originary (Dundes 8-9).

 Guenther refers to Schmidt’s work when arguing that more original research is needed on the Khoikhoi and San, but is harsher in his criticism, declaring the quality of most of the work ‘execrable’:

Most of the texts are actually re-writes, with or without acknowledgement, of what others had written previously. The amount of original folklore material, collected in the field by competent observers, is thus quite small. Some of the re-writes, or re-tells, turned out to be brazen cases of plagiarism…If not outright fabrications, these recycled works could ultimately be traced back to only a handful of solid field collections, prime of them the published and accessible works by W.H.I. Bleek and Lucy Lloyd. (14)

Both Schmidt and Guenther’s laments regarding the flimsy empirical grounds of their fields of research recall Edwin Wilmsen’s critique in *Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (1989) of ‘the poverty of misappropriated theory’ (33) in ethnographies of the ‘Bushman’. The phrase forms the title of one of Wilmsen’s chapters and is crucial to his larger critique of a pernicious mythicisation of the various peoples categorised ‘Bushman’ that occludes the evidence of what anthropologists encounter in favour of making their perceptions conform to ‘inherited’ theories. Critical of the scientific authority ethnographers cede to themselves, Wilmsen contends that

ethnography is itself a rhetorical form, an invention created to bring back from the primitive world to nineteenth-century Europe the cosmic and worldly – that is, the ideological – reassurance that its place in the industrializing colonial world was indeed as it saw it to be. (36)

Wilmsen is perhaps too sweeping in his collation of what might be more variegated operations of discursive power – into ethnography as an ‘invention’ that works with a conscious agenda. Nevertheless, his argument is convincing, and his reflexive consideration of ‘Euroamerican’ traditions helps to illuminate what he comes to identify as the ‘invented tradition’ of the ‘Bushmen’ as a people without politics and outside of history (317). Linda E. Merians also offers an illuminating reading of discourses of the other indigenous peoples of Southern Africa, named ‘Hottentot’ by early European visitors, by considering it in relation to contemporary British national identity (‘What they are’ 14-40). The ‘Hottentot’, she argues, is a figure who occupies the imaginations of readers in Britain long before the Cape became a British colony and comes to figure the abjected other of the nation – all that the British are not. (It is also a figure which comes into focus via travel accounts that are often heavily recycled from other texts, and sometimes even wholly fabricated, though always keen to point to their eyewitness veracity and deny any elements of ‘fancy’).

 Perhaps even more remarkable than the reproduction of Khoisan tales without acknowledgement, described by Schmidt, is the frequent reascription of these stories to an alternative first-hand source *–* the author usually claiming that he or she had heard the stories ‘from the lips of natives’, thus rendering a textual source oral and bodily. ‘From the lips of natives’, in the phrase of Rev. A Wookey, describing the source of a story he submitted to *The Folk-lore Journal*[[32]](#footnote-32)is a remarkably recurrent and persistent trope and one which, I suggest, persists in *Country of My Skull*, in somewhat sublimated form. The *Folk-lore Journal,* in its inaugural preface, describes the content of the journal as ‘communications from the lips of the aborigines, written down in their own language and words and accompanied by a translation into English’ (Vol I [January 1879] ii). Often, even when accounts are altered, contributors such as a Mr Bevan insist that: ‘you have the language *verbatim* as it fell from his lips’, although noting that ‘I have taken the liberty of arranging his story a little, since he did not give it me in a consecutive statement, but in answer to questions’ (Vol II [March 1880] p.30). The *Folk-lore Journal* carried as an epigraph Pliny’s statement ‘*semper novi quid ex africa*’ (always something new out of Africa), suggesting its own investment in the idea of Africa as a place of originality, a mine of original research. The inaugural preface also states that the Journal sees its role as part of an attempt to

secure, before this becomes too late… a *representative* collection of the traditionary literatures existing among the South Africa aboriginal races, but allowed on all hands to be rapidly passing away, under the influence of European ideas, and the spread of European civilization. (i; original emphasis)

Although it seeks to determine a ‘representative’ collection of Africa; arguably, it participates in – or invents – this homogenising representation of the African, rather than ‘discovering’ it.

Schmidt notes that the stories in the *Folk-lore Journal* appear particularly vulnerable to appropriation, on account of the relative scarcity of the publication, which only ran for two years, 1879­–80, and that a number of them were lifted wholesale, without attribution (‘Khoisan Folktales’ 206). Even the stories in the *Folk-lore Journal*, though, might be read as protesting too much about their own originality. The editorial comments about two stories contributed by Thomas Bain (both stories in turn reproduced without acknowledgement by other writers, discussed shortly) exhibit considerable anxiety about sources and authenticity, indicating that both of Bain’s stories, ‘The Story of a Dam’ and ‘The Lion and the Jackal: A Hottentot Story’, appear to be versions of stories in *Reynard the Fox*. ‘Story of a Dam’ is prefaced with the comment that the story was

sent to us by Mr Bain, in fulfillment of a kind promise to write down some of the Hottentot stories picked up by him in childhood. It appears to be a somewhat modernized version of an older, or already existing, tale. In a letter which accompanies it (dated Woodside, Rondebosch, 15 May, 1879) Mr Bain speaks of the great difficulty experienced by him in “conveying the exact expressions used by the Hottentots in telling these stories in their peculiar half Cape and half Hottentot Dutch;” adding, that “the stories lose their zest and force by translation’ (Volume II, p.69).

In a second footnote, the editors note that Bain’s tale resembles one related in *Reynard the Fox* that is (in the original manuscript in the Grey Library) ‘in the Otyiherero or Damara language’, but which Bleek considers ‘probably of Hottentot origin’ (71). That both of the ‘Hottentot stories’ heard by Bain in childhood and contributed to the journal should be told in *Reynard the Fox* and should include a Damara story is remarkable.

 The two stories possibly adapted by Bain from *Reynard the Fox* ‘The Story of a Dam’ and ‘The Lion and the Jackal: A Hottentot Story’, reappear again in a 1934 issue of *American Folklore*, contributed by G Seubring, who claims to have heard them first-hand himself. In Seubring’s appropriation of the ‘The Lion and the Jackal. A Hottentot Story’, reproduced by him in full, the tale is reinscribed away from Bain, the prominent Englishman, who is replaced with a Boer, and is thus inscribed into an oral Afrikaner tradition:

This tale was given to me by a Boer, who got it from a learned Hottentot. I heard similar tales when I travelled among the Griquas and all of them seem to imply the cleverness of the Jackal, who occupies in Hottentot folklore the same place as does Reinhard the Fox in western Europe. (332)

This footnote itself builds on those given in the *Folk-lore Journal*. Editorial notes comment that, in a letter, Bain mentions he has heard the story frequently from Hottentots ‘to show how clever and wily the Jackal is’ (Vol I, p. 53), and the editors also note the similarity of the story contributed by Bain to the stories ‘The Lion’s Share’ and ‘Jackal’s Bride’ recounted by Bleek in *Reynard the Fox*.

### 2.4 *Reynard the Fox*

 If one hoped to find in Bleek’s *Reynard the Fox* an ‘authoritative’ source for the oft-recycled story of ‘The Lion and the Jackal’[[33]](#footnote-33), discussed above, one would be disappointed. Remarkably, *Reynard the Fox*, a text which, as we have seen, would come to be heavily plagiarised and recycled, is itself marked by anxieties about its own authenticity*.* The bookcarries an extraordinary preface, exhibiting various concerns about the provenance of its own contents. Bleek addresses his patron, Sir George Grey:

You are aware that the existence of Fables among the Hottentots was already known to us through Sir James Alexander’s “Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa” (8vo., two vols. London, 1838), and that some interesting specimens of their literature had been given by him in that work; but that Fables form so extensive a mass of traditionary Native literature among the Namaqua, has first been brought to light by Mr Krönlein’s communications. (xii)

Rev J.G. Krönlein was the Rhenish missionary at Berseeba, Great Namaqualand, whom Bleek reports sourced his stories ‘from the mouth [singular] of the Natives’ (xii)[[34]](#footnote-34). Bleek’s supposition as to the originality of Krönlein’s contribution – forming the evidence that Native literature is ‘traditionary’ and extensive *–* is interesting. Bleek is perhaps being rather polite – forming a belief as to the ‘traditionary’ nature of ‘Native Literature’, rather than supposing that Krönlein might have copied them (or been influenced by Alexander) and that there is, if anything, an alternative European tradition, and ‘traditionary literature’, in the making. Bleek shortly continues:

Some questions of no trifling importance and interest are raised by the appearance of such an *unlooked-for* a mine of literary lore, particularly as to the originality of these Fables. Whether they are indeed the real offspring of the desert, and can be considered as truly Indigenous Native Literature, or whether they have either been *purloined* from the superior white race, or at least brought into existence by the stimulus which contact with the latter gave to the Native mind (like that resulting in the invention of the Tshiroki and Vei alphabets) may be matters of dispute for some time to come, and it may require as much research as was expended upon the solving of the riddle of the originality of the Ossianic poems. (xiii; my emphasis)

 Bleek’s superfluous ‘unlooked-for’ is slightly disingenuous, or perhaps rather unwittingly self-deceptive: Bleek begins his preface by noting that he had, at Grey’s desire, written to missionaries in South Africa ‘requesting them to make collections of Native Literature, similar in nature to those which, through your instrumentality, have been so abundantly rescued from oblivion in New Zealand’ (xi)[[35]](#footnote-35). Most remarkable is his speculation, with regard to the ‘originality’ of the ‘Native Literature’ (viewed, in national romantic terms, as a natural ‘offspring’ of the environment), as to whether the Fables, the possession of which appears to show indigenous peoples to have a distressing commonality with Europeans, is the result of their being ‘purloined’ from ‘the superior white races’. This reads as an instance of projection in what is a preface to a book filled with ‘purloined’ tales – that is, appropriated from native peoples (whose stories, arguably, where not always freely ‘given’), and also, perhaps, in another sense, plagiarised or ‘forged’ by a series of unreliable (white) narrators. Bleek himself here inscribes ‘Hottentot’ fables into a European framework, by naming the book ‘Reynard the Fox in South Africa’, filtering indigenous tales through the pan-European folkloric character Reynard the fox, the subject of Goethe’s epic poem *Reinecke Fuchs* (1794).

 Goethe was influenced by the Ossian poems (Williams 45), mentioned by Bleek in his preface, and a source of great celebrity and controversy in eighteenth-century Europe. The Ossian poems, first presented in *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language* (1760) were declared by the Scottish poet James Macpherson to be translations by him, from previously undiscovered manuscripts, of ancient Scottish poems narrated by ‘Ossian’. The poems, nowadays considered forgeries, helped to create Scottish national consciousness, serving in the ‘invention’ of Scotland as a distinct nation. At the close of his preface, Bleek comments, in relation to his inclusion in the book of some ‘specimens of Hottentot poetry’, that

perhaps some of the material in this book might be worked out similarly to Goethe’s “Reinecke Fuchs”; and we should hereby gain an epical composition; which, though not ranking so high as the latter poem, would yet…far exceed Longfellow’s “Hiawatha” in adaptation to the general taste. (xxx)

Similarly, Krog wonders in her introduction to *the stars say ‘tsau’* whether the |Xam ‘recorded material could be the starting point for an epic poem such as the Greek *Odyssey* or the ancient English *Beowulf*’ (11). And Skotnes closes *Claim to the Country* with her own national epic of sorts, titled ‘Claim to the Country: An Anthem’ (372-73) – a self-composed ‘founding anthem’ (47) constructed from fragments culled from the *kukummi* and structured on the template of Robert Graves’ ‘Song of Amergin’, purportedly an ancient Celtic poem, which, according to Graves (Skotnes cites his authority approvingly) ‘is the prime poetic myth’ (47).

In *Unconquerable Spirit*, Skotnes declares that Stow saw the Bushman rock art as their ‘title deeds’ (14); similarly, she describes the *kukummi* as the |Xam’s ‘claim to the country’, performing acts of ownership through inscription. Skotnes’s word ‘claims’ is more resonant than ‘title deeds’, having affective associations, speaking of desires and appeals as well as rights. Arguably, Skotnes’s own work, like that of many white writers who appropriate the stories of the Khoi and the San and who take it upon themselves to re-present them – works towards securing their own positions of authority (in scholarship, art, or government), and does so by an appeal to authenticity that is constructed, in circular fashion, through its own emerging traditions. Africa – out of which there is always something new – becomes a generative site of native authenticity, the ‘ground’ from which the ‘raw material’ of myth and fable may be extracted and shipped back to the metropole for the production of knowledge, or, rather the fiction of its own authority. ‘Stories that float from afar’ might signify not just the circulation of *kukummi* between |Xam families, but between colony and metropole. Bleek himself, at least, in 1873, near the end of his life, when, according to Thornton he came to question whether there was in fact such a thing as a ‘primitive language’ (6) questioned the authority of knowledge produced through such tenuous circuits of exchange. Responding to his cousin Ernst Haeckel’s supposition as to the polyphyletic origins of language, Bleek commented rather sharply on Haeckel’s authority, and particularly on the scholarliness of Max Müller:

Regarding your authority … I must in this connection name F. Max Müller. It is very clear that he does not understand the languages which he writes about, (as far as I have read his writings) … He depends so completely on the writings of others, yet without the honesty of referring to his sources, that he copies the printing errors quite correctly. (1874 letter qtd.in Thornton 7)

Another nineteenth-century account of Khoikhoi traditions demands our attention here – namely Theophilus Hahn’s *Tsuni-||Goam: The Supreme Being of the Khoikhoi* (1881) – for, as we shall see in Chapter Three, fragments of it reappear in Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*. Hahn was the son of a Rhenish missionary at Bethany, Great Namaqualand, and spent the first part of his childhood there, learning to speak Nama. He studied for a PhD in Linguistics at the University of Halle, and later became Grey Library custodian (taking over from Lucy Lloyd) and Government philologist, during which tenure he published *Tsuni-llGoam*. The book is a ‘linguistic analysis of Khoi religion’, in the tradition of Max Müller (Chidester et al. 69). In it, words are understood as a ‘telescope’ (ix) into the past, a means of unveiling or uncovering it – and Hahn constructs what he believes to be the ‘authentic’ Khoikhoi religion (one that predates any contemporary, transculturated religion he might witness) through his study of the Khoikhoi language and various texts about Khoikhoi religious beliefs and practices.

 Significantly, *Tsuni-||Goam*, like *Reynard the Fox*, is plagued by anxieties about its own authenticity and authority. Indeed it begins with a pre-emptive defense against any possible inference of plagiarism. In his preface, Hahn notes when his work was written, adducing the authority Max Müller as witness, and adds that that day (the preface is dated 24 March 1880[[36]](#footnote-36)), a review of a book had ‘come into his hands’ which suggests that he and a German academic, Professor Roskoff, might have ‘perused’ each other’s work or ‘corresponded’ (x). He attests that this is not the case, and makes of the similarities between their works proof of what is at any rate his main contention in the book, ‘*the psychical identity of the human mind*’ (x; Hahn’s emphasis). Hahn describes Roskoff, who seems to hold the same views as him, as a ‘fellow labourer’ and ‘comrade’ in the ‘battle-field’ (x), in a re-iteration of the metaphor of the contestation of knowledge (and indeed of the literary field). Hahn’s disclaimer that he has read only the review of Roskoff’s work, not the book itself, is made more striking by the preamble in which Hahn laments the lack of books in South Africa, and urges patriotic colonials to contribute books to the library and build it into a ‘national institution’ (vii). Indeed, he begins his preface by lamenting that his authority must necessarily depend on a poor colonial library, and that he is unable always to provide exact references for his statements (vii).

 Hahn’s preface is remarkably patriotic; he speaks of ‘our country’ and is invested not just in the building of the science of comparative religion, but more specifically in ‘South African science’ (viii). Travellers and missionaries are exhorted to properly ‘serve the cause of South African Philology’ (viii). Elsewhere, Hahn urges the ‘cause of civilization in South Africa’ (76). In many respects, Hahn exemplifies Cape colonial nationalism, which Saul Dubow describes as reaching its apogee in 1870 (*A Commonwealth of Knowledge* 4). Dubow notes of the ‘close links between colonial naturalism and colonial nationalism’ (14) that

 to know the land and to conceptualise its peoples was to assert cognitive power and to proclaim a custodial or proprietorial sense of ownership. It was, in a sense, an assertion of acquired indigeneity. (14)

 Hahn, like Bleek and many others, has frequent recourse to the trope of ‘from the lips of natives’[[37]](#footnote-37), and presents his findings as if ‘raw’ (a term he uses to describe ‘natives’ and ‘heathens’ [63]), their mediations, and the mechanisms of their own production repressed or effaced. In *Tsuni-||Goam*, Hahn stresses that he ‘adduces only…genuine productions of the Khoikhoi mind’ (x) (to which language supposedly provides direct access). Hahn, like Bleek in *Reynard the Fox,* sees indigenous folklore as a ‘mine’ of material for the purposes of international (and universal) ‘science’[[38]](#footnote-38). Hahn explicitly sees himself as answering to those overseas, and Africa as a rich resource for ‘science’. He writes that: ‘The linguistic and ethnological world, both of Europe and America, daily ask, *Quid novi ex Africa*?’ (117). Africa, it seems, must continually produce the ‘new’. Interestingly, Hahn, in his metaphors, implicitly links this unearthing of the ‘new’ for the purposes of ‘science’ with emerging global markets and circuits of trade and exchange that allow for such ‘science’. Using a monetary metaphor, he describes himself, in his research on the Khoikhoi, as wishing to ‘supply the scientific market in Europe, where hundreds of hands stand ready to coin the ore thus produced’ (120). (We might compare the contemporary production of tales of African authenticity for a contemporary metropolitan academic market.)

 As David Chidester has argued, this apprehension of colonial philologists’ research as ‘raw unmediated materials’ relied on a glossing over of intercultural mediation and of imperial violence (‘Classify and Conquer’ 73). Chidester notes, too, the dependence of the discipline of comparative religion on colonisation and at the same time the denial and erasure of the traces of colonisation by the development of ‘theories about the prehistoric rather than the historical situation of empire in which they were operating’ (‘Classify and Conquer’ 73). As indigenous ‘literary lore’ and ‘custom’ are ‘preserved’, or even ‘saved’ (one thinks of Skotnes’ description of writing as ‘gift’), the realities of contemporary indigenous inhabitants of South Africa, their violent transculturation into the colonies, is effaced. There is an foretaste here of those present-day celebrations of the indigenous which ignore the situation of contemporary groups who self-identify as Khoikhoi and San, in favour of a vision of ‘ancient’ and ‘authentic’ indigenous peoples.

 The work of philological ‘science’, concerned as it is with the hierarchical classification of languages (according to ‘race’), is, unsurprisingly, bound up with language politics, and what languages should hold sway (a politics which comes to have a ‘racial’ inflection). Hahn, while fervently patriotic, notably, has a vision of South Africa’s future (and that of the world’s) as specifically *English*. In another publication, his address to the South African Library, Hahn, after dismissing Dutch as an overly-ponderous language with little literary genius (because no ‘original’ poets), asserts: ‘Now English, on account of its cosmopolitan nature, gains daily more and more ground among the civilized nations, *and there is no reason whatsoever why we should try to retard its glorious world-cultivating mission*’ (‘Science of Language’ 36; original emphasis). The local ‘Dutch patois’ (i.e. an early variant of Afrikaans) Hahn describes as ‘psychologically an essentially Hottentot idiom’ (‘Science of Language’ 36), and argues that a language influenced by slaves cannot be worth cultivating, for ‘language is the embodiment of the mind’ (‘Science of Language’ 24). One is reminded of Watson’s implication that the local is ‘extra-literary’, the truly literary cosmopolitan. Hahn’s contention that English daily gains more ‘ground’ (a telling figure) on account of a vaguely ‘cosmopolitan nature’ occludes what is the more prosaic account for its spread – British imperialism and its hunger for new territories, resources and markets. The promulgation of English as a world language is inseparable from the promotion of global capital. English is not, as is suggested, a uniquely cosmopolitan or ‘universal’ language, but one which bears a particular history, of unequal exchanges and appropriations. From this perspective, the ‘annals of plagiarism’, contra Watson, are not simply a ‘local’ tradition, even if South Africa’s dense mix of disparate languages and cultures brings contestations of authorial power into sharp focus. Rather, the ‘annals of plagiarism’ are shaped by transnational circuits of exchange and by metropolitan expectations of African authenticity and originality – ‘*semper novi quid ex africa*’. Something of this can be seen by considering early travel accounts of the Cape, which again are concerned with authenticity while marked by plagiarism.

### 2.5 *Travel Writing: Fact and Fiction*

Early accounts of visits to or residencies in Southern Africa raise similar questions about authenticity, for many of them are heavily derivative, while at the same time attesting vigorously to their first-hand veracity. The most famous, seemingly comprehensive, and influential early account of a residency at the Cape, Peter Kolb’s *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* (first published in German in 1719, and translated into English, as *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, in 1731), was the first to make a virtue of, and parade, its method of ‘autopsy’ (Kolb gives the word in Greek) (Huigen 6, 44, 225) – basing itself on first-hand, eye-witness accounts. There were well over 250 accounts of the Cape by Europeans previous to Kolb’s, but none so extensive as his, and Kolb in his preface only refers to one specifically[[39]](#footnote-39) – in order to dismiss it, thus instituting his own authority (Good 79). We also see in Kolb an early instantiation of the ‘from the lips of natives’ trope – in the preface to the Dutch edition he states that, in relation to the Khoikoi, he relates nothing that he did not himself hear straight from ‘their mouths’[[40]](#footnote-40). Significantly, Kolb makes this statement despite the fact that he could not speak or understand the Khoikhoi language, thus glossing over issues of translation.

 *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* is a text whose authenticity has frequently been disputed. There has been particular controversy about the authenticity and authority of the section of his account that deals with ‘the Hottentots’, with Father Nicholas de la Caille and Otto Friederich Mentzel both accusing him of extensive plagiarism from Johan Willem van Grevenbroek (Schapera 162-64). Similarly, Francois Le Vaillant, in his account of his stay at the Cape (1781-1784; some 80 years after Kolb had left it), claims that ‘Kolbern is not yet forgot at the Cape; tis known that he never left the town, though he spoke with the certainty of an eye witness of the manners and customs of the internal part of the country’ (109).

 Despite Kolb’s insistence on factuality, his text has a fictional premise – it is composed as a series of letters, making for a sense of direct address and immediacy, as well as engaging the reader in a personable manner, thus appearing ‘natural’ rather than bearing the artifices of fiction. (We will see a similar use of direct address in Krog.) As Siegfried Huigen notes regarding Kolb’s epistolary format: ‘a letter to a good friend…was, according to him, characterized by frankness and contrary to the artificial style and fabrications of the novel’ (39). The preface to the English translation of Kolb’s book contains an extraordinary denunciation of the vices of lies, fantasies and fictions and insists that Kolb’s account is singularly authoritative, on account of the author’s phlegmatic temperament. Unfortunately, though, Kolb’s being a stickler for detail makes his account dull, requiring the translator to abridge, and, occasionally – where Kolb’s ‘methodology’ is declared to be faulty – to rearrange. Speaking of the ‘phlegmatic’ nature of Kolb, the translator writes:

I am satisfied, from his Manner of Writing, that he is not subject to Transports of Imagination, and that *Phlegm* (to keep the old Dialect) has the *Ascendant* in him. This, I think, adds not a little Credit to the following History, since, as I have observ’d, the Sons of Phlegm are the exactest Relaters in the World of What they see; and in History of this Kind an Author has little else to do. (*The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* xvi-xvii)

This insistence on exactitude and veracity, artlessness and ‘autopsy’ – versus the ‘transports of the imagination’ – is a persistent trope in travel accounts of journeys to Southern Africa, even those that are entirely fabricated ‘armchair’ accounts[[41]](#footnote-41). Thus the author’s preface to the English translation, from German, of Christian Frederick Damberger’s *Travels through the Interior of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to Morocco* (1801), declares that

Thefe obfervations, wear not an air of learning of deep fcience; but I can with confidence affirm, that *I fpeak of everything, as* AN EYEWITNESS, w*ith* TRUTH *and* FIDELITY. When I occasionally correct Errors, which have, from the accounts of preceding travelers, as Vaillant for example, been adopted as matters of fact; or when I fupply what is defective in them; – it is done from *no other motive than the* LOVE OF TRUTH. (x)

The translator’s preface declares ‘To literary merit our traveler makes no pretensions: he tells a simple artless tale: what he saw, and what he suffered he described accurately’ (vi). Despite disavowals of ‘literary’ ‘art’ the translator proceeds, by literary allusion, and a neat rhetorical turn, to grant Damberger what might be termed an ‘African’ authenticity – comparing the telling of his tale to Othello’s relating of his past to Desdemona.

 Another apparently entirely fictional travelogue (once again purporting to be fact) provides a glaring example of the use of Africa as authenticating device for English self-assurance. The final lines of *Travels of Sylvester Tramper Through the Interior of the South of Africa* (1813) read:

I reached England without any further accident, after an absence of nearly six years, accompanied by my friend Clack[[42]](#footnote-42); and am now settled upon my own estate, perfectly cured of my desire to travel, and satisfied that the laws, constitution, religion, manners and morals of my own country are superior to those of all others on the face of the earth. (216)

Generally, in these early accounts of the Cape, the work of translators and abridgers is, as in the example of the English translation of Kolb cited above, presented as an exercise of refinement, rather than alteration or fictionalisation, or perhaps ‘generification’, as accounts are made generic. This is evident in a 1774 book (a volume in a series) which includes an abridged English adaptation of Kolb that focuses on his tales of ‘Hottentots’. On the title page, the book declares itself:

The World Difplayed; or, a Collection of Voyages and Travels, Selected from the Writers of All Nations. In which the Conjectures and Interpolations of Several vain Editors and Tranflators Are Expunged; Every Relation is Made Concise and Plain, AND The Divifions of Countries and Kingdoms are Clearly and Diftinctly Noted. (*The World Displayed*)

Although, apparently, the divisions of countries are clearly and distinctly noted, arguably, this totalising global ‘display’, with its various excerpts concerning ‘all nations’, serves to render ‘primitive’ peoples generic, attempting to incorporate them into a single field of vision.

 This globalising tendency, the emergence in Europe of a ‘planetary consciousness’ dependent on imperial expansion, has been explored by Mary Louise Pratt. Pratt notes in her study of eighteenth-century travel writing about the Cape that

The explicit project of these explorer-writers, whether scientists or not, is to produce what they themselves referred to as “information.” Their task, in other words, was to incorporate a particular reality into a series of interlocking information orders …To the extent that it strives to efface itself, the invisible eye/I strives to make those informational orders natural, to find them there uncommanded, rather than assert them as the products/producers of European knowledges or disciplines. (‘Scratches on the Face of the Country’ 144)[[43]](#footnote-43)

The work of Hahn and Bleek, and ‘scientists’ who follow (and plagiarise from) them, takes its place among a broader Enlightenment drive to produce factual ‘knowledge’, one which, on closer inspection, is marked by an apt degree of appropriation and invention – apt, insofar as these texts, even if they did not always justify the imperial order, were dependent for their ‘discoveries’ on an order expansionists and acquisitive.

 Pratt argues in *Imperial Eyes* that one of the stories (necessary fictions) capitalism tells itself is of ‘reciprocity’. Pratt, following Peter Hulme’s work on sentimental literature of the colonial frontier, notes that ‘while doing away with reciprocity as the basis for social interaction, capitalism retains it as one of the stories it tells itself. The difference between equal and unequal exchange is suppressed’ (84). Pratt’s observations regarding the mystique of reciprocity, and its relationship to labour and property, might also be brought to bear on the curious symbolics enacted in plagiarised colonial travel accounts. Pratt’s study does not extend to questions of plagiarism or of authorial property, but these might be fruitfully related to particular tropes – of theft, exchange and reciprocity – which recur in these travel accounts and gesture to the larger canvas of European expansion, and the ‘Civilising Mission’, what Pratt calls ‘the greatest non-reciprocal non-exchange of all time’ (85). Pratt’s insights, I suggest, might be particularly useful to our consideration of the trope of writing as gift, the establishment of a reciprocal or bonding exchange between white writer and indigenous tradition in books which efface or occlude their status as commodities, and historical questions of property and ownership more generally. As we shall see the commodity-status of the book in an international trade is awkwardly gestured to in *Country of My Skull* and *The Heart of Redness*.

 The appropriations of travel narratives are clearly exemplified in the Swedish traveler Peter Möller’s *Journey in Africa through Angola, Ovampoland and Damaraland* (first published in Sweden in 1899, and translated into English in 1974), where ‘The Lion and the Jackal’, as told by Bain in *The Journal of Folk-lore*, and recycled in *The Journal of American Folklore,* crops up without acknowledgement once again. Möller’s lifted account is remarkable for its inscription in a chapter obsessed with the ‘notorious’ ‘robberies and plundering’ of the Hottentots, plundering which apparently is based on hearsay for he does note, in a brief aside concerning the exchange of some milk for some tobacco, that this was not his personal experience (157). The transposition of the lifted fable into the chapter is all the more remarkable for its following shortly after an anecdote about thieving which has recourse to the image of writing and the inscription of plunder into the ‘account book’ of the trader (who is also Möller’s storyteller):

They [the ‘Hottentots’] mostly travel round hunting or making a living out of robbery and plundering. ..before the Germans annexed the country and commanded respect the Hottentots were the fear of all traders and travelers. It was then their habit to plunder every white man who travelled in the country and who was not strong enough to defend himself…A trader, who owned a shop on Autjo [Outjo], told me that Hottentots as well as Damaras used to plunder his supplies; ironically, on these occasions the Hottentots demanded that what they took should be noted in the big account book, they wanted only to borrow for the moment and would later pay everything, something which, of course, never happened. (158)

It is ironic, and fitting, that Möller should view his own tale in terms of irony, for there are a number of reversals at work: it is not the travellers and traders who ‘plunder’ (the stories of the local people among other things), but the Khoikoi, and it is not the latter who are not ‘strong enough to defend themselves’, but the former. Annexation is seen to be preceded by plunder rather precipitating it.

 Möller’s anecdote is particularly resonant when read next to Mda’s vignette, in *The Heart of Redness*, of Bhonco reclaiming his *ityala* (credit, but also, incidentally one half of the title of the first extant Xhosa language novel, S. E. K. Mqhayi’s *Ityala lamaWele*) from the trader John Dalton, who keeps an account book in which Bhonco’s debts are recorded. Mda here reverses the logic of credit and debt – showing the white trader to be the one who, historically, is in debt to Bhonco. In so doing, in a work which takes without acknowledgement from the colonial archive, Mda touches on all those curious inversions (concerning property, theft and ownership) that mark it.

 The ‘thieving’ indigene is a trope present in some of the earliest accounts of Europeans who had been resident at the Cape. It is reproduced with particular virulence in the account of William Ten Rhyne (1647-1700), in close proximity to an implicit justification by him for colonial occupation (and, in effect, theft):

They are so addicted to theft, that one neighbor does not stick to enrich himself by stealing the cattle of another…And in addition to their shameful indulgence in vice, they secure for themselves a luxurious idleness; they never till the soil, they sow nothing….Wherefore whoever wishes to employ them as slaves must keep them hungry, never fully satisfied, speak to them with authority, and never fail to be as good as his word. (qtd. in Schapera *Early Cape Hottentots* 123)

Ten Rhyne, complaining that ‘they never till the soil, they sow nothing’, has recourse to Locke’s labour theory of property as an argument in support of the colonial project[[44]](#footnote-44). The ‘neighbours’ could be Khoikhoi and Dutch, and the neighbour who does not stop at enriching himself by stealing the cattle of the other, the Dutch. Indeed, Ten Rhyne supplies a (surprisingly honest) account of the deceits used by traders when dealing with their Khoikhoi ‘neighbours’. Ten Rhyne’s insistence on speaking ‘with authority’ and being ‘as good as one’s word’ also has an ironic resonance – for, arguably, colonisers, rather than ‘speaking’ with ‘authority’ (or good faith), employed the alienability and fixity of the written word, and written contracts, to their advantage, insisting on the bindingness of written contracts made with a society for whom they did not have the same ‘currency’ or meaning, being in this sense ‘as good as their word’.

 Olfert Dapper, whose account of his stay at the Cape (published in 1688), is far more restrained, appears to express some shame at the Dutch behavior, and suggests, contrary to Ten Rhyne, that theft hardly occurs within Khoikhoi society, implicitly casting it in a wider context of group contestation (47). As we shall see, the motif of theft (particularly of cattle) as a type of contestation of power recurs in *Country of My Skull*. The book opens with the account of a farm being robbed, gesturing to what Voss notes is the deep implication of the pastoral with the law of property in South African writing (‘The Waining Swain’ 65). Indeed, the ‘thieving’ African appears to operate here as an inversion of the appropriative white writer. In *Reynard the Fox* we see another classic inversion of the trope of theft, when Bleek, apparently quite unself-consciously, suggests of the indigenous stories he appropriates and retells that they might be ‘purloined’ from the ‘superior white races’.

 This necessarily brief exploration of travel narratives is important for their strict insistence on their own factuality, combined with the authoritative stance they construct vis-à-vis the ‘native’, in many ways foreshadows Krog’s insistence on the non-fictional status of *Country of My Skull*, a book which lays claim to an authoritative and authentic take on South Africa. It is also one which bases itself on testimonies ‘from the lips of natives’, as it were, fetishising its origins in the TRC testimonies, and their visceral pain. But arguably it remains, in material terms, a text which secures white privilege and white authority. Moreover, a similar insistence on factuality, and the strict division between the ‘literary’ and the ‘historical’, fact and fiction, marks Andrew Offenburger’s complaints against Mda, in which, from his position in the US academy, Offenburger attempts to ‘limit’ what he describes as the excessive ‘license’ afforded postcolonial African writers in their appropriations from other texts (176).

CHAPTER TWO

**FORGING A NEW SOUTH AFRICA: THE ‘BLACK VOICE’ IN ANTJIE KROG'S *COUNTRY OF MY SKULL***

‘I am always fascinated when people talk about the “forging of a nation”. Most nations are forgeries, perpetrated in the last century or so. Some nations relied on literal forgeries: the epics of Ossian…’ (Ascherson 281)

‘We were forging a new vocabulary in an open and democratic society where finally the past had been made known’ (Krog, ‘Last time, this time’)

‘Identity is memory, says [José] Zalaquett. Identities forged out of half-remembered things or false memories easily commit transgressions’ (Krog, *Country of My Skull* 24)

**1.** ***Hughes and Krog***

 In this chapter I return to Krog’s alleged plagiarism of Ted Hughes in *Country of My Skull* and the debate about Krog’s authorial practicesthat ensued. I relate Krog’s citational methods to her controversial use of testimony in that book. There is, I argue, a surprisingly direct relationship between her reworking of testimonies and her obscuring of the authorship of various writers (Hughes, Elaine Scarry, Pierre Bourdieu, Julian Pitt-Rivers) that she draws on. Together, they work towards the authorisation of Krog as ideal national chronicler of the TRC, as poet and as African. Let us turn to Krog’s alleged borrowing from Hughes, and her rebuttal of this, before considering her other alleged borrowings and her use of testimony.

Theallegation of plagiarism from Hughes was vehemently denied by Krog and her publishers, Random House. Stephen Johnson, the managing director of Random House, posted on *Litnet* a statement that Krog had told them that she had in 2005 received a letter claiming that she had plagiarised from Hughes and that Watson had now repeated these claims. He continued:

We have examined Watson’s claims regarding Krog’s alleged use of the Hughes piece and reject, out of hand, that his argument holds any validity. We cannot tell whether he is confused or deliberately disingenuous in making these claims against Krog. What is clearly apparent, however, is the man’s inability to grasp the nuances of Krog’s writing about myth in her work *Country of My Skull*.

Krog's rebuttal of the allegation that she plagiarised from Hughes – a charge she describes as ‘absurd’ (‘Last time’); Ingrid de Kok as ‘unconvincing’; Nic Dawes as ‘unsustainable’; and which was testily dismissed by Rosalind Morris – deserves some scrutiny. This rebuttal rests on a misrepresentation of Hughes’s essay ‘Myth and Education’ and a reading of her own work which relies not on her words as they stand in *Country* but on her privileged authority to say retrospectively what really inspired her. Krog begins by claiming that ‘Watson cunningly disguises the context of these [contested] lines [in Hughes], and the spread of pages over which they appear, through the use of ellipses’ (‘Stephen Watson’ 74)[[45]](#footnote-45). The ‘spread of pages’ to which Krog refers amounts to approximately half a page. The passage begins near the bottom of page 138 and ends just over a third of the way down page 139. Here are the words in their original context:

A child takes possession of a story [Hughes uses myth and story interchangeably in this essay] as what might be called a unit of imagination. A story which engages, say, earth and the underworld is a unit correspondingly flexible. It contains not merely the space and in some form or other the contents of those two places; it reconciles their contradictions in a workable fashion and holds open the way between them. The child can re-enter the story at will, look around him, find all those things and consider them at his leisure. In attending to the world of such a story there is the beginning of a form of contemplation. And to begin with, each story is separate from every other story. Each unit of imagination is like a whole separate imagination, no matter how many the head holds. If the story is learned well, so that all its parts can be seen at a glance, as if we looked through a window at it, then that story has become like the complicated hinterland of a single word. It has become a word. Any fragment of the story serves as the ‘word’ by which the whole story’s electrical circuit is switched into consciousness, and all its light and power brought to bear. (138-39)

The only contested words that do not occur over this half-page are the references to the ‘inner and outer world’. Hughes refers to them briefly half a page before (at the top of page 138).[[46]](#footnote-46)

After suggesting that Watson’s quotations are arranged deceptively, Krog claims:

In ‘Myth and Education’ (*Winter Pollen*, 1994)[[47]](#footnote-47), Ted Hughes writes about a particular kind of myth, namely those sediments of Greek and Christian culture that settle in the unconscious and inform the Western mind. (74)

This is untrue. Hughes is not writing about ‘a particular kind of myth’; he is writing (generally) about myth as a ‘unit of imagination’ – a phrase which Krog repeats[[48]](#footnote-48). Hughes is concerned throughout with the *workings* of myth rather than their specific contents. He mentions the Greeks because he is trying to elucidate why Plato, so sceptical of poetry, should have proposed the inclusion of myths in childhood education. Later in the essay Hughes also mentions the importance of stories in Steiner education and in the training of sages in Islam. He nowhere posits the idea of a (Jungian) (collective) unconscious in which the ‘sediments’ of Greek and Christian culture deposit themselves.

After offering this representation of ‘Myth and Education’, Krog makes another unfounded claim: ‘Watson suggests this is the only way to view myth’ (74). Krog then trumps what she perceives to be this ‘particular’ understanding of myth, confining itself only to the ‘Western mind’, with the brutal reality of South Africa’s past:

But during the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africans were confronted by another kind of myth, the one that enabled an ordinary white man to kill a black man and afterwards go home and play with his children. (74)

Krog hereby manages to posit her more enlightened understanding – and that of South Africans who participated in or witnessed the TRC – against Watson’s supposed (Eurocentric) narrowness. She then goes on to claim that interviews with psychologists and a member of the special forces clarified for her that ‘when a white man had internalised the indoctrination that a black man was a “kaffir” (code for not being human), he was enabled to kill what he then took to be not human’ (75).

It is worth pointing out that in ‘Myth and Education’ Hughes does deal with what he terms a morality ‘contemptuous’ of the ‘human element’ which has, in its ‘purity and strength’ and ‘nearly religious fanaticism’, characterised most of the ‘philosophies and political ideologies of our time’ (146). His whole argument for the inclusion of myths and stories in education is that they develop the imagination, the faculty which, according to him, reconciles a person’s inner and outer worlds, and without which humanity cannot exist. In societies where the inner world is scorned, so is the human. For Hughes contempt for the human enables people to become disconnected, to no more actively engage and participate with outside reality than with a television screen, and in this way, when their inner world of ‘natural impulsive response is safely in neutral’, to enter the realm of the ‘broiler killer’ (148).

Krog claims retrospectively that when she wrote the contested passage she was concerned solely with ‘a specific derogatory word’ (75), but this is not evident in *Country*. Here her musings on myth begin very abruptly, in a bold and declarative tone that in no obvious way follows on from the preceding paragraph’s reminiscences, and are offered as a general assertion, as follows:

A myth is a unit of imagination which makes it possible for a human being to accommodate two worlds. It reconciles the contradictions of these two worlds in a workable fashion and holds open the way between them. The two worlds are the inner and the outer world. Myth makes it possible to live with what you cannot endure. And if the myth has been learnt well it becomes a word – a single word that switches on the whole system of comforting delusions. (190)

It would be fallacious of a reader to claim (as Krog does) that in the above passage she is not generalising about the workings of myth, and how ‘a single word’ may function, but rather is concerned solely with a specific – but unspecified – word. Likewise it is false to claim, as she does, that when Hughes writes about how a story learnt well becomes like ‘the complicated hinterland of a single word’ (Hughes 139) he ‘deals with Greek mythological backgrounds’ (Krog, ‘Stephen Watson’ 75). Hughes proposes the idea that every word carries with it a hinterland of associations and in this sense has possibly ‘mythic’ dimensions and functions– not the idea of a hinterland of Greek myths behind every word.

In Krog’s rebuttal the contested words are decontextualised and rearranged, so that they appear in a different sequence to that in *Country*, and she omits some words. In her rebuttal, Krog argues backwards: she starts with the contested words ‘And if *the* myth has been learnt well it becomes a word’ (75; my emphasis), claiming that she is dealing with ‘a specific derogatory word’ (75), whereas in *Country* the contested passage starts with the generalising ‘*A* myth’ (my emphasis). When in her rebuttal she does quote this line beginning ‘A myth’, she belatedly specifies, including a qualifying – and crucial – parenthesis: ‘A myth (as encapsulated in the word ‘kaffir’) is a unit of imagination’ (75).

Krog also misquotes her own writing. She writes that she finds it ‘strange’ that Watson, while claiming to have a good ear for English, should find the ‘following phrases so similar that they amount to a case of “authorial deceit”’ (75) and gives them as follows:

‘It contains not merely the space and in some form or other the contents of those two places; it reconciles their contradictions in a workable fashion and holds open the way between them’ (Hughes)

and

‘It reconciles the contradictions of these two worlds and holds open the way between them’ (Krog).

She omits the phrase ‘in a workable fashion’ from her own quotation, even though the sentence appears in *Country* as follows: ‘It reconciles the contradictions of these two worlds in a workable fashion and holds open the way between them’ (190).

In *Country* Krog’s musing on the manner in which a myth learnt well becomes like a word which acts like a switch is immediately followed, in the next paragraph, by an example: ‘Like the word *meid*’. In ‘Myth and Education’ Hughes’s words on how a myth learnt well becomes like a single word which acts as switch are also immediately followed with an example: ‘As a rather extreme example, take the story of Christ’, and Hughes explains how the very word Christ carries with it and triggers a number of associations and stories – the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the story of Lazarus et cetera. But whereas in Hughes the example follows on as a logical step in an argument, in Krog it is presented as if a sudden epiphany, the single sentence granted an entire paragraph. Her observation appears as if contingent upon the realisation of the general dynamics of mythic language and an example of them, and serves to link what goes before – childhood reminiscences including the word *meid* (maid )– with what immediately follows: words uttered by a farmer that every time he sees a black woman crying at the TRC he thinks of two expressions from his ‘youth’: ‘to cry like a *meid*’ and ‘to be as scared as a *meid*’ (190). Although Krog may claim retrospectively that her inspiration lay in interviews done with psychologists and members of the special forces and her interest was in race[[49]](#footnote-49), the context of the passage in *Country* deals with the indoctrination not of soldiers but of children. Also, education and indoctrination are not so absurdly unrelated. Hughes makes it clear that the stories we internalise as children structure our understanding and behaviour and writes that once a story is firmly planted in the imagination it becomes the foundation for all that is built there (141).

Krog’s passage on myth as a ‘unit of imagination’ is immediately preceded by an illustration of just how a child employs such a mythic word, here ‘*meid’*[[50]](#footnote-50). In the section of *Country* in which the contested passage occurs, there are two mythic words under discussion – *meid*/maid and kaffir. Although the immediate context of the contested passage is concerned with *meid*/maid, Krog in her rebuttal seizes on the word kaffir, omitting to mention *meid*/maid, and thus shifts the focus from the indoctrination of children (and hence from the matter of myth and education) to that of soldiers, and to questions of race and politics, ostensibly far removed from Hughes’s concerns with what Krog claims are ‘Greek mythological backgrounds’.

In her statement on how a myth learnt well becomes like a word, Krog also repeats Hughes’s metaphor of a word acting as a switch within an electrical circuit. But whereas Hughes is arguing for the ability of words to provide illumination (the logical extension of this electrical metaphor), for Krog they switch on a system of ‘delusions’. It is a mixed, powerless metaphor and it is hard to see how Krog would have reached this phrasing, or ‘idiom’[[51]](#footnote-51), independently of Hughes. In Hughes the metaphor is one which extends throughout the essay, and is vital to his conception of myth in education as potentially enlightening.

There are other instances where words, phrases and idioms which in Hughes are formulated with striking coherence occur in the contested passage in *Country*, but without the same supporting context. If it was Krog’s ‘conclusion’ that ‘myth makes it possible for one to live in two real worlds simultaneously’ (as she argues in her response to Watson [75]) why does she choose, in *Country*, to refer to these ‘two real worlds’ as the ‘the inner and the outer world’ – and so emphatically, granting them an entire sentence of their own? There is nothing that prepares us for the sudden assertion that ‘The two worlds are the inner and the outer world’ and no perceptible basis for it. In the example given in her rebuttal too, this definition is obscure – the two worlds she describes are both external: killing and loving one’s family. And why, if myth is something that enables a person to inhabit ‘a whole system’ of delusions, does it accommodate ‘two’ worlds only?

Regarding these phrases, Eve Gray writes that ‘It [the issue of plagiarism] all seems to hinge, in Watson's mind, on the use of the idea of “inner mind” and “outer mind”’. Having erroneously identified these two worlds as two ‘minds’, Gray dismisses the notion that the idea of these two worlds could be particular to Hughes. These are obviously very general and commonplace words, but in Hughes they have a particular sense, whereas in Krog they are vague, even messily obscurantist.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Contrary to the suggestion of Morris, the issue of plagiarism does not turn simply on the idea, or even the phrasing, of myth as a ‘unit of imagination’, or even on the notion of ‘two worlds’ which are the ‘inner and outer world’. There is also the idea that a myth/story when ‘learnt well’ becomes like a word and that such a myth accommodates two worlds and ‘reconciles’ their ‘contradictions in a workable fashion’ and ‘holds open the way between them’– and more pertinently the verbatim repetition therein; the electrical metaphor – as contained in the verb to ‘switch’ (on); the context of childhood; the concern with how myth relates to our humanity (explicit in Hughes, implicit in Krog); and Krog’s following on of her statement that a myth learnt well becomes like a word in just the same manner as Hughes’s corresponding statement in ‘Myth and Education’ – with an example. On top of this, there is the dissonance of Krog’s assertions in their immediate context, not helped by her reluctance to defend the words in this context.

Morris, a professor of anthropology at Columbia University, drew on her expertise to refute the allegation of plagiarism. Declaring that ‘perhaps a little intellectual history would clarify’, she proceeded to provide some genealogy of the idea of myth as a ‘unit of imagination’, and directed the reader to Claude Levi-Strauss's 1955 article ‘The Structural Study of Myth’. As it happens, a line from Levi-Strauss's essay is repeated by Krog in the same contentious passage. The penultimate line of the passage – ‘[t]he function of a myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction’ (190) – differs only from Levi-Strauss in two words – ‘The purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction’(443). This reinforces the impression that Krog is working by a type of pastiche[[53]](#footnote-53), making the possibility that she is borrowing from Hughes less than absurd.

In her response to the plagiarism allegation, Krog appeared horrified that she could be accused of plagiarising from Hughes of all people: she declared that ‘she had always been a Plath groupie’ (‘Last time’), thus staking out an ‘either or’ territory, distinct ‘groups’. In retrospect, it is striking that Krog should disaffiliate herself so strongly from Hughes on this account – the suggestion is that she is judging Hughes for his marital infidelity (in the wake of which Plath killed herself) – given that Krog inserts into her own account a tale of marital infidelity. Krog invents a fictional affair, in which she is unfaithful to her husband, in order to illustrate some of the ‘psychological underpinning’ (*Country* 171) of the commission (this fictional affair is discussed in more detail in the following section). This dynamic of ‘betrayal’ is one which, I will argue, is even more powerfully allegorised, or symbolically enacted, through Krog’s unacknowledged borrowings, which act as a type of violence towards a reader-beloved (as we shall see, this elision between the fictional lover and the reader is literally facilitated through Krog’s shifts in address). It is even more striking that Krog should plagiarise this particular passage from Hughes – for it expresses an idea at the heart of the TRC: that stories, the sharing of stories in a common space, promotes ‘reconciliation’. This is the line that Krog puts forward in *Country*, and has since defended. Yet Krog’s very act of writing here suggests and enacts something else: a denied commonality. And this was reinforced when she declared herself on Plath’s ‘side’, presumably against Hughes’s. The line from Levi-Strauss used by her in turn reflects the contradictions of her own text, and the attempt to subsume them into, or reconcile them via, a single imaginative work, or, perhaps, personal myth – as she offers herself as sacrificial figure for the new South Africa, willing to speak for ‘all voices, all victims’ (*Country* 278). My own reading of Hughes in the contested passage is that the idea that myths and stories enable reconciliation goes hand in hand with his rewriting of Plath’s poetry in *Birthday Letters*, a revisiting of the same poetic tropes used by her, so as to establish and renew a connection with her, and establish himself as her rightful poetic heir[[54]](#footnote-54). *Birthday Letters* constitutes an act of elegy which constantly comes up against its own limitations, if not futility: that poetic reparation cannot change the fact of Plath’s death. The ‘face’ of ‘the real’ (a phrase from *Birthday Letters*, ‘The Beach’, line 78), a ‘face’ which elides with the haunting image of Plath’s dead face, keeps on confronting Hughes, despite all the efforts of his poetry to, so to speak, ‘efface’ this in favour of a happier, earlier vision of her. Krog’s ‘poetic’ project in *Country* is faced with a similar material insurmountability, and ‘anxiety of authorship’ (or perhaps of ‘inheritance’), as that of *Birthday Letters*, I suggest. Krog’s ‘anxiety of authorship’ will be returned to in due course. First let us consider the further queries about *Country* that appeared in the national media after Watson’s article was published. These concern the relationship of fact to fiction, a relationship which has some commonality with that between the ‘real’ and ‘poetic’/ ‘mythic’.

**2. ‘*Called to Account’: Fact and Fiction***

 Two weeks after Watson's article appeared, Colin Bower in the *Mail & Guardian* (3 March 2006) reported on another alleged plagiarism in *Country*, this time of South African academic Isabel Hofmeyr's book *We Spend Our Years As A Tale That is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*. Excerpts from this appear in the mouth of a ‘Professor Kondlo’, whom Krog describes in the book as ‘my friend’, ‘the Xhosa intellectual from Grahamstown’ (37)[[55]](#footnote-55). Kondlo is not simply ‘a’ Xhosa intellectual, but ‘the’ ‘Xhosa intellectual from Grahamstown’, suggesting a degree of renown. The following week the *Mail & Guardian* published a letter from Chris Mann, a poet and academic from Grahamstown, saying that in the decades he had spent in the tiny academic community of Grahamstown he had not encountered a Professor Kondlo, and nor had anyone he knew. Sarah Ruden, another poet, who had in 1998 published a highly critical review of *Country My Skull*, in which she had raised the matter of copyright and claimed never to have ‘been more leery of postmodern appropriation than in reading Krog, or more inclined to call it ordinary theft’ (171), also wrote to the *Mail & Guardian* (‘Watson Deserves An Answer’). Ruden pointed out that the text includes a poem inadequately attributed to a nameless student, and that a testifier had objected to Krog's use of his testimony and had not received a satisfactory response from her[[56]](#footnote-56). Krog posted another response on *Litnet*, titled ‘Last time, this time’ (20 March 2006). She wrote that the poem mentioned by Ruden, although described by her in *Country* as by a student, was in fact a translation of one of her own, published poems. She did not respond to the matter of the testifier who had objected to Krog's use of his testimony. On the subject of Professor Kondlo, Krog asserted that she knew him well, adding in a footnote that this was not ‘his’ real name. By asserting that ‘Kondlo’ was male, Krog appears to hold to the idea that this pseudonymous Kondlo is indeed, as described, a Xhosa intellectual from Grahamstown[[57]](#footnote-57). As Michael Titlestad and Mike Kissack note:

We must assume then that either her friend ‘Professor Kondlo’ has passages from Hofmeyr's book by heart (in which case, perhaps he should have acknowledged the origin of his comments), or he is the fictional version of Hofmeyr, whom Krog interviewed in the course of writing *Country of My Skull*. If the second case is true, one might have reservations about the practice of the fictional masking of a white female academic as a “Xhosa intellectual from Grahamstown”. (75)

Titlestad and Kissack aptly describe this ‘fictional masking’ as an ‘act of ventriloquism’ (76). The apparently pseudonymous Kondlo in *Country* would appear to be a representative or composite figure, what Krog describes as a ‘spokesperson for ideas’ (‘Last time’). Arguably, Krog's use of a specifically *black* spokesperson for ideas serves to legitimise statements that would surely be treated more sceptically were they given as her own – that is, as those of a white Afrikaner, an identity Krog foregrounds in *Country*. For instance, Kondlo announces that he wants to ‘take’ the words of testifier Nomonde Calata and turn them into a comic. At least one reviewer, Meira Cook, has criticised Kondlo’s lack of reflection about appropriation in the conversation between himself and Krog (n.pag.).

 In ‘Last time, this time’, Krog addressed the matter of Hofmeyr's attribution by noting that:

Throughout the book fellow textmakers were named, often together in a single paragraph, often under alternative names to protect their identities, often as spokespersons for ideas. Knowing that the text of *Country of My Skull* was a quilt of personal, South African and international input, and not a revelatory egg laid exclusively by myself, all source material was sent to the literary museum in Grahamstown for anybody to access.

There are two such paragraphs of names in which numerous ‘textmakers’ are acknowledged (on pages 47 and 237). In the first, the names of testifiers and writers (including Hofmeyr) are piled together. In the second, Krog mentions four works on which the conversations that follow are based.

 In the paragraph of names on page 47, Krog mentions Art Spiegelman, the artist and author whose autobiographical comic books *Maus: A Survivor's Tale I* (1986) and *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale II (1991)* self-reflexively interweave both the story of his father, a Holocaust survivor, with whom he has a difficult relationship, and the story of trying to re-negotiate this relationship through his art. Spiegelman's acclaimed work avoids charges of trivialising the Holocaust by its choice of the comic book form by its strong personal investment. The books contains self-reflexive vignettes on the problems of representation and caricature, which, strikingly, are most often presented via conversations – for example the conversations between the artist and his step-mother to this effect (*Maus I* 132), as well as a conversation between the artist and his father as to the value of the book (*Maus I* 133), and the conversation between Spiegelman and his psychologist, a survivor of Terezin and Auschwitz , as to whether anyone should attempt to tell the stories of the dead victims, unable to speak for themselves (*Maus II* 45[[58]](#footnote-58)).

Spiegelman's mention by Krog further suggests that Kondlo is a composite or fictive character, and that Krog follows Spiegelman in articulating self-reflexive questions of form via the vivid and dramatic device of the conversation. Moreover, as we shall see, a number of Krog's conversations are fictionalised, created out of verbatim quotes from other writers, and propped up by notional interlocutors. On page 147, Krog notes that the conversations that follow are based on various texts, which she cites. But this device of inserting quotes in the mouths of herself and her interlocutors begins earlier, I suggest.

Krog in ‘Last time, this time’ expressed exasperation at the questions being raised: ‘I am finding myself in the bizarre position of being called to account why a fork is not a spoon. Put differently: Why was a non-fiction text not written like a factual report?’. Krog maintains that *Country* is ‘non-fiction’ but asserts that it ‘is NOT a journalistic or factual report of the Truth Commission’. Krog’s assertion here that *Country* is not a ‘report’ echoes one made in the book itself. It occurs in what, despite Krog’s assertion that the book is not fiction, might best be described as a metafictional vignette. Here Krog confesses to someone called Patrick, a sort of meta-reader, that she has altered material to suit *her* ‘truth’. It is worth quoting the passage in full; the admission occurs after a description of a workshop, and has Krog confronted by Patrick:

'Hey Antjie, but this is not quite what happened at the workshop,' says Patrick.

'Yes I know, it's a new story that I constructed from all the other information I picked up over the months about people's reactions and psychologist's advice. I'm not reporting or keeping minutes. I'm telling. If I have to say every time that so-and-so said this, and then at another time that so-and-so said that, it gets boring. I cut and paste the upper layer, in order to get the second layer told, which is actually the story I want to tell. I change some people's names when I think they might be annoyed or might not understand the distortions.'

'Then you're not busy with the truth!'

'I am busy with the truth…*my* truth. Of course, it's quilted together from hundreds of stories that we've experienced or heard about in the last two years. Seen from my perspective, shaped by my state of mind at the time and now also by the audience I'm telling the story to. In every story there is hearsay, there is a grouping together of things that didn't necessarily happen together, there are assumptions, there are exaggerations to bring home the enormities of situations, there is downplaying to confirm innocence. *And all of this together makes up the whole country's truth*. So also the lies. And the stories that date from earlier times.'

'And the affair you describe in here. Is that true?'

'No, but I had to bring a relationship into the story so that I could verbalise certain personal reactions to the hearings. I had to create a new character who could not only bring in new information but also express the psychological underpinning of the Commission. Surely I can't describe how I eavesdropped and spied on others? What gives a story its real character is its need to entertain – to make the listener hang on your lips.' (170-71; my italics)

Notably, this admission occurs more than half way into the book, once the reader has taken Krog's stories at face value, as 'truth', thus allowing for the maximum emotional impact, making the reader ‘hangs on the lips’ of the teller. Krog admits her manipulations, but at the same time justifies them, not merely in the name of her own truth, but the whole country's truth, effecting an elision between the two, and assuming the responsibility of national voice. Through her confession, Krog paradoxically presents the text as ultimately without narrative guile.

 The scenario presented here is prescient of that in which Krog finds herself in ‘Last Time, this time’: ‘called to account why a fork is not a spoon’. ‘In ‘Last time, this time’, she reasserts the contention that she is not ‘reporting’, but insists also that her work is ‘non-fiction’. Although Krog draws a distinction between ‘non-fiction’ and the ‘factual’, she does not clarify it; rather, she reinforces the sense of the two as distinct rhetorically, by repetition, writing that ‘[i]n the Netherlands my work falls under the rubric of Creative Non-Fiction (ie different from Faction)’ (‘Last time’). Krog implicitly suggests that facts, factuality are the sole confine of reports. But other genres and texts, including most fiction, also incorporate facts. Also, it should be noted that despite Krog's disclaimer within the book that she is ‘not reporting’ but ‘telling’ (171), her journalistic experience as reporter covering the TRC is used to sell the book, and validate her own authority and perspective – the dustjacket of the 1998 South African Random House edition describes Krog's journalistic expertise. The front jacket flap begins with an italicised epigraph: ‘This is Antjie Samuel reporting from Ladybrand’, as if *Country* were reportage, and goes on to describe how this ‘award-winning poet’ covered the TRC as a reporter for two years. The back flap, having listed her literary achievements, notes that the radio team she headed won the Pringle Award for ‘excellence in journalism for reporting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ and also that Krog won ‘the Foreign Correspondents' Award for outstanding journalism for her *Mail & Guardian* articles on the Truth Commission’. In fact, the *Mail & Guardian* articles are reproduced and incorporated into the book. Interestingly, Krog has since modified her insistence on her work's non-fictional status, claiming in a 2007 article that she writes ‘fiction bordering fact but marketing it as nonfiction’ (‘Fact Bordering Fiction’ 41) My own sense is that Krog borrows the authority associated with non-fiction to bolster her own account, and that there is some commonality here with the colonial travel writing discussed in Chapter One, in which ‘transports of imagination’ are denied, while significant alterations are made. Indeed, *Country* is plotted as a tour around South Africa, following the TRC, and closes with a trope that is a *locus classicus* of colonial accounts of journeys to the Cape – the sighting of Table Mountain (276). Krog, on a ferry to Robben Island, uses this moment to name Africa, and assert her own belonging to it (277). It is a rewriting of these accounts, but also, like them, depends on a certain naturalisation.

 One of Krog’s arguably ‘fictional’ strategies is her use of composite figures, like Kondlo. In her conversation with the pseudonymous Kondlo, Krog places in his mouth a near verbatim quote from Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, a book whose influence on *Country* has been noted in articles by Ashleigh Harris and J.U. Jacobs and a MA thesis by Jacqui Starckey-Melck cited by Harris (22). Starckey-Melck claims that although *The Body in Pain* ‘echoes through’ *Country*, Scarry is not named (qtd.in Harris 47). Scarry's name does appear, but 19 pages later, in the paragraph of names to which Krog refers in ‘Last time, this time’. *The Body in Pain* is not mentioned, although notes from it are included in the box of source material Krog deposited at the National English Literary Museum (NELM)[[59]](#footnote-59). The reference to *The Body in Pain* in *Country* is indirect given that Scarry has several publications to her name. Scarry's authorship is further blurred by the fact that when Krog, in conversation, puts forth Scarry's thesis, she introduces it with ‘the academics say’, a curious phrase used elsewhere too (88), which suggests for academia a consensual, established authority rather than a profession of differing, competing perspectives. Moreover, as we shall see, Krog swiftly moves from ‘what the academics say’ to what is purportedly Kondlo's own direct impression as TRC witness, while in fact what is presented as such is a rewriting of the following passage in *The Body In Pain*:

To witness the moment when pain causes a reversion into the pre-language of cries and groans is to witness the destruction of language; but conversely, to be present when a person moves up out of that pre-language of cries and projects the facts of sentience into speech is almost to have been permitted to be present at the birth of language itself. (6)

In *Country*, Krog discusses with Kondlo the haunting effect of the crying, at the first TRC hearing, of Nomonde Calata, activist and wife of Fort Calata. Krog says that ‘that sound…will haunt me for ever and ever’, and Kondlo comments:

The academics say pain destroys language and this brings about an immediate *reversion* to a pre-linguistic state – and to witness that cry was *to* *witness the destruction of language…*was to realise that to remember the past of this country is to be thrown back into a time before language. And to get that memory, to fix it in words, to capture it with a precise image, is to be *present at the birth of language itself*. (28; my emphases)

What is striking about Krog's reworking is not only that she makes Scarry's general theoretical observation an epiphanous, personal and specific reflection – about *that* cry*, this* country – but that whereas Scarry is concerned with how the ‘person in pain’ births language, Krog is concerned with the position of witness, and appropriates this act of articulation away from the sufferer to herself/the TRC as witness. (Arguably, Krog also conflates her position as poet-confessor and that of the testifier, making both simply witnesses[[60]](#footnote-60).) Elsewhere in *The Body in Pain* Scarry does talk about how people can articulate pain on behalf of others, and sees some of the value of art in this, but she does not elide the distance between sufferer and witness quite so easily. Krog departs most strikingly from Scarry in eliding the personal and the national, claiming that to witness Calata's cry is to realise that trying to remember South Africa's past is to be thrown not simply into a state of inarticulable trauma, but into a *time* before language, so that Calata becomes a cipher of the nation, figured as a suffering woman in travail awaking from a primordial silence. (From such cries and groans, poetry rather than history is allowed to emerge). This transferral of authority involves a violence against, or effacing of, the specific, and of *testimony* (defined by being a first-person articulation), in the service of a national narrative, which Krog undertakes to author. Tellingly, Krog elsewhere reworks Scarry's formulation of language being ‘born’ out of pain in a specifically national context. After the first testimonies quoted in the book, or what appear to be testimonies (a rapid sequence of quoted excerpts from the transcripts), Krog offers, in her capacity as witness to the first days of hearings, the follow reflection:

In the beginning it was seeing. Seeing for ages, filling the head with ash. No air. No tendril. Now to seeing, speaking is added and the eye plunges into the mouth. Present at the birth of this country's language itself. (29)

At the close of the book she says ‘I want this hand of mine to write it – for all voices, all victims’ (278). As Harris suggests, there is an untenable conflict between this desire to author a national narrative, and to manipulate events so as to present *her* story[[61]](#footnote-61). Mark Sanders argues that Krog finds a way to ‘host’ the testimonies of the victims, to be open to and facilitate the utterance of the other (158). This does seem to be Krog's project in many respects (as presented in her appeal to the ‘beloved’), but her manipulation of texts and testimonies at times, I argue, serves as a remastering that effaces the other and is even solipsistically indifferent to it. By conflating the two projects (of constructing a national narrative and telling her *own*, personal story, and representing it specifically as such) Krog offers herself as official, authoritative spokesperson on the TRC, a position she has in many ways come to occupy and profit by. (It is thus that allegations of plagiarism and falsification throw into crisis this authorial position and its associated credibility.)

 Immediately after the observations about pain and language and Calata's cry in the passage quoted above, Krog/Kondlo continues to claim the following about verbalising pain:

But more practically, this particular memory at last captured in words can no longer haunt you, push you around, bewilder you, because you have taken control of it – you can move it wherever you want. So maybe this is what the Commission is about – finding words for that cry of Nomonde Calata. (42-43)

Here we have a conflation of Krog's anxiety of authorship – that she cannot find words for the haunting cry of Calata – with the problems and purposes of the TRC. Surely it is naïve at best to believe that a successful verbalisation or literary rendering of the past would assauge its trauma, that you can ‘move it wherever you want it’. This ‘taking control’ (as Kondlo wishes to ‘take’ Calata's story), or narrative mastery, is a fantasy. Moreover, the TRC was about establishing other types of reference than narrative – it concerned itself with times, dates, recovering bodies, establishing an historical record, validating experience and restoring reference generally as best as possible. There is a self-reflexive doubleness to the passage quoted above in that Krog has hereby found words for Calata's cry – consequently, her writing project becomes, possibly, ‘what the Commission is about’ and is thus authorised.

There are other such (‘poetic’) doublings in the book that serve to authorise it. For instance when Krog claims that the most important way in which Archbishop Tutu leads theTRC is language:

The process is unthinkable without Tutu. Impossible. Whatever role others might play, Tutu is the compass. He guides us in several ways, the most important of which is language. It is he who finds language for what is happening. And it is not the language of statements, news reports, submissions. It is language that shoots up like fire – wrought from a vision of where we must go and from a grip on where we are now. And it is this language that drags people along with the process. (152)

 This could be a description of her own language in *Country* (not one of ‘reports’), and indeed of this very passage, and the justification of the text's occasional over*wrought*ness – in the service of engaging its readers.Similarly, Krog's metaphor for her method, ‘quilting’, which she repeats in her rebuttal of plagiarism (‘Last time’), is presented in the text as the *natural* extension of the TRC legislation's own make-up. Krog has Johnny de Lange, the chair of the Justice Committee, which oversaw the TRC's legislation, say of it: ‘it is really is a patchwork of all the viewpoints of this country, a real *lappieskombers* [patchwork blanket]’ (10). The quilting method, become homely, local and indigenous, is hereby ‘legislated’ (in a doubled sense) as the authoritative take on the TRC. But if there is a process of auto-authorisation via these self-reflexive tropes, and what might be described as Krog’s ‘naturalisation’ of her poetic tropes, there is also an attendant ‘anxiety of authorship’. Indeed, the two seem to be concomitant.

**3. *Anxieties of Authorship***

The term ‘anxiety of authorship’ is used by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* , their study of how female writers have written themselves into a male-dominated literary tradition in which certain oppressive metaphors of the feminine dominate, and threaten to silence female self-articulation. Their term is in turn borrowed from Harold Bloom, whose study *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* traces how poets respond to literary tradition, casting this as an Oedipal struggle with the literary ‘father’ or forebear, in which the aspirant writer takes up his place, assumes his voice. Louise Viljoen has noted how the anxiety of maternal influence is played out in Krog's work, in her articulation of her familial and literary relationship with her mother, the Afrikaans writer Dot Serfontein. Something of this struggle is brought into *Country,* via Krog's intertextual quotation of her mother's work[[62]](#footnote-62).

In *Country*, we see Krog struggling with the legacy of Afrikaans, which she describes as ‘carrying violence as a voice’ (216), as well as with a new language, English, and the weight of its tradition. Crucially, *Country* is the story of Krog not just as an Afrikaner, but as an Afrikaans *poet*, and continually reflects on the relationship of Afrikaans literature and language to apartheid suffering. Krog interweaves allusions to Afrikaans literature throughout the text and signals her interest in the relationship of Afrikaans literature to apartheid violence in the conversation with Kondlo on the occasion of the first hearings – wondering at the mention in Calata's testimony of ‘Mattewis and Meraai’, two figures from Afrikaans literature alluded to by the police when they were harassing Matthew Goniwe (40). Krog, about to playback on tape some of Calata's testimony to this effect, states: ‘[b]ut the space that haunts me is the space of Afrikaans literature that now enters the narrative’ (40). The ‘space’ of Afrikaans literature continues to haunt Krog's own narrative, and indeed has already been touched on. Strikingly, Krog opens the book with a vignette which focuses on Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) leader Eugene Terre’Blanche and his oratory (Terre’Blanche wrote poetry, some of which was once prescribed in schools); Krog describes him as a ‘master of acoustics’ (2) and gives us snatches of a speech in which key motifs of Afrikaans literature recur – the veld, freedom, tears, betrayal, suffering women and children (2). As we shall see, such allusions recur and are carefully situated so that Krog builds up to a situation of her own voice as poet in a new polyphonic, multilingual landscape where Afrikaans is no longer the master tongue of white rule. Indeed, Krog tries to write it into a broader African tradition or identity. What plays out, particularly given her invocation of her mother, might be described as an anxiety of authorship as described by Gilbert and Gubar, but with an elegiac and redemptive twist, as Krog seeks to resituate Afrikaans literary tradition.

Perhaps significant here is an alteration Krog makes to her mother's text via the excision of a line which deals precisely with national literary tradition. This line is translated by Viljoen as follows: ‘I made the resolution to never break down two stones that an Afrikaans writer piled on each other in the Afrikaans language, no matter how crooked they may be’ (qtd. in Viljoen, ‘Mother’ 199). Krog, quoting her mother's lament for Verwoerd, and cutting this line from it, explicitly opens up the question of the relationship of politics to language, and risks breaking down the ‘stones’ ‘piled on each other’, i.e. opening the tradition to critique. The quotation sits ambivalently in the text, though, and by the end of the book we see Krog repeating its terms – thus illustrating (in a perhaps rather over-determined manner) this narrative of filial anxiety (and resolving it by subsuming it to a poetics of suffering which has at its end the ‘birth’ of the new, casting herself as a latterday *volksmoeder* [mother of the nation)]).

But arguably there is a further anxiety of authorship at work– the anxiety that narrative mastery is insufficient, cannot perform all that it should (including ‘healing’), that the literary is not up to the brute reality of South African life and bodily suffering. At one point in the text, Krog remarks in conversation that ‘I often write pieces [of testimony] down from memory, and when I check the original tape it is always, but *always* better than my own effort’ (238). The victims' testimonies have a power that is experiential rather than rhetorical, they have the weight of reality – *having happened*, against imagining. And here the first person voice (recorded on the tape) – the testimonial – is crucial, the link, proof of the suffering, tying the story to the body. As Scarry argues in her discussion of voice, body and self in *The Body in Pain*, voice is an extension of the ‘body-self’; the voice metaphorically ‘embodies’ the ‘self’ (50). What we witness in Krog is an anxiety of authorial mastery – the power of the testimonies, their power (of the material, the bodily) – versus the power of words, her writing, and the literary. What plays out here might be described in terms of a psychoanalytical phenomenon described by Judith Herman as ‘witness guilt’: a process in which a counsellor feels guilt that she has not suffered as much as her patient, and an anxiety that she will not be able to ‘manage the material’ (qtd. in Berger 200). Herman notes that witness guilt can emerge because ‘the therapist is part of the system that failed to protect the client’ (qtd. in Berger 200). Herman’s description is apt in that, as Sanders notes, Krog sets up the hearings as scenes of psychoanalytic transference and interlocution (163).

**4. *Krog’s Use of TRC Testimony: Poetry and Testimony***

Let us turn to Krog’s reinscription of TRC testimony – narratives which she finds ‘always, but always’ contest and subvert the power of her own narrative mastery. As Catherine M. Cole has pointed out, the testimonies quoted in *Country* are widely cited in academic discussions of the TRC, with the assumption that they are identical with the transcripts of the testimonies given at the hearing (80) – and that when one cites Krog one cites testimony from the hearings (more or less – many of the transcripts are in translation). Or at least, that it is acceptable to ascribe these words to the testifiers, and make via Krog’s text, general assumptions or observations about the TRC and its workings. But Krog does not always attribute the testimony, and a closer inspection, and tracing of the testimonies, show that in such cases this testimony is not always testimony, but includes Krog's invention (testimony I take to belong to a certain, singular voice, and to be defined by this). This is not merely a matter of editing (and it is made more confusing by the fact that at time ellipses are used to mark omissions and pauses, and at other times not, even when material is omitted)[[63]](#footnote-63), but rather of altered meanings. Generally, the alterations serve an overarching narrative of 1) pain as destructive of language and 2) the TRC as an occasion for storytelling that is healing. Significantly, the chapter in which the testimonies are introduced closes with a section headed ‘We tell stories not to die of life’[[64]](#footnote-64) (48). The very first testimonies quoted (on page 27), which serve to set the scene for what is to come (the text is largely made up of testimony) and are derived from the first few days of hearings, are nameless, but in a paragraph twenty pages later (page 47), near the close of the chapter, we are given names which can be connected to most of these snippets (although not all). Seventeen snippets of testimony – or what appears as such, given that each appears in quotation marks – are presented. They are prefaced by a fragment of Krog's own, her own testimony, which is presented as if in parallel, the singular difference being that it is presented without quotation marks, so that Krog's voice also comes to be seen as a testifying one; Krog beseeches:

Beloved, do not die. Do not dare die! I, the survivor, I wrap you in words so that the future inherits you. I snatch you from the death of forgetfulness. I tell your story – complete your ending – you who once whispered beside me in the dark. (27)

Krog's positioning of herself as a ‘survivor’ is curious. A white South African, no matter how politically active, surely cannot claim the position of survivor, in so far as this denotes survival of a shared suffering or trauma and experience. Krog presents herself and the ‘beloved’ as existing in a shared intimacy: ‘you who once whispered beside me in the dark’. Perhaps Krog casts herself as such because she is working by a method of pastiche, homing in on tantalising fragments in other narratives[[65]](#footnote-65). From the notes Krog deposited at NELM, it seems that this piece is derived from a public lecture given by Ariel Dorfman at the University of Cape Town on 1 July 1997 and entitled ‘Disappearing Acts’[[66]](#footnote-66). Krog appears to have transcribed the lecture[[67]](#footnote-67). Her notes begin with Dorfman speaking about birth and death, concentrating on the latter, and saying the following:

 [t]his incapacity of the dead to communicate the ending of their own story compells the living to tell it – completing the message, trying to fill the emptiness with some form of memory. Not just trancing FOR the dead, but trancing the dead themselves into some vestige of life [*sic*]. (second page of unpaginated notes)

I presume ‘trancing’ is shorthand for ‘translating’. On the third page of the notes Dorfman goes on to discuss the relation of the ‘survivors’ to the ‘beloved’ and the problems of speaking about the missing, including his own struggle of articulation. The notes on the seventh page tell of the bereaved survivors' sympathy to the missing and the sense that they were being called to articulate their stories:

[t]hey [the survivors] were murmuring to the death: do not die, do not dare to die, do not disappear. By snatching those deaths from forgetfulness, by ceaselessly telling their stories the living were allowing them to be born again because of the absence of their bodies [*sic*].

On the next page Dorfman continues: ‘How can we speak that survivors can understand and inherit us in future’.

Clearly the fragment in *Country* that introduces and frames the first set of ‘testimonies’ is derived from Dorfman, but where Krog differs from him is that she is about to present not only the stories of the dead (and thus supplement the absent material body with the textual body), but to quote from the testimony of *living* witnesses, sufferers and victims, whom she did not consult over her use of their testimony, and some of whom have objected to this usage. As we shall see, in a number of instances Krog does ‘complete’ the stories – that is, she does not merely bear witness, but fictionalises testimony in order to more powerfully put across her particular truth, her vision of the hearings. I will discuss four of these fragments from the first hearings that are altered to serve Krog's narrative purposes and also another piece of altered testimony, which occurs later in the text, and is broken up into verse form, namely ‘the shepherd's tale’. Although Krog states that she presents the shepherd's narrative in his exact words – a statement academics such as Sanders, Ashlee Lenta and Shane Graham have taken as given in their discussions (though Graham acknowledges that this is a translation) – this is not true, and a study of Krog's excisions and alterations, as she renders this ‘poetic’, helps us to understand what model of the literary/poetic she is deploying.

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The third fragment Krog presents on page 27 is adapted from the hearing on Sicelo Mhlawuli, the activist whose hand was cut off by the security police who killed him. It reads:

'This inside me…fights my tongue. It is…unshareable. It destroys…words. Before he was blown up, they cut off his hands so he could not be fingerprinted…So how do I say this? – this terrible…I want his hands back.’ (27)

The detail about the hands, and the wish to have them returned, clearly links this testimony to that concerning Sicelo Mhlawuli, given by his wife Nombuyiselo Mhlawuli[[68]](#footnote-68), yet there are a number of differences. Mrs Mhlawuli nowhere describes her husband as ‘blown up’; she specifies that it was one hand, his right hand, which was allegedly cut off and which she would like returned; and she does not provide a motive for his hand being amputated (according to Krog ‘so he could not be fingerprinted’)[[69]](#footnote-69) . Nevertheless, this fragment is treated by critics as evidentiary. J.U. Jacobs traces the fragment to the East London hearings (though he doesn't name Mrs Mhlawuli but treats her as a cipher, describing her as ‘the woman in’) and lauds her expression of the difficulty of articulation in the face of pain: ‘The woman in East London…perhaps expresses it best: “This inside me…fights my tongue. It is…unshareable. It destroys…words”’ (152). While Jacobs writes that *Country* ‘exposes an element of fictionality at its heart’ (149), he does not appear to believe that this fictionality extends to the testimonies. Most critics who quote this piece of testimony focus on the same words as Jacobs does, doing so in order to make a similar point, that is, to illustrate a particular line of argument foregrounded in *Country*, namely that pain destroys language. This idea is amply illustrated by this testimony, in which the speaker says that ‘it’ is ‘unshareable’ and ‘destroys…words’ and ‘fights my tongue ‘and asks ‘So how do I say this?’. But all of these reflections on language and its relation to trauma – here given authority by being *dramatically enacted* in testimony, and, it would seem, being spoken by a victim – are Krog's addition. None appear in the transcript, and moreover these insertions are not warranted as a means of rendering verbally a difficulty in articulation that Krog might have witnessed as journalist present at the hearing. A video recording of the testimony shows Mrs Mhlawuli speaking in a fluent and composed manner, sure of her voice and narrative and request, without breaking down or lengthy pauses[[70]](#footnote-70). Nevertheless, this fragment of testimony, has repeatedly been cited as evidence of the destruction of language by pain and the consequent incoherence of the testifiers[[71]](#footnote-71). But the testimony of Mrs Mhlawuli, who at the time of the hearing was a lecturer in the Department of Xhosa at Bellville Training College, was cogent and detailed, specifying names and dates, and describing both her and her husband's political involvement.

By her fictionalisation of the testimony, Krog's (or Scarry's) thesis is put into the mouth of a testifier of one of those most mediated, visually iconic and *powerful* stories of the TRC. Krog latches on to the spectacle of the severed hand, and indeed makes much of Mhlawuli’s hand in the conversations which follow (32; 44). Moreover, the severed hand becomes an iconic figure in her text. Shortly, Krog will pray that her hand may ‘fall off’ if ‘poetry come forth from this [the hearings]’ (49). Later in the text Krog will quote a piece of writing by her mother in which she prays that her hand will fall off if she writes in an exploitative way about the death of Verwoerd (98). And at the end of the book Krog states ‘I want this hand of mine to write it [i.e. about the Commission]’ (278).

Arguably, Krog's recasting of Mrs Mhlawuli’s narrative performs its own violent erasure of detail and identity, metaphorically of ‘fingerprints’, rendering Sicelo Mhlawuli's hand a symbol in the act of (mis)quotation. That Krog should add in (and invent? unconsciously interpret?) the detail about the hand being amputated in order to make the corpse unidentifiable seems quite uncanny.

Krog's presentation of pain as ‘unshareable’ – her insertion of this into the testimony – serves to elide her own position with that of the victim. In the same chapter, Krog foregrounds the difficulty she has in rendering the horror of the hearings; she portrays herself as afflicted by wordlessness – ‘I stammer. I freeze. I am without language’ (37) – and quotes a TRC counsellor as telling the journalists covering the hearings that ‘[y]ou will experience the same symptoms as the victims. You will find yourself powerless, without help, without words’ (37). Ashlee Lenta quotes the fragment about language as ‘unshareable’ in support of Krog's presentation of herself as poet-witness as also that of victim-sufferer, without questioning the elision (194). Lenta notes that this is a ‘literate manipulation’ of longer testimony, but lauds the ‘editing’ as careful (195), and argues (like Sanders) that Krog attempts to find a way to ‘host’ the voices of the TRC. Arguably, this reading does not itself establish sufficient critical distance from the text, as if Krog's readers were themselves ‘hosting’ her voice, in repetition.

There is, of course, an irony to Krog's insistence on the ‘unshareability’ of pain given her appropriation and representation of it. This unshareability of pain is a key thesis of Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, where she argues that the isolation engendered by pain might be relieved through finding in material culture, the texts of others, a resonant representation of the pain. This recognition serves, if not to lessen the pain, to lessen the isolation it induces, and make the sufferer feel part of a community. Krog's project might be read as trying, with good intentions, to engage in a reciprocal task of establishing community by responding to pain by figuring its very difficulty of articulation. There is, however, also the potential for violence here (and exploitation), particularly since Krog uses the testimony of a living woman. As it happens, Nombuyiselo Mhlawuli has objected to being the object of representations rather than having her own voice facilitated. Fiona Ross writes that:

Nombuyiselo Mhlawuli…commented to students making a documentary film that “Many people have been writing stories about us, making films and documentaries. What about doing it for us? We do it ourselves and tell our stories the way we’d like it”. (*‘*On Having Voice’ 335)

Despite Krog's plea, at the close of Chapter Three, that her ‘hand may fall off’ if ‘poetry come forth from this’ (49), her alteration of Nombuyiselo Mhlawuli’s testimony appears to operate in the service of a certain poeticisation. Strikingly, this piece of supposed testimony appears translated as an Afrikaans poem in Krog's poetry collection *Kleur Kom Nooit Alleen Nie* (2000):

*dit binne my*

*veg teen my tong*

*dit is*

*ondeelbaar*

*dit vernietig*

*woorde*

voor hy opgeblaas is

sny hulle

sy hande af

daar is geen vingerafdrukke nie

*hoe sê ek dit*

Die

Verskriklike

ek wil sy hande terughê[[72]](#footnote-72)

(‘dagboeke uit die laaste deel van die twintigste eeu’ 33)

Either the fragment cited in *Country*, ostensibly from the hearing about Sicelo Mhlawuli, and which has little relation to the transcripts, is a translation of an Afrikaans poem by Krog, or the poem is simply a translation of the prose piece into poetry by means of enjambment (apart from the four lines that render the single continuous sentence ‘[b]efore he was blown up, they cut off his hands so he could not be fingerprinted’ and ‘[d]ie/[v]erskriklike’ every other line is enjambed exactly according to an ellipsis or period in the English). If the latter, it lends credence to Watson's charge that Krog sometimes writes by the ‘carriage return’ principle of poetry (‘Annals’ 53).

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The ninth fragment of unnamed testimony presented by Krog (28) is adapted from the testimonies concerning the death of Sonny Boy Zantsi[[73]](#footnote-73) given by his sister Nomvuyo Priscilla Zantsi and Ms Quay, a neighbour, and ‘Priscilla Zantsi’ is among those named in the paragraph of ‘texts’ on page 47. The fragment runs as follows:

'This man with the red scarf, he shot into the outside room where Sonnyboy was hiding…I was standing in the kitchen..I saw him dragging my child. Sonnyboy was already dead. He was holding him by his legs like a dog. I saw him digging a hole, scraping Sonnyboy's brains into that hole and closing it with his boot. *The sun was bright…but it went dark when I saw him lying there. It's an everlasting pain. It will never stop in my heart. It always comes back. It eats me apart. Sonnyboy, rest well, my child. I've translated you from the dead.’* (28; my emphasis)

This fragment is substantially altered from the testimonies[[74]](#footnote-74). Krog conflates two testimonies and twice inserts the phrase ‘my child’, a term used by neither of the testifiers, and which tends to suggest the speaker here is Zantsi's mother, rather than his sister or neighbour. Krog also adds various details, arguably sensationalist and potentially offensive (at the very least to Zantsi's family). These include the description of Sonny Boy being held ‘like a dog’, and the image of the hole being closed with a boot, as well as the claim that the sun was bright, but then seemed to darken. There are no such details in the testimony. Moreover, the last seven sentences of the fragment, which have been variously cited by academics as testimony[[75]](#footnote-75), are Krog's invention. These lines conveniently extend the motif of remembrance through words introduced in Krog's earlier utterance: ‘[b]eloved do not die…I wrap you in words’ (27). Again, Krog's fictionalisations serve to elide the distance between her and the testifiers and their differing tasks. The statement ‘I have translated you from the dead’ recalls the same lecture by Dorfman from which Krog derives the fragment beginning ‘[b]eloved’, so that the testifier here comes to ventriloquise Dorfman/Krog. Problematically, Krog's additions also ascribe to the testifier a greater victimhood than she professes – rendering her quite helpless (‘It's an everlasting pain. It will never stop in my heart. It always comes back. It eats me apart’).

What is curious is that Krog chooses to insert her own words as testimony when the testifier makes a similar (but different) plea for Sonny Boy to be commemorated which is perfectly moving as it stands. The transcript has Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza asking Ms Zantsi if there is anything the Commission could do for her, and her replying:

The only thing I can ask the Commission is that usually on – every – every June 16th we know that Sonny Boy died. This – we are reminded of this by the newspapers and the TV when we see Hector Petersen’s picture we actually hoped that we will also have something that they did to Hector Petersen, something with his name in it. And if it’s just a stone with his name on it just like Hector Petersen’s case I would be very satisfied with that.

Ms Zantsi requests that Sonny Boy's name be remembered. This is an appeal for specificity – the proper name is the linguistic marker of the material, historical, specific; Ms Zantsi does not see Sonny Boy's loss as emblematic and wishes for a memorialisation of him specifically, rather than seeing his death subsumed under the iconic loss of Hector Petersen. It is possible to read Krog's alterations as a response to Ms Zantsi's appeal, but the alteration of the testifier's request for memorialisation of Sonny Boy to the claim that this *has* been performed by the giving of testimony – ‘I have translated you from the dead’ – is problematic. There is a doubleness here – Krog's rendition records the need and desire for commemoration but grants this as having occurred – it has occurred (for Krog) via her reworking (her text standing in for a stone with Sonny Boy's name). So here we have Krog's voice displacing the testifier's, although it is represented as a testifier's. (The ‘I’ in ‘I have translated you from the dead’ is Krog here.) Krog's response is problematic too, given its lack of contextualisation and specificity – precisely what the appeal for the remembrance of a name demands. Interestingly, something of this decontextualisation is remedied in Krog's recent, co-authored book, *And There Was This Goat* (2009), where the writers return to the story of Sonny Boy and correctly identify the women who gave the testimony about his death (2).

In having the testifier say of Sonny Boy ‘I have translated you from the dead’, Krog has her speak within the conventions of elegiac poetry in which translation/metamorphosis is a standard trope. Strikingly, this piece of supposed testimony, like the piece on language as ‘unshareable’, recurs as an Afrikaans poem in *Kleur Kom Nooit Alleen Nie*. The poem reads as a rough translation of the English from ‘[h]e was holding him’ onwards, with the line breaks of the poem for the most part according with the sentence breaks of the English prose version:

hulle sleep hom aan sy bene soos ’n hond

hulle skraap sy brein in ’n gat in die grond

hulle trap dit vas met hulle stewels

dit was helder oordag

en stikdonker

dit hou nooit op in my hart nie

dit kom altyd terug

dit vreet my uitmekaar

Sonnyboy, rus in vrede my kind

*ek vertaal jou vir vandag uit die dood[[76]](#footnote-76)*

(‘dagboeke uit die laaste deel van die twintigste eeu’ 34)

The poems as they appear in *Kleur Kom Nooit Alleen Nie* are set in parallel with poems about the concentration camps of the South African War, drawing a clear analogy between the victims of apartheid and the Afrikaans victims of the British concentration camps, an analogy which is also latent in *Country*.

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The eleventh fragment of unnamed testimony is adapted from the testimony of Nodwzakazi Juqu, the mother of Petros Fuzile Juqu, and his father, whose name is given in the transcripts only as Mr Juqu.[[77]](#footnote-77) The fragment in *Country* reads

[w]hen Fuzile didn't come home that night I went to look for him. Now this makes me mad really. My son was shot and nobody told me. I looked everywhere and nobody told me my son was in the mortuary…they later gave me his clothes. His T-shirt looked as if it had been eaten by rats. (28)

This significantly alters the testimony, conflating the two testimonies – and, most strikingly, changing the testifier's causes of anger. Mr Juqu's testimony as it is given in the transcript reads in a way that complicates the meaning of the TRC hearing, and shows it as an occasion of pain – that is, it reads *against* the representation of the hearings offered by *Country*. The transcript shows Mr Juqu saying he is ‘mad’ not because no-one told him that his son was dead, but rather in response to the question of how it feels to be before the TRC and to possibly face his son's killers:

Ms Sooka: Sir this is a very difficult question that I am going to ask you now, I am going to ask you in English. I think we cannot even miss the pain and the sorrow because it is reflected in your face. There is the question of whether you might want to meet the people or the person who killed your son. What -– what is your thinking about that?

Mr Juqu: Ja I hear you, but now what will they do when I meet them because my son is already dead, even now – even the fact that I came here, *I didn’t want to come here to this Commission because I was – I got very hurt. Now this makes me mad really, now if I meet these people what am I going to do with them?* (my emphasis)

Krog re-orders Mr Juqu's testimony, and changes his reasoning, omitting (without noting it as such) his statement that he would prefer not to be at the hearing, that it is painful, and it is this that ‘makes me mad really’; she then conflates it with details from Mrs Juqu's testimony (it is she who describes the shirt looking as it it'd been eaten by rats, and she tells of going to look for her son at the mortuary, though not of anger). Perhaps because this fragment is so heavily rewritten, the Juqus are not amongst those mentioned on page 47. Nevertheless, Krog uses verbatim statements from their testimonies, as well as factual details that point to it, and in doing so effaces their voices and feelings. Strikingly, Krog retains the affect – Mr Juqu’s anger – but remasters it to different ends.

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The thirteenth fragment of nameless testimony runs as follows:

This was the last thing I saw: Barnard standing next to his car. He spoke Xhosa like a Xhosa. He pointed his firearm at me. I felt something hitting my cheek. I felt my eyes itching. I was scratching my eyes and yelling for help. Since then I’ve been blind...and unemployed...and alone and homeless. But today...today it feels as if I can nearly see...’ (29)

It is adapted from the testimony of Lucas Baba Sikwepere[[78]](#footnote-78), testimony which is repeated at greater length and with attribution on the next page, but which appears here in altered form and without attribution. If it were not altered, it would appear to be merely a repetition. Here it looks either like another testimony, or as if he reiterated this point (which, instead, he made once, very powerfully). Attesting as it does to the ‘healing’ potential of testifying before the TRC, the fragment's repetition serves to underscore Krog's narrative of the TRC as 'healing', in a way that is directly derived from the somatic, based on the idea of ‘the body in pain’. Krog also exaggerates Sikwepere’s supposed helplessness prior to his testifying before the TRC; the details about his being ‘homeless’, ‘unemployed’ and ‘alone’ are her invention. In the transcripts he speaks of his children (asking that the commission help support their education), and tells of how his being shot was the occasion of his becoming politically active (for which he was later tortured):

I would like to explain something to the Commission that the role of the struggle by the comrades, I was not involved in those, I forgot to tell you this. I was just an ordinary worker, and I was - I was not involved in - in the struggle. My involvement now with the struggle only came when I was already injured, now that’s the time I started to get involved with the struggle of the freedom. Before I wasn’t involved.

Arguably, there is real violence/violation in Krog's altering of testimony and flattening of difference, wrenching fact from context. Perhaps this explains the curious metaphor of language as ‘freshly mown’ in the sentence that precedes the list of names of testifiers and writers: ‘[t]he texts grow next to one another in the vapour of freshly mown language’(47) – the texts are cut and flattened, to a blank and composite *surface*, so that we have a ‘vapour’ of language – a sense, impression, something as faint as a simulacrum. What is most problematic is that Krog presents these fragments in quotation marks, as the statements of others, while projecting her/Scarry's/Dorfman's voices, performing an act of ventriloquism.

**4. *Testimony, Confession and Ventriloquism***

Much has been written about the commendable ethics of *Country,* particularly the way in which it facilitates, or plays ‘host’ to, the voice of the other through its incorporation of testimony. Sanders praises Krog's foregrounding of lyric address (as he points out, her book closes with a lyric poem and it incorporates letters and poems), which mimics testimony in that it depends on ‘an address to the other’ (163), as apposite to her subject, as the TRC hearings followed a question and answer structure (Sanders describes this as a ‘structure of address’ [163]). But this structure is double-edged. For the structure of question and answer is also that which defines the relationship of torturer and tortured, what Scarry describes as the ‘structure of torture’[[79]](#footnote-79). Arguably, Krog does not always simply facilitate the voice of the other, but veers into a type of narrative manipulation or mastery of the voice of the other – an appropriation which Scarry describes as basic to the scene of torture: one in which ‘voice’ is severed from body and appropriated[[80]](#footnote-80). There is the sense that the ground of Krog’s’ work is black *bodies* – black bodily suffering– and the text repeatedly dramatises this with its references to the ‘blood’ cost of the stories told before the TRC (49, 237-38). (Indeed, Krog shows language being ‘birthed’ from Calata’s cry – pain destroys language, and from these ruins, Krog builds a new national language. For Krog, this cry of pain is the inaugural moment of the TRC.)

Krog, in her notes from *The Body in Pain*, submitted to NELM, includes reflections from it on this relationship of torture, 'confession' and 'betrayal':

'The natur [*sic*] of confession is falsified by an idiom built on betrayal. Torture consists of a primary physical act: infliction of pain; and a primary verbal act: the interrogation. The verbal act consists of two parts: the question and the answer. The question is mistakenly understood to be the motive; the answer is mistakenly understood to be the betrayal. The first miskate [*sic*] credits the torturer, providing him with justification; his cruelty with an explanation. The second discredits the prisoner, making him rahter [*sic*] than the torturer, his voice rather than his pain, the cause of his loss of self and world'[[81]](#footnote-81) (second and third pages of unpaginated notes)

What Scarry describes as occurring is in effect a type of ventriloquism, the tortured's 'voice' becomes appropriated by the desires of the torturer, who gains this power of reducing the tortured to puppet through the force of pain, the body's pain and power, which has the capacity to overwhelm the 'self'[[82]](#footnote-82). Pain becomes the ground for articulation, but this ground is appropriated by another 'voice', the master/torturer, master narrative, which must be (re)produced at whatever cost[[83]](#footnote-83). Scarry describes the torturer's voice in this scenario as ‘doubled’ (36). Strikingly, *Country* itself performs a number of doublings, enacting its own premises. Indeed, there is even a figuration of the act of ventriloquism.Krog uses the metaphor of ventriloquism in relation to Katiza Cebekhulu, an ex-member of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's notorious football club and the subject of *Katiza's Journey*, and Emma Nicholson, the woman who provided the means for Cebekhulu's story to be written, and who, as Krog relates, described herself as his ‘scribe’ (252)[[84]](#footnote-84). It emerged in the hearings that *Katiza's Journey*, authored by Fred Bridgland and based on the story told to him by Cebekhulu, contained a number of factual inaccuracies, which Krog ascribes to the ‘ventriloquism’ of Cebekhulu's would-be benefactors: ‘The ventriloquists surrounding Cebekhulu see to it that his evidence feels as shaky as everything else we've heard so far’ (252). Elsewhere, Krog presents Nicholson, whom she describes as ‘the unacceptable face of colonialism’ (presumably because British, and a baroness) saying of Stompie Seipei's mother: ‘I want to be Mrs Seipei's voice’ (251). Arguably, Krog herself veers dangerously close to using the testimony as ground for ventriloquism in an attempt to be the 'voice' of others.

Steven Connor, in *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, observes a particular relationship between ventriloquism, torture and the vatic or oracular that is pertinent to my reading of Krog’s poetics. The oracular, as described by Connor is precisely the scene of possession, of voice ‘without origin, the voice that invents and dissimulates its own source, that has always come from somewhere else than the place from which it issues’ (74). Connor, following Page du Bois's *Torture and Truth* (1991), a study of how contemporary understandings of truth derive from an idea of truth articulated in ancient Greece specifically in relation to the practices of slavery and torture, describes the myth of the Delphic oracle as ‘a myth of the omnipotent voice, a voice which both tortures itself, and is formed out of that torture’ (74). Plagiarism, then, shares something with the oracular insofar as the oracular is based on displacement and exchange, the story of the oracle being, as Connor notes, the story of ‘displaced and reappropriated speech’ (72). Notably, Krog's plagiarisms, particularly of Hughes and Pitt-Rivers (discussed at the end of this chapter), appear vatic, out of the blue, and serve to construct an image of her as an ‘inspired’ poet. And in her articulations she shows herself as if possessed (speaking out of anger, striking people). It is also specifically as *tortured* artist-poet that Krog presents herself (her responses of bodily disintegration (rashes [49, 79)], hair and teeth falling out [49]) ‘miming’ those of the victims, as Sanders puts it (158, 166). It is worth unpacking what lies behind this common metaphor for the (romantic) poet. The cultural cliché of the tortured poet is of the poet as ‘inspired’ or possessed, driven towards confession by an agonised self-consciousness. Krog's confession in her ‘Envoi’ that she has ‘told many lies’ and ‘exploited many lives and many texts’ (281), and cut and pasted in order to tell *her* truth, works in the service of an avowed sincerity (unsceptical of its own premises) that places an impossible self-expression foremost and thus subscribes to a logic of narrative mastery rather than listening or facilitation. This lack of scepticism about sincerity translates into and demonstrates an idea of a self transparent to itself, governed by intentions that are seen as simple operations of the will rather than invested in fantasy. Interestingly, Tilar J. Mazzeo has argued that Coleridge, who famously defined his own plagiarisms as a type of divine ventriloquism, saw his plagiarisms as ‘unconscious’ not in the sense that they were performed unwittingly, unknown to self, but in the sense that they were habitual and compulsive, over which he had little will, and thus an act of possession or ventriloquism in the service of a transcendent truth[[85]](#footnote-85). Krog does not subscribe to the idea of a transcendent truth, but she does to that of an overarching personal truth – of the ‘I’ as ultimate reference point[[86]](#footnote-86) – and shows a near religious devotion to the new South Africa. Perhaps this is what justifies to her the plagiarisms in *Country*, in which she offers herself as a vessel for the entire country's truths (elided with her own). In this way it is possible to see Krog's appropriations of testimonies (her ventriloquisms) and texts (her plagiarisms) as continuous, and continuous with her ‘poetic’ method (of self-expression), and to refuse (or resist) the terms (and claims) of that poetry/method. Both the plagiarisms and the ventriloquisms serve as a type of textual violence that appropriates the voice of the other.

The analogy between textual and bodily violence is an unfortunate one – clearly narrative violence is not the same as physical or bodily pain – but the parallel is one that the text invites via its figurations and disclaimers. Moreover, testifiers have objected to Krog's use of their words, and the pain it causes them – it seems such representation can translate into psychic, if not somatic, violence. Yazir Henri, who confessed before the TRC that he had provided details of a comrade's whereabouts while under police detention, and whose testimony is used in *Country* (52-55), is exceptional in having the academic skills and resources to respond to Krog's use of his testimony in various forums (book and journal publication and academic conferences) that carry weight, and is among the foremost of Krog's critics. Strangely, given Krog's reading of Scarry, which critiques the reading of breakdown under torture as ‘betrayal’, she presents Henri's testimony under the heading of betrayal, in the chapter ‘The Narrative of Betrayal Has to Be Reinvented Every Time’ (50-55). While in the notes at NELM Krog copies out the sentence from Scarry to the effect that ‘the nature of confession is falsified by an idiom built on betrayal’, in *Country* confession and betrayal are seen as inseparable – and she portrays herself, in telling her story of the Commission, as betraying, accused of betrayal. (Here she identifies her own ‘confession’ [constituted by *Country*] with her potential ‘betrayal’ of her Afrikaner community, and conflates this with the ‘confessions’ made by testifiers.)

Ross, one of the few academics to mention objections by testifiers to Krog's use of their testimonies (333-34), in her attempt to grapple with this, interestingly turns precisely to the question of voice and its mastery. In her article ‘On Having Voice and Being Heard’ Ross provides a formulation by Liisa Malkki’s of ‘voice’ as ‘the ability to establish narrative authority over one’s circumstances and future, and, also, the ability to claim an audience’ (qtd.in Ross 333) and goes on to suggest that the ‘concerns of testifiers described earlier suggest that restoration of dignity is not simply a function of restored voice, but of a voice in control – that is, a voice with a signature’[[87]](#footnote-87) (336). Ross goes on to quote Paul Gready on the importance of establishing reciprocal dialogue and not perpetuating the mastery of other voices, even with the good intention of ‘voicing’ the other:

voice without such control may be worse than silence; voice with such control has the capacity to become a less perishable form of power because in essence it allows voice to enter into a more genuinely reciprocal dialogue. (336)

**6. *Testimony, Poetry and National Remembrance: ‘The Shepherd and the Landscape of My Bones’***

In this section I consider an example of altered or ‘ventriloquised’ testimony which occurs in the context of a chapter, ‘The Shepherd and the Landscape of My Bones’, which gives primacy to the *poetic* voice as the authentic voice of the national. At the beginning of the chapter, Krog feels divided; hearing the sounds of everyday Afrikaner life from within the TRC Hall in Louis Trichardt, where traumatic stories are being related, her ‘hands on the laptop keyboard are numb with contradiction’ (195). Shortly after, this is reversed – she is in the countryside of her youth, a place of Afrikaans names, and hears from afar the voices of the TRC, the ‘voices of all the land’ – and realises her own voice lies with those (210). The TRC has facilitated an integration of these contradictions. Not much longer we have a graphic illustration of this – Krog, at a TRC hearing singing the national anthem, standing next to a Sesotho woman, their voices harmonising, even if distinct in their accents (216-17). An excerpt from this vignette of the singing of the new national anthem (itself composed of many languages) appears on the dustjacket of the book: ‘I wade into song….It is fragrant inside the song, and among the keynotes of sorrow and suffering there are soft silences where we who belong to this landscape, all of us, can come to rest’. Here we have Krog finding her voice, demonstrated as poetic – and indeed, here, expressed in ‘song’ – in relation to the country's trauma. At the heart of the chapter we have a local inhabitant of the Free State, Krog's home province, speak ‘poetry’ as he gives testimony, thus naturalising her poetic relation to the land as authentically African and indigenous. ‘The Shepherd's Tale’ (210-16), in which Krog versifies the testimony of a man named Lekotse (only one name is given) and then constructs a literary critical analysis of it (217-20), is one of the most widely discussed testimonies in *Country*[[88]](#footnote-88). In her analysis, she claims that the shepherd's ‘narrative’ is ‘given above in the exact words in which he spoke it’ (217). This is not true; this is not an ‘exact’ transcription of the testimony, but one shaped by omission, notably of detail, specificity and material conditions – time, names, costs[[89]](#footnote-89). I will look briefly at Krog's shaping and analysis in the context of the testimony, and how this poeticisation has been read as making the testifier's words more ‘valuable’, suggesting that what is displaced here are questions of economic reparation, in favour of a particular model of the poetic.

The major omission from the testimony is the following exchange between Ilan Lax, the questioner, and Mr Likotsi (as his name is given in the transcripts):

Now, you said that some of your furniture was damaged in that raid, and that your doors were broken. Approximately how much did these things cost, or what did it cost to repair them? Do you have any idea of that? – I am taken care of by my children. I do not know what amount did they spend to repair the house. I think Thomas can be in a good position to estimate the cost, but because of his businesses he could not come. My wife is not here today because she cannot work. The jackals went into my house on that night trying to bit us [*sic*]. I know things are expensive. We all know you cannot get a door that costs less than R50,00. Prices have gone up. I don't want to lie. I don't want to commit myself.

Krog has not simply overlooked this part of the testimony, as she does use the following sentence from it: ‘[t]he Jackals went into my house on that night trying to bit us [*sic*]’. Krog transfers it into another part of the testimony, altering the narrative to read ‘since that day/ that the jackals came into my house to bite us/ I cannot even carry a spade for gardening’ (215). Krog then glosses this statement as meaning ‘Without his self-respect, he cannot live, and he cannot grow’ (219), focussing on the psychological, rather than the economic and material, consequences of the injury, which, among other things, would forbid work as a gardener – or to grow food for consumption. While the economic details of reparation, and Likotsi's striking honesty and particularity about them (‘[p]rices have gone up. I don't want to lie’) are not of import to Krog's rendering, the comparison of the security police to jackals is, as this is a repetition of a previous metaphor. She writes: ‘[n]otice at the end of the narrative Lekotse returns to the comparison – “the jackals came into my house'” – as if he cannot find another image.' (218). This repetition is useful to Krog's binarist analysis, which seeks out doublings, repetitions, dualities, and her claim here, that it ‘is as if he cannot find another image’, read in light of her own reworking, reads as a case of projection. Krog makes much of any perceived duality and repetition; she points out as significant for instance the fact that Likotsi reports that his son has twins. Krog writes that Likotsi's answer to Lax's question about his family is ‘marked by the word “two”: two of his children are dead, two of them are mentally disturbed, there are twins among his grandchildren’ (217). But the narrative is just as marked by other numbers, and it is not marked by the *word* two. Likotsi himself does not make much of the fact that *two* of his children are mentally disturbed, and he first mentions that out of ten children ‘eight are left behind’ (excluded by Krog), not merely that ‘two passed away’[[90]](#footnote-90).

In her rendering of the testimony as verse and analysis of it as primarily a literary narrative, Krog tends to favour the symbolic over the material. Having excluded the material costs of the door in her rendering of the testimony, she writes generally of the implicit symbolism of the door in her analysis: ‘A door closes off a space, but it also opens into it. Both these meanings are present in Lekotse's story’ (220). There are three other exclusions of any significant length in Krog's rewriting of the transcripts, and these too are concerned with the material and economic aspects of Likotsi's suffering. Thus, for instance, the following passage is omitted by Krog:

My wife cannot walk. I am not in a position to buy her a wheelchair, and we have to go to doctors all around the country and we are lacking funds for the transport’ and ‘[h]is business stood still, there was no income for that month. We were not given any explanation as to what happened. I was asking myself, ‘What are these policemen doing here?’ I was scared of their guns.

Krog's other, more minor exclusions – insofar as they are of words and phrases, rather than longer passages – are all of material specificities. Likotsi states that his last-born son was born in September 1948. Krog excludes this date. She also excludes the second name of one of Likotsi's sons and another date, that it was in March, rather than just ‘this year’, that his children had bought him new doors. Krog occludes specificities of place, where the children went to school, important enough to the testifier to enumerate – Bloemfontein, Thaba Nchu, Wepener and Botshabelo. In her analysis, Krog makes a point of casting Lax's question about the date of the attack as irrelevant: ‘Surely the precise date on which your life was destroyed is irrelevant? It could have been any day, the important thing is that it happened’ (217). This supports Krog's rendering, in which details are obscured. Krog's exclusions of names, dates, costs, material specificities in her versification serves to render this a timeless story and the shepherd an archetypal figure, or, in the words of Ruden, ‘a literary figurine’ (‘Review’ 171) in a chapter which is self-consciously concerned with the poetic and its value. Shane Graham praises the way Krog ‘enjambs the sentences to resemble poetry’ (25). Graham suggests that as ‘poetry’, the ‘old man's voice’ has more ‘dignity’ (25). Alternatively, one could read the re-casting of Likotsi’s testimony as verse as patronising, framing him, as Ruden, suggests, as a stock literary type.

Certainly the description of him as ‘*the* shepherd’ suggests he is supposed to be somehow representative. The figure of the shepherd has a long history in Western poetry. A.E. Voss, in his article ‘The Waning Swain: Prolegomena to the South African Pastoral’, describes the figure of the ‘swain’, one variant of which is the shepherd, in English language South African pastoral as the product of an ‘idealising vein’ of pastoral poetry in which the material and economic is invariably suppressed. Krog appears to work out of a similar idealising vein of poetry. ‘The Shepherd's Tale’ is prefaced by a pastoral vignette, in which Krog reflects on the beauty of the landscape, and asserts her relation to it: ‘[t]his is my landscape. The marrow of my bones. The plains. The sweeping veld. The honey-blond sandstone stone. This I love. This is what I am made of’ (210). This possessive self-assertion is shortly tempered: ‘[t]he land belongs to the voices of those that live in it. My own bleak voice among them’ (210) and the authorial self blends again with the landscape, pictured as supplicant to the stories of the TRC, humbled by them: ‘[t]he Free State landscape lies at the feet at last of the stories of saffron and amber, angel hair and barbs, dew and hay and hurt’ (211). Krog herself blends with the landscape, which is of ‘her bones’, eliding her bones and those of murdered apartheid victims, the unearthing of whose remains, on farms around the country, is also covered in this chapter. In this regard, Krog quotes Eugene Terre’Blanche: ‘When Eugene Terre’Blanche said, 'This country is drenched with blood' – he didn't know how right he was’ (205). In so doing, Krog also elides her ‘bones’ and the literal bones of the murdered with Boer blood shed in the name of republicanism (significantly, the Free State, about whose landscape she is writing, was one of the Boer republics). This suggests a new, shared land created out of suffering. Latent here is a myth of autochthonous origins – a type of (virgin) ‘birth’ from land – a land ‘drenched with blood’ – which naturalises ownership by recourse to blood rather than labour and recurs in white South African writing[[91]](#footnote-91). (As we shall see, the interrelation between blood and labour surfaces in Krog’s reference to the ‘blood cost’ of words, where her own, potential material profits are occluded.)

 The invocation of the pastoral and simultaneous suppression of the economic (as in Krog's versification of Likotsi's testimony) is particularly problematic in the South African context, being a well-noted feature of its more socially and politically disingenuous writing. Arguably, this suppression of the economic also subscribes to a particular, fetishised conception of the literary. Mary Poovey, in *Genres of the Credit Economy*, locates the origins of this conception of the literary and literary value to the differentiation of moral thought into the two distinct disciplines of economics and literary criticism in eighteenth-century Britain, and with it new accounts of value – particularly ‘aesthetic’ value, capitalised on, so to speak, by Wordsworth and others (290). She notes that poetry (30) was accorded a particularly high place in the ensuing hierarchy of genres, and lyric in particular (126). In many respects this conception of the literary and literary value, derived predominantly from the Romantic poets, has dominated in English South African literary criticism[[92]](#footnote-92). Arguably, this conception of the literary plays out in the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the Afrikaner literary establishment too. After the humiliating loss of the South African War, recognition was sought for Afrikaans as a literary language and poetry, in particular, was elevated as a national form. The first Afrikaans literary prize, established in 1914 by the Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns was for poetry – the Hertzogprys (Hertzog Prize). Sandra Swart, writing about how Eugène Marais, a complex figure whose ‘home language was English’, was canonised by the Afrikaans press and academy as a *volksdigter* (people's poet) who expressed the *volksiel* (people's soul) writes that ‘The answer lies in the culture-brokers’ need for an ‘Afrikaner poet’ (‘Construction’ 850).

As Voss, following Coetzee in *White Writing*, notes, ‘the locus of the South African pastoral is deeply implicated with the law of property’ (‘The Waning Swain’ 65). This relationship between land, labour and property, rather than land and blood, is touched upon only sideways in Krog's farm scenes. The farm is a significant topos in *Country*, and the narrative is carefully structured around it. In the opening chapter we have a scene of Krog on her family farm; in the final chapter we are again presented with Krog and her family on the farm. Black labour is noticeably absent from Krog's sketches of the farm. Krog presents a family reunion at the farm:

We are all there. My brother Hendrik cuts three watermelons. Afterwards we swim in the cement dam behind the orchard while the sun sets in a splendour of clouds. The noises of the yard become more distinct – the milking of cows, the tractors being put away, then the sounds of frogs and birds rising like moisture from the vlei. (272)

The cows and tractors are tended to by invisible hands, and the labour becomes as natural and inevitable as birdsong. Labour, following Locke, is what makes private ownership rightful, and Coetzee and others have argued that it is for this reason that representations of black labour are repressed in white writing. In their stead, by a type of displacement, there is a rhetoric of blood, sweat and suffering whereby ownership and belonging are asserted via the blood sacrifice made for the land. The chapter closes with a meditation on poetry, titled ‘Waterholes’, which comments specifically on the role of the national poet, and casts the poet as vital to the group or nation's survival. Krog describes a trip to a poetry festival on the slave island of Gorée. She does not give any dates, and the impression – the piece is written in the vivid first-person present tense – is that this is during the TRC. But the festival occurred some years earlier, in 1992. Krog's inclusion of this piece serves to stress the importance of poetry, and, arguably, to foreground her own national task as 'poet'/memorialiser of the TRC. It also provides an occasion for her to clearly affiliate herself with an African poetic tradition. Asserting her belonging to Africa, she writes: ‘I am uncomfortable with how easily Europeans write off *our* continent – never as “different to”, only as “less than”’ (221; my emphasis). This follows shortly after a description of how a Dutch poet, whom she has portrayed as ridiculously vain, responds negatively to the recitals of the West African poets, ‘moaning: “Rubbish! Clichés! Nothing but clichés about blood and land!”’ (221). Krog herself has just remarked how '[I]n the square the trees forge blood' (221) and has, of course, used the language of blood and land throughout. In this way, Krog extends her affiliation to an Afrikaans literary tradition in which blood and land features in the poetry to a broader African tradition. Krog then goes on to consider the focus of ‘her’ culture on newness:

I ask Breyten [Breytenbach] to translate. ‘In my culture you are a good poet if you can say old things in a new way. We have been saying “I love you, but you don't notice me” for centuries. The “newer” the way you say it, the better poet you are. In the culture of Senegal, what makes you a good poet?’…The Senegalese poet speaks and Breyten translates: 'In my culture you don't just become a poet. You have to apply first. And the older poets come together and your ancestry is studied and your ability tested. And if you are chosen, you take up an apprenticeship with the chief poet. And he teaches you the nation's poetry. And your people's poetry is your people's lyrical soul, their history. And you may *not* say it in a new way, you may *not* change it, because then you forge what has happened. You change history...The more accurately you preserve the poetry, the better you perform, the better poet you are.’ (221-22)

The nation's ‘lyric soul’, here equated with their ‘history’, recalls the idea of the *volksiel* (people's soul) and the poet as the *volksdigter* (people's poet). Krog implicitly relates her own position as Afrikaner poet to a broader African identity, weaving the poetics of suffering, blood and land that characterise Afrikaner nationalist literary rhetoric into an encompassing African whole. Doing so, she justifies her own poetics of suffering in *Country* as part of a new, inclusive nation-building.

The Senegalese poet's focus on accuracy in preservation recurs as motif in the next reflection, on the vital function of the nomadic poet in remembering the sites of waterholes:

The survival of the whole group depends on whether you can find the waterholes in the desert. You must remember them in such a way that other groups are none the wiser…the day you betray the position of the waterholes to someone else, that is the day they will leave the poet behind in the dunes. (222)

 Poetry becomes vital for ‘survival’ and is a matter of ‘loyalty/betrayal’ – another two tropes which, as we shall see, affiliate the Afrikaans literary tradition with an African one.[[93]](#footnote-93) But if one is to apply the analogy of the ‘waterholes’ to *Country*, surely truth – as well, as dates, names, times – are crucial? There is another way in which the quoted pieces, specifically the Senegalese piece, read against *Country* – the Senegalese poet says you may not ‘*forge* what has happened’ (my emphasis), for to do so would be to ‘change history’. Arguably, Krog does ‘forge what has happened’ insofar as she changes the details of the testimonies, and her plagiarisms and, particularly, ventriloquisms raise the spectre of forgery insofar as it entails the replication of another's metaphoric signature.

Krog’s casting of the matter of ‘forging’ in relation to poetry is striking, as it appears to be in the service of poetry (with which she here conflates history) that her own manipulations occur. Krog explicitly casts her work as ‘poetic’, by thanking her editor for facilitating a ‘poetic style’ (280), and particularly by appending to the main body of the text an ‘Envoi’ (280), a passage which traditionally is attached to a poem[[94]](#footnote-94). Krog also closes the main body of the text with a poem, which acts as offering and summation: her response to the wronged (in what is constructed as a drama of reciprocity) and plea for forgiveness, and to be included in the future of South Africa. (By this point, after the chapter on the ‘shepherd’, and the section about Gorée, the text has lent force to the idea that the poet is the ideal national chronicler, and especially so in African society.) This poetic offering is a risky – or to use a word that Krog uses to describe the commission, a ‘brave’ (259, 278) – move, and Krog acknowledges, and prepares for, this by including various prefatory reflections on the ethics of poeticising apartheid suffering. Let us consider Krog’s meditation, in *Country*, of Theodor Adorno’s celebrated dictum that ‘to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric’ (*Prisms* 34).

**7. ‘*The language of the heart*’**

 Near the close of the book, Krog presents a conversation between herself and another, most probably her fictional lover, which deals self-reflexively with the problems of art (and specifically poetry) after Auschwitz (49), which in Krog is construed primarily as the problem of using the suffering of others for artistic purposes. Krog prefaces the scene with the following note:

The following conversation, and those in the final two chapters, are based on *Het Loon van de Schuld*, byIan Buruma; *Guilt and Shame*, edited by Herbert Morris; *Imagination, Fiction, Myth*, byJohan Degenaar; and *After the Catastrophe* by Carl Jung. (237)

The conversation that immediately follows is derived particularly from Buruma's book. Krog cites the original Dutch version, published in 1994, but parts of her conversation are remarkably close to the English translation, *The Wages of Guilt* (1995), and appear to be excerpted from a single chapter in that book, namely ‘Auschwitz’.

 Krog begins by playing on a famous line from Paul Celan's poem ‘Todesfuge’ (‘Death Fugue’), transferring it to an African context, writing ‘*Death is a master from Africa – his eyes are blue*’ (237), where Celan writes that death is a master from Germany. The transposition effects an appropriation, precisely the subject on which Krog and her interlocutor will shortly come to reflect. The sentence raises questions about the use of the Holocaust as metaphor and bestows on the ‘blue-eyed’ ‘master’ (the settler? Afrikaner?) a problematically broad ‘African’ identity. Where in Celan, ‘Germany’ signifies a country with a particular, death-driven ideology carried out in the name of that nation, ‘Africa’ casts apartheid South Africa's murderous policies as endemic to Africa (rather than part and parcel of colonialism, capitalism or scientific racism). Strikingly, Krog goes on to quote the last eight lines of Celan's ‘Todesfuge’ translated into English in prose form rather than verse. This change of form mirrors her own transposition between Afrikaans verse in *Kleur Kom Nooit Alleen Nie* and English prose in *Country*, as in the case of the testimonies discussed earlier.

 Krog then moves immediately, without fictional buffer or frame, into the mode of direct address, writing to or conversing with a fictional beloved, who it seems has been quoting these lines: ‘The way you say “ash”. The way you say “drink”. How a single letter can rip my heart to water. You close the book of twentieth-century German verse and I know that I love you’ (237). Perhaps somewhat perversely, this reading of Celan's poem becomes an occasion not for horror but seduction. The power of Celan's poem, which is relentless in its evocation of the destruction of life into ash and nothingness, is transferred to the reader/lover – Krog's heart is melted/turned to water not by the content of the poem and what it evokes but by the way the lover reads: 'the way you say ash. the way you say drink'. In this scenario, the horror becomes a strange erotic charge. If there is in *Country* an anxiety about poetry's authority, there is a latent acknowledgment (or unconscious rendering) of the torrid side of its fetishisation. The lover himself, nameless, faceless, mediated through poetry (Osip Mandelstam [142] is also mentioned in relation to him) seems to be nothing so much as a cipher for the 'poetic'. Arguably, the occasion of this reading of a lyric poem of horror for a seduction – while Krog has placed the beloved and the reader in the same place through her use of second-person address – allegorises (if unconsciously) Krog's own use of apartheid suffering in performing a type of narrative seduction: entertaining the reader and making him ‘hang on your lips’, as she puts it in the metafictional confession within the text (171).

 Krog then moves from this piece (‘The way you say…’) which is addressed to a lover who is not present, and clearly presents itself as a piece of writing (as if a type of letter), directly into the representation of a conversation, and continues (at first) to use the second person. This subtle transition between modes of writing and between absence and presence marks a more general elision between speech and writing in *Country*, an elision which helps create an illusion of direct address and immediacy (of artlessness rather than craft). Krog's simultaneous use of vivid present tense and second person is a dramatic device that conjures the fictional beloved and places the reader in his place, on the scene. Krog's addressee then says the following:

‘Every educated German knows the line ‘*Der Tod is ein Meister aus Deutschland,*’ you explain. ‘After the Second World War it was said in Germany: it is barbaric to write a poem after Auschwitz. Yet Paul Celan wrote this indescribably beautiful fugue of death. The reception of the poem was ambivalent. Isn't the poem too lyrical? Just a bit too beautiful? Is the horror not too accessible? In the end Celan himself felt this ambivalence and asked anthologists to remove the poem from their books’. (237)

It is clearly derived from the following in Buruma:

Every educated German knows the famous line: ‘*Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland*' (‘Death is a master from Germany’). But its reception in Germany has been ambivalent. Was the poem perhaps a bit too lyrical, a bit too pleasurable to the ear? Did it not end up sweetening the horror instead of expressing it? Paul Celan himself felt ambivalent, and in the late 1960s he asked editors to remove it from anthologies’ (82)

Krog's allusion to Adorno's dictum about poetry after Auschwitz in the passage above also has Buruma as its source: ‘“It is barbarous to write a poem after Auschwitz”, wrote Theodor Adorno’ (Buruma 81). Krog's borrowing from Buruma does not amount to much more than copying; the tweaks, ‘anthologists’ and ‘books’ rather than ‘editors and anthologies’, ‘barbaric’ rather than ‘barbarous’, are arbitrary.

 Krog responds with a reflection on writing in post-apartheid South Africa that does not appear to be derived from elsewhere, but is consistent with her expressions elsewhere in *Country*:

That is precisely why I say writers in South Africa should shut up for a while. That one has no right to appropriate a story paid for with a lifetime of pain and destruction. Words come more easily for writers, perhaps. So let the domain rather belong to those who literally paid blood for every faltering word they utter before the Truth Commission. (237-38)

 Krog's underlying economic metaphor – that a story is *paid for* and has a *price*, which is exacted in *pain* and *blood* – is unexplored, but it is one that recurs throughout her text. Here it most explicitly recalls an early reflection of Krog's, in a similar context, at the close of Chapter Three, the chapter in which the testimonies given before the TRC are first introduced:

No poetry should come forth from this. May my hand fall off if I write this. So I sit around…Stunned by the knowledge of *the price people have paid for their words*. If I write this, I exploit and betray; if I don't, I die. (49; my emphasis)

Here, Krog's justification for writing (poetry) about the hearings at the risk of exploitation or betrayal is that she needs to do so in order not to ‘die’ – this paragraph follows on from one in which she describes her own physical suffering as witness: ‘My hair is falling out. My teeth are falling out’ (49). Krog's symptoms apparently mimic those of the victims – and so, too, her words (which we are reading), it is implied, come at a cost, are ‘paid for’ in suffering.

 Further into the text, Krog quotes a piece of writing by her mother that explicitly recalls this piece – not only in its economic metaphors, but in the image of the severed hand. Krog's mother is writing on the occasion of Verwoerd's death:

I prayed that my hand should fall off if I ever write something for my personal honour at the cost of my people and what has been negotiated for them through years of tears and blood; that I will always remember that to write in Afrikaans is not a right; but a privilege bought and paid for at a price – and that it brings with it heavy responsibilities. (qtd. in *Country* 98)

Here we have not just individual stories but an entire language seen to come at a cost, from ‘blood and tears’. Serfontein's ‘negotiated’ is heavily euphemistic; if Afrikaans had then emerged as the language of governance and dominance ‘through years of tears and blood’, the tears and blood were not only those of Afrikaners. Hofmeyr has noted how the propagandistic promotion of Afrikaner nationalism by Gustav Preller and others after the South African War was characterised by ‘inversions, repressions, ellipses and displacements’ (‘Popularizing History’ 534), including that of black suffering. Interestingly, Hofmeyr notes the preponderance of the language of blood and violence, and how it suppresses the blood Boers shed, focusing entirely on Boer loss. She suggests that there is an ‘unconscious dimension’ to this, and that it is in this that some of the wide appeal of such work must be sought: that it was because of its appeal to violence that Preller's work was so popular (534).

 Shortly after Krog's quotation of her mother's work, she reflects on the language of politicians, again using the language of ‘price’ and ‘pain’:

Gone is the *dearly bought* language. Over months we've realised what an *immense price of pain each person must pay* just to stammer out their own story at the Truth Commission. Each word is exhaled *from the heart*, each syllable vibrates with a lifetime of sorrow. (102; my emphases)

Krog continues: ‘This is gone. Now it's the hour of those who scrum down in parliament. The display of tongues freed into rhetoric – the signature of power’ (102). In so doing, she firmly distinguishes between words from ‘the heart’ and ‘rhetoric’, and distances herself from such rhetoric. But at the same time, she performs a problematic elision between Afrikaner and black suffering, precisely through her rhetorical structuring of *Country*. That is, by her juxtapositions and a ‘poetic’ linking and repetition of key metaphors, Krog draws an implicit parallel between black and Afrikaner suffering, between the ‘dearly bought’ (102) language of the TRC hearings and the ‘cost’ of Afrikaans, paid for in ‘tears and blood’ (98). In her poetry collection *Kleur Kom Nooit Alleen Nie*, which, as we have seen, contains translations from *Country* this link is made more explicit – with the TRC hearings directly paralleling concentration camp testimonies[[95]](#footnote-95).

At the close of the book, by her allusion to her mother's invocation that her hand ‘fall of’ (98) if she writes of suffering, Krog, summoning her own ‘hand’ (278), casts her nation as the new South African one, and also patterns Afrikaner and African suffering as symmetrical. Krog overlays contemporary ‘South African’ suffering over Afrikaans suffering, inserting it and herself into a putative, all-encompassing whole, and threatening to justify such suffering by subsuming it to a teleology whose end point is the bloody, painful ‘birth’ of the ‘new’ South Africa via the Truth Commission.

 In the passage derived from Buruma, Krog doesn’t just borrow from him, but from a work cited by him. It is uncited by her, instead made part of her self-expression, and what is her performance of guilt and self-examination. Krog might argue that her words are not based on, or inspired by the following, but it is difficult to read them the same way after reading Albrecht Goes's words, cited by Buruma for their remarkability:

In his preface to *Das Brandopfer* (*The Burnt Offering*, 1954), “one of the very few pieces of high literature to concern itself with the full horror of the past” (George Steiner), the author, Albrecht Goes, made the following remarkable statement: “As the teller of this story…I shall never as long as I live cease to shudder at the thought that all those death orders (by Heydrich, Eichmann, et al.) were issued in the language in which I think, speak, write, and dream”. (86)

In Krog this becomes the question: ‘How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart?’ (238). Krog's question is more dramatic – directing the focus to her scruples – and at the same time vaguer, the language is of ‘the heart’. In Goes the horror of the intimacy of language is powerfully rendered through the vivid fact of its inescapability not just in thought and conversation, but even in dreams – beyond consciousness or choice. In Krog it has become something more rhetorical, less tangible – the ‘heart’; Krog risks slipping into the dangerous sentimentality of which Buruma warns (72-73) and which she touches on in *Country* (261).

 Just before she asks how she will live with the Afrikaans language, Krog asks: ‘Was Apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture? Could one find the key to this in Afrikaner songs and literature, in beer and braaivleis?’ (238). Clearly this is modeled on Buruma, who asks: ‘Was genocide a product of some ghastly flaw in German culture, the key to which might be found in the sentimental proverbs, the cruel fairy tales, the tight leather shorts?’ (72). Again, the primary text is more probing and specific – Buruma speaks not merely of ‘songs’ and ‘literature’, but *sentimental* proverbs, *cruel* fairy tales. Indeed, his question forms part of a larger discussion of the complicity of sentimentality and sadism (71-72). It is curious that Krog, whose writing tends towards both violence and sentimentality, and who includes various representations of her own violence (hitting a colleague, on two occasions [167, 260[[96]](#footnote-96)]; clawing, hitting and biting her lover [165]; pushing her hand into F.W. de Klerk's face [97]) as well as various sentimental vignettes – grandmother with children and baskets of eggs [272], cake baking as restorative [49] – should not explore this link, or its recurrence in her writing, or, indeed, in Afrikaans literature. She describes Afrikaans ‘literature’ and ‘songs’ as merely that – not characterised by particular traits beyond their language.

 Krog's predilections towards violence and sentiment meet in the almost obsessively recurrent imagery of blood. She enquires after the 'bloodline' of Dirk Coetzee (61) and comments on the ‘bloodline’ (96) of an Afrikaans family; when moved, she feels 'blood slushing my veins’ (259). Moreover, she sees words as weighed, priced, made worthy, in blood. Language is seen to be forged in blood as it were (again, the image of language as ‘born’ is salient – birth being a bloody process). There appears to be a displacement, or metonymic shifting, which belies a lack of thorough questioning of the language of nationalist sentiment, between the blood cost of Afrikaans and the blood cost of the language of the victims. In this respect the epigraph to *Country* is striking. It is dedicated not to apartheid's victims generally (living or dead), but women who *died* with an Afrikaner name *on their lips*: ‘for every victim/ who had an Afrikaner surname on her lips’*.* The idea that the victim at the moment of death speaks the name of the perpetrator is strange – unless one views this as an act of beseeching. It is an extraordinarily violent fantasy which helps structure (and validate/naturalise) as reciprocal Krog's own address, to the ‘beloved’ (‘who once whispered beside me in the dark’), which draws on the erotic in order to be seductive. As Krog says, repeating the lip imagery – she wants her audience (which presumably include the proxies of those it is dedicated to) to *hang on her lips*. Elsewhere, Krog, asking about violence, tastes ‘blood on the lip’ (170).

 Just after asking how she will live with the fact that Afrikaans, described as the language of her heart, was used to kill and humiliate, she says: ‘At the hearings, many of the victims faithfully reproduced these parts of the stories [about orders to kill, humiliation] in Afrikaans as proof of the bloody fingerprints upon them’ (238). This recalls a fragment in Buruma, where he describes Adorno as ‘a German Jew who wished to save high German culture, on whose legacy the Nazis left their blood finger marks’ (91). In Buruma the Nazis' hands are bloody because so murderous; high German culture, embraced by them, is contaminated by association. In Krog, the meaning is not quite so clear. Surely the *victims' testimonies* are not bloody/contaminated by association? Or does she mean that Afrikaans is somehow an inherently bloody language, and the reproduction of it in testimonies brings this home to her? Does she see the victims as issuing a condemnation of Afrikaner culture as violent by their quoting ('reproducing') these parts in Afrikaans? Or are the ‘fingerprints’ Krog’s own? Does this reflect her subsuming of testimonial narratives to her identity (of which the fingerprint is a marker), one explicitly rendered as Afrikaans? It is difficult not to think of Krog’s translation of testimonies into Afrikaans, and to link this image of fingerprinting with that incorporated by Krog into the testimony about Sicelo Mhlawuli (in which she claims that his hand was cut off so that he could ‘not be fingerprinted’ [27]).

 Krog continues to pastiche Buruma in this section of *Country*, sometimes in a confused and contradictory way, providing the impression that these ostensibly searching questions about the problems of form and representation are not that thoroughly thought out. Buruma's ‘But the reluctance in German fiction to look Auschwitz in the face, the almost universal refusal to deal with the Final Solution outside the shrine, the museum, the schoolroom suggests a fear of committing sacrilege’ (84) clearly informs Krog: ‘The reluctance of German literature to look Auschwitz in the face, the refusal to deal with it except in school textbooks, museums and memorials, is precisely this fear of sacrilege you are talking about’ (238). Elsewhere, Buruma mentions the use of terms like ‘the buffalo eaters’ by Heinrich Böll (83) and ‘the men in leather coats’ by Siegfried Lenz (84) for the Nazis. Krog erroneously writes as if ‘the buffalo eaters’ was an appellation derived from the fact that they wore leather coats[[97]](#footnote-97): ‘In the fifties and sixties writers didn't even call the Nazis by name – they called them ‘buffalo eaters’ – the men in leather coats’ (238). Again, in Krog specificity is lost – terms used by specific writers in specific works become terms used generally, and the 1960s becomes ‘eventually’. Krog writes:

They [German artists] refused to take possession of their own history. So the inevitable happened. Hollywood took it away from them. A soap opera laid claim to the statistic, the metaphor, the abstraction that was Auschwitz. (238)[[98]](#footnote-98)

Krog appears to be talking of *Holocaust*, an American series discussed by Buruma (88-91), and her characterisation of how Auschwitz was memorialised prior to this soap opera is clearly derived from Buruma, who writes that: ‘The Auschwitz of the courtroom, the chapel, or the museum had been an abstraction, a metaphor, a bunch of unimaginable statistics’ (90). More importantly, Krog's quotation contradicts a previous statement she has just made to the effect that

Germany has produced some of the best writers ever. We in this country have failed in a sense – the things told here surpass the wildest imaginings of any writer. Nowhere in our literature do you find captured the extent of the pathos, the pain, the horror, the voices of this country. (238)

While it is true to say that nowhere in South Africa's fragmented, multilingual literatures will you find the extent of all the voices of the country, South Africa has produced a number of (world-renowned) writers who have engaged with the ‘the pathos, the pain, the horror’[[99]](#footnote-99). Krog appears to clear the way for her own literary contribution – in which she declares ‘I want my hand to write it. For us all; *all voices*; all victims’ (278; my emphasis) – as utterly original (indeed, a ‘birth’).

 Intriguingly, in her conversation with her lover, Krog addresses the matter of fictionalising testimony, and relates a conversation with Dorfman:

Dorfman said his work is a sort of mixture – some of it is what he's heard and some he makes up. So I asked, ‘But isn't that a sacrilege – to use someone else's story, a story that has cost him his life?’. He looked at me, and then he said: ‘Do you want the awful truth? How else would it get out? How else would the story be told? (238)

It is worth bearing in mind that Dorfman's situation is different to Krog's in that, unlike the highly mediated South African TRC, the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation took place behind closed doors, as Krog has Dorfman state[[100]](#footnote-100). Also, Dorfman's work is less generically hybrid than Krog's. The work which is ‘a sort of mixture’, i.e. that is derived from true stories, is not published as ‘non-fiction’ thus capitalising on the horror. In South Africa not only had novelists, poets and dramatists written about apartheid, but its activities were widely known via an array of genres and media. As Ross notes of the TRC:

The model assumed that what preceded the Commission’s work was voicelessness and silence about the apartheid past. In fact, much was already known about apartheid, told in diverse genres – in stories, songs, political rhetoric, magisterial orders, court cases, newspapers, scholarly work, parliamentary debates, at funerals and rallies and so on. (‘On Having Voice’ 327)

One of the most obvious implicit metaphors of stories having a ‘price’ is that they are commodities, or operate in a framework of alienation and exchange. But despite the frequent language of ‘profit’, ‘price’ and ‘cost’, Krog is strikingly silent about the matter of literal profits and of her position as author as possessor of a commodity, and the way in which the TRC transcripts, through her literary retelling, become commodities, under her copyright. Instead, we have a Romantic conception of the poet whereby questions of the economic and of commerce are suppressed and, as seen in the ‘shepherd's tale’, questions of material and economic reparation are excluded in favour of a particular model of the poetic. There is one point at which there is some reflection on how black pain is commodified in post-apartheid South Africa. In an interview, psychologist Nomfunda Walaza says to Krog that ‘the pain of blacks is being dumped into the country more or less as a commodity article, easy to access and even easier to discard’ (161). Intriguingly, Krog presents Walaza, speaking of the ‘price’ all black people paid under apartheid, as saying: ‘I have problems when this price becomes a mere tool for self-aggrandizement. At the end of the day, we all have to stand up and say, this is what we did *not* do’ (161-162). There is, I would suggest, a disturbing gap between Krog’s rhetoric of non-appropriation – and dramatisation of reciprocity – and her actual practice. This is not only in relation to her concealed refiguring of powerful testimonies, but in the fact that she apparently sees no need for testifiers to be consulted or recompensed for the inclusion of their testimonies in works such as hers. Cole, one of the few academics to critique Krog’s refiguring of testimony, writes that Krog advised the composer Phillip Miller, when he was setting out on his own work based on the TRC, *REwind: A Cantata for Voice, Tape and Testimony* (2006), that ‘he had no need whatsoever to consult with the victims or ask their permission’ (*Performing* 153) to include their testimonies. Miller decided that he could not do this, and instead sought permission from each person whose testimony he wished to use. He also decided to follow the protocols for ‘sampling’ in music, whereby credit is given for samples used, together with a fee (Cole, *Performing* 154). In Krog, on the other hand, matters of the economic and of literalprofits and costs tend to be skirted, though gestured to metaphorically. Indeed, implicit economic metaphors – of exchange, prices and costs – recur, including in a notable fragment from Bourdieu, copied (without acknowledgment) by Krog, and discussed in the next section.

**8. *‘How Can the Deftness of Stealing be a Mark of Honour?’: Krog’s use of Julian Pitt-Rivers and Pierre Bourdieu***

 Krog's citations of Buruma and others on page 237, just before the conversation derived from Buruma, are misleading. ‘After the Catastrophe’ and ‘Imagination, Fiction, Myth’, both essays, are italicised as if full-length works. Puzzlingly, it is unclear how the conversations that follow derive from the anthology edited by Herbert Morris, *Guilt and Shame* (1971), which she cites[[101]](#footnote-101). Perhaps she meant to cite another, similarly titled volume, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (edited by J.G. Peristiany), or rather two essays in it from which she borrows verbatim, namely ‘Honour and Social Status’ by Julian Pitt-Rivers and ‘The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society’ by Bourdieu. Both are ethnographies of Mediterranean society and their potentially spurious application to the South African situation might have been marked had they been cited. Krog borrows largely from the first part of Pitt-Rivers's essay, which forms a self-contained whole that comments on the ‘general structure [of honour] as it is found in Western Europe without much concern for the local and temporal variations’ (21).[[102]](#footnote-102)

 Even had Krog cited the essays by Pitt-Rivers and Bourdieu, it would have been untrue to say that it was only the ‘conversations’ that are derived from these publications. The following passage, which is presented as a reflection by Krog on the Winnie Madikizela-Mandela hearing, is clearly extracted from Pitt-Rivers:

The point of resemblance between the mores of a street-corner society and those of the political aristocracy is this: both are contemptuous of legality. The political aristocracy claim the right to honour by tradition, which makes them the leaders of society and therefore ‘a law unto themselves’. Street-corner society also claims to be a law unto itself, not because it is above the law but because it is outside of it. (251)

This clearly echoes Pitt-Rivers:

the resemblance between the mores of the street-corner society and those of the aristocracy, both contemptuous of legality, derives from this: the aristocracy claims the right to honour=precedence by the tradition which makes them the leaders of society, arbiters rather than 'arbitrated' and therefore 'a law unto themselves'...On the other hand, street-corner society claims also to be a law unto itself, not because it is above the law, but because it is outside it and because the concept of honour=virtue has no claim upon its aspiration. (31)

Notably, Pitt-Rivers distinguishes two types of honour (honour=precedence and honour=virtue) and Krog departs from him here, mentioning only ‘honour by tradition’, that is ‘honour by precedence’. Pitt-Rivers argues that honour can come about via virtue or by precedence – we rightfully honour the virtuous (by merit), just as we wrongfully honour dubious authorities (who have power and can claim and enforce their authority). In a conversation that shortly follows, Krog opposes ‘virtue’ to ‘honour’, her terms echoing Pitt-Rivers, except that Pitt-Rivers regards honour as related to either virtue or to precedence, rather than honour and virtue as oppositional. In the conversation Krog borrows from both Pitt-Rivers and Bourdieu, conflating their (differing) perspectives on honour. Pitt-Rivers, who sees honour as dual, logically writes about ‘the duality of honour’, a phrase which later in the conversation Krog's interlocutor uses.

In the passage quoted above, Krog's reworking of Pitt-Rivers, as in her reworking of Hughes, is presented as an authoritative insight, with little contextualisation. Regarding Pitt-Rivers, Krog might claim again – as in the case of the Hughes allegation – that she refers to a specific ‘African’, i.e. local matter – whereas Pitt-Rivers ostensibly confines these remarks to the Mediterranean, but the verbatim phrasing suggests plagiarism. Moreover, the transposition of Pitt-Rivers’ remarks to the specific case of Madikizela-Mandela leaves Krog's remarks on the law open to puzzlement, and makes for a blind-spot regarding Madikizela-Mandela's relationship to the law. Krog suggests that Madikizela-Mandela has a contempt for ‘legality’. But this obscures the fact that in apartheid South Africa the law itself was entirely discredited and illegitimate, even while, as Mahmood Mamdani notes,‘the apartheid regime both fetishised and brandished legality’ (49); in this context, contempt for ‘legality’ could be virtuous. Arguably, the actions of Madikizela-Mandela and her football club demonstrate a contempt for the ethical, and Krog here conflates the legal and the ethical. This conflation goes hand in hand with Krog's departure from Pitt-Rivers in making no distinction between honour=precedence (i.e. honour=force/power) and honour=virtue (another authority, not based on force).

 Another, shorter reflection on honour in the context of the Madikizela-Mandela hearing appears to be derived from Pitt-Rivers. Krog writes of Madikizela-Mandela that ‘her honour depends on public acknowledgement. Public opinion forms the constant tribunal before which the claims of honour are tested’ (244). This recalls Pitt-Rivers: ‘Public opinion forms therefore a tribunal before which the claims to honour are brought’ (27).

Krog also reworks Pitt-Rivers's essay, together with Bourdieu's, in the discussion between herself and another journalist concerning Madikizela-Mandela's hearing which closes the chapter. Krog is moved by Tutu's appeal to Madikizela-Mandela, by which he elicits from her a public apology that ‘things went horribly wrong’, for which she is ‘deeply sorry’ (259). Tutu's appeal makes Krog feel pride in the Commission and induces a moment of what she elsewhere calls ‘fierce belonging’ (277):

Ah, the Commission! The deepest heart of my heart. Heart that can only come from this soil – brave – with its teeth firmly in the jugular of the only truth that matters. And that heart is black. I belong to that blinding black African heart. (259)

 Krog's colleague is less sanguine, asserting that Madikizela-Mandela's apology is a mere formality that allows her to ‘further her populist career’ (259). Krog explains: ‘The essence of this hearing was the collision between two cultures alive in the black community. The culture of responsibility, human virtue and guilt, and the culture of clan honour and shame’ (260). Her colleague ‘rolls his eyes’ and Krog responds viscerally: ‘I push him down on a chair. My paralyzed palate jumps to life’ (260). Again this is presented as a sudden articulation – arriving out of anger. But perhaps the violence told of here is enacted rather in the text, as textual transgression, and partially towards the reader, for whom in Krog the interlocutor (here pushed down on to the chair) is always a proxy? There is certainly a curious doubleness here between the writing, which is plagiaristic, and its representation as speech arising out of, and coterminous with, anger that renders her violent. Both acts of articulation, plagiarising and pushing someone, involve a certain transgressive violence. Strikingly, Krog's self-presentation here, expressing herself out of anger, is consistent with that established in her poetry – one of her most famous lines is ‘I write because I am furious’ (‘omdat ek woedend is’) (‘Nightmare of A Samuel Born Krog’, *Down to My Last Skin* 49).

Krog explains to her colleague:

Honour becomes the code, the atmosphere breathed by any close-knit group – a group *outside* the powerful group – whether it's based on clan loyalties, ethnicity, or colour. Winnie is the monarch of the people for whom the new system does not work. She symbolises their collective honour. She personifies their aspirations and their right to status. She has to cling to that honour. If she admits to wrongdoing, she dishonours them all. (260)

 The first sentence is clearly derived from Bourdieu, who writes ‘The values of honour are part of the atmosphere breathed by the closely-knit group, the clan or village’ (‘Sentiment’ 229), and the reflections on collective honour are more loosely derived from Pitt-Rivers, who writes that ‘social groups possess a collective honour in which their members participate; the dishonourable conduct of one reflects upon the honour of all’ (35). Pitt-Rivers shortly continues to comment on the situation of the family and the monarchy/nation in respect to collective honour: ‘In both the family and the monarchy a single person symbolises the group whose collective honour is vested in his person’ (35). Krog in describing Madikizela-Mandela as a ‘monarch’ makes her role as ‘mother of the nation’ an aristocratic one, in line with her previous reproduction of the passage from Pitt-Rivers.

In response to her explaining why she regards Madikizela-Mandela as existing in a culture of honour, Krog's colleague asks: ‘So why do you expect ANC ministers to admit to wrongdoing but not her?’. She replies:

‘Because the principle of democracy is virtue. It affirms the *equality and dignity of all people*, their rights and duties regardless of their status. Winnie's *ethos of honour is fundamentally opposed* to this…It *establishes two opposing sets of rules*: one for *kinsmen* and one for *strangers*’ (260; my emphases)

This appears to be derived from Bourdieu, who writes:

*The ethos of honour is fundamentally opposed* to a universal and formal morality which *affirms the equality in dignity of all men* and consequently *the equality of their rights and duties*. Not only do the rules imposed upon men differ from those imposed upon women, and the duties toward men differ from those toward women, but also the dictates of honour, directly applied to the individual case and varying according to the situation, are in no way capable of being made universal. This is so much the case that a single system of values of honor *establishes two opposing sets of rules* of conduct - on the one hand that which governs relationships between *kinsmen*, and in general all personal relations that conform to the same pattern as those between kinsmen; and on the other hand, that which is valid in one’s relationships with *strangers*. This *duality of attitudes*proceeds logically from the fundamental principle, ..., according to which the modes of conduct of honor apply only to those who are worthy of them’ (228; my emphases)

I have italicised ‘duality of attitudes’ because it seems to me that Krog conflates this with ‘duality of honour’, a phrase used later in the conversation by Krog's colleague, and derived from Pitt-Rivers. The impression that Krog is working from both Bourdieu and Pitt-Rivers, and conflating their positions on honour, is reinforced upon reading the rest of her statement against their essays. Krog continues:

She and her group live according to their own rules and the result is a permanent ambivalence: a kind of self-deceit wrapped in self-interest. In the meantime, their consciousness is obsessed with honour. And in the field of honour might is right. (260)

This recalls Bourdieu, ‘The result is a permanent ambivalence: by a kind of self deceit one is continually acting both within an ambit of self interest, which must not be admitted, and of honour, which is proclaimed’ (‘Sentiment’ 231), and Pitt-Rivers: ‘On the field of honour might is right’ (25). (What Krog means by ‘a kind of self-deceit wrapped in self-interest’ is not quite clear, and I will return to a consideration of Bourdieu's words in their original context shortly).

In *Country*, Krog's meditation/dialogue around honour is seen to emerge from her witnessing of the Madikizela-Mandela hearings, and the dialogue to be triggered specifically by Tutu's appeal to ‘honour’ (260). Krog says the following, quoting Tutu's speech – seemingly verbatim – and stressing a particular word in it, to back up her claims:

Tutu instinctively latched onto her operative principle of honour and challenged her on her own turf. He left the calls for moral accountability behind. He honed in [sic] on her honour. He told her: ‘You are a great person, you should have been our First Lady – you deserve that *honour*. You will be even greater if you admit that things went wrong’. (260)

But the transcripts make no mention of honour. Though one can see how Krog would have inferred this as an appeal to honour, Tutu does not use the word. This is Krog's addition, in a paraphrase which otherwise follows him very closely – the transcripts (which Krog has quoted from accurately on the page before) have him say: ‘Many, many love you. Many, many say you should have been where you ought to be, the first lady of this country’ and, later, ‘You are a great person and you don't know how your greatness would be enhanced if you were to say sorry, things went wrong, forgive me. I beg you.’[[103]](#footnote-103) Of course, in the passage quoted above we have Krog in conversation rather than Krog the narrator quoting from the hearings, but the impression given is that Tutu used that exact phrase and word – ‘you deserve that *honour*’ that Krog has latched onto and emphasises. Krog, in conversation with her colleague, then glosses this supposed statement of Tutu's again in terms of honour, claiming that by ‘begging her [Madikizela-Mandela] publicly, he said to her “I honour you as my equal”’ (260). Krog goes on to explain that ‘in the culture of honour, you are answerable for your honour only to your social equals’, which appears to be derived from Pitt-Rivers, who writes: ‘A man is answerable for his honour only to his social equals’ (31). In Krog's rendering of the Madikizela-Mandela hearing, honour is shown to be pivotal, and its importance/articulation is traced to Tutu's speech; placing the word ‘honour’ in Tutu's mouth, Krog ascribes her reflections on honour to that source, rather than Pitt-Rivers or Bourdieu. Krog is clearly reworking Pitt Rivers here – her claim that Tutu latched onto honour as Madikizela-Mandela's ‘operative principle’, leaving behind moral accountability, recalls Pitt-Rivers, who argues that Montesquieu observed a basic distinction between ‘the monarchy whose operative principle is honour’ and ‘the republic whose operative principle is virtue’ (36). The impression that Krog is consciously working from Pitt-Rivers is reinforced by the fact that she has just described Madkizela-Mandela as the ‘monarch’ of ‘the people for whom the new system [democracy] does not work’ (260).

Krog's colleague asks why Madikizela-Mandela's apology should be a ‘victory for morality’ and Krog answers that by apologising, Madikizela-Mandela ‘wiped out her whole culture of honour…A space was created for the first time for both her and her followers to admit in an honourable way that things went wrong’ (260). Her colleague responds: ‘So thanks to the duality of honour the killer becomes the chief and the tyrant the minister’ (260). This statement makes little sense in its context – as the ‘duality of honour’ has not been explored or put forward by Krog. In his essay, Pitt-Rivers distinguishes between honour=precedence and honour=virtue and thus logically writes about the duality of honour. Krog's colleague's statement reads as a gloss of the following in Pitt-Rivers:

Thus, thanks to its duality, honour does something which the philosophers say they cannot do: derive an *ought* from an *is*; whatever *is* becomes *right*, the *de facto* is made *de jure*, the victor is crowned with laurels, the war-profiteer is knighted, the tyrant becomes the monarch, the bully, a chief. The reconciliation between the social order as we find it and the social order we revere is accomplished thanks to the confusion which hinges upon the duality of honour and its associated concepts. It is a confusion which fulfils the function of social integration by ensuring the legitimation of established power. (38)

From the account Krog has given, it would appear that Madikizela-Mandela has apologised because of the ‘duality of attitude’ that pertains in the society of honour as described by Bourdieu – that is, that there are different rules for the treatment of community members and strangers. Krog says that it is by Tutu saying ‘I honour you as my equal’ that Madikizela-Mandela was compelled to apologise. It is as if, in the construction of this conversation, Krog had conflated Bourdieu's ‘duality of attitude’ with Pitt-Rivers's ‘duality of honour’, homing in simply on the fact of there being an operation of 'duality' at work.

Pitt-Rivers' account of the duality of honour differs from Krog's in that in his argument this duality is seen to result from a lamentable confusion (of virtue and power) and to reinforce the ‘order of precedence’ (38) and ensure ‘the legitimation of established power’ (38) rather than to create a new, democratic space, and ensure a transition from a culture of ‘honour and shame’ to one of ‘virtue and guilt’.

To return to Krog's borrowing from Bourdieu with the statement ‘the result is a permanent ambivalence: a kind of self-deceit wrapped in self-interest’, her meaning here is not quite clear but a consideration of Bourdieu's words in their original context is oddly resonant to the workings of Krog's own (literary) honour in *Country*, especially if considered in tandem with the model of the poetic/literary that emerges in ‘the shepherd's tale’, and from which economic self-interest is excluded. Bourdieu is speaking of the way economic relationships are treated in societies governed by honour:

Economic relationships are also not considered as such, as relations governed, that is to say, by the law of self-interest. They always remain, as it were, concealed beneath a veil of prestige and honour relationships. Everything takes place as if this society refused to face up to economic reality, to conceive it as governed by laws that are different from those regulating impersonal and family relationships’ (‘Sentiment’ 231)

and Bourdieu continues with the lines quoted above (‘the result is a permanent ambivalence … proclaimed’). Many accounts of literature and the literary take place with no cognisance (and even a denial) of their economic and commercial aspects. In *Country* the only hint we have that the book is also a commissioned commodity, part of a monetary system, is in the ‘Envoi’, where Krog mentions a contract as thick as a bible (280), and the fact that she was approached by Random House to write the book (280). Instead, Krog overtly offers the entire text, and the poem that closes it, as gift or offering. (One is reminded of Pratt’s discussion in *Imperial Eyes* of the constant dramatisation of reciprocity in Mungo Park’s *Travels*.) Within the text, Krog, via her allusion to her mother, foregrounds the question of personal versus collective ‘honour’ in writing (and the metaphorical *cost* of such writing), portraying herself as making a personal sacrifice in her writing, and giving no sense of what Bourdieu terms ‘self-interest’. (Krog, as Afrikaner, might be seen, like Madikizela-Mandela to represent an ‘honour’ bound community for whom ‘the new order’ does not work – she describes Verwoerd as driven by ‘honour’ (262) and in the passage by Serfontein quoted by Krog, Serfontein too invokes honour – hoping that she never writes anything for ‘personal honour’ at the cost of the Afrikaner’s honour [98]).

Bourdieu in his discussion of economic relationships in honour societies gives as an example of how economic transactions are bound by honour systems the sale of an ox (‘Sentiment’ 231), and elsewhere he discusses theft within the context of honour (‘Sentiment’ 228). Intriguingly, Krog begins the personal narrative of her book with an account of cattle theft on her family's farm (4) which raises the question of how property works in honour societies. Krog asks her black colleague, Mondli Shabalala[[104]](#footnote-104), regarding Moshoeshoe's name, which apparently means ‘he who can steal as swiftly and silently as cutting someone's beard’ (12), ‘How can the deftness of stealing be a *mark of honour*?’ (12; my emphasis). Shabalala then answers, ‘I grew up with the notion that stealing from whites is actually not stealing. Way back, Africans had no concept of stealing other than contesting power’ (13). If Shabalala is a fictive character, Krog is quite possibly working from Bourdieu's analysis of theft and honour and applying it to the South African situation. Bourdieu writes of Kabyle society that ‘theft and fraud were held to be reprehensible in themselves – so long as they had been carried out with skill and craft – only when they were committed within the group’ (‘Sentiment’ 228). Strikingly, Bourdieu's passage about theft comes just between two passages copied verbatim by Krog in the discussion about honour and cited above: ‘the ethos of honour is fundamentally opposed…strangers’ (Bourdieu, ‘Sentiment’ 228), which in Krog reappears in ‘ethos of honour is fundamentally opposed’ (260), and ‘[t]he values of honour are part of the atmosphere breathed….’ (Bourdieu, ‘Sentiment’ 229), which in Krog becomes ‘honour becomes the code, the atmosphere breathed by any close-knit group’ (260).

This posing of theft as culturally relative in turn raises the matter of plagiarism as ‘theft’. The seminar on plagiarism that took place shortly after Kirby’s allegation of plagiarism was titled ‘The plagiarism debate: theft or creative transformation?’, suggesting that such ‘theft’ might be rendered something else by a certain deftness, that is ‘creative transformation’. The seminar invitation also signaled the pertinence of matters of honour when listing as a topic for discussion ‘penalties for plagiarism: public shaming, the law, or right of reply’. After Kirby's article, Krog wrote to me that she was returning to her sources, trying to discover how Hughes's words had appeared in her text, implying (though not clearly stating) that they were not necessarily her own (‘Re: re *Country of My Skull*/Hughes, from Kate Highman’), and contradicting an earlier assertion that ‘particular similarities’ must have been a coincidence of translation (‘Re: *Country of My Skull*’). But when Watson accused her of blatant opportunism, laziness, and very poor writing (at least of English poetry), the allegation of plagiarism from Hughes became ‘ludicrous’ and ‘absurd’ – her language uncannily recalling that of Madikizela-Mandela as reported by her in *Country*. Krog at once denied plagiarism, but did not seem to condemn unacknowledged verbatim copying. Primarily, she seemed to be denying the current force of the word plagiarism and being hanged ‘in the plagiarist gallery next to Darrell Bristow-Bovey and Pamela Jooste’ (‘Stephen Watson’ 72). Given Krog's almost obsessive concern with honour in *Country*, one can't help but wonder if there is anything to the fact that the two authors most substantially plagiarised by her are two British men – if she regards their territory as fair game for poaching, a contestation of power. After, all there are different rules for ‘strangers’ and ‘kinsmen’. In this respect Krog’s somewhat conflicted comments about the influence of English writers on her work is pertinent – she describes how refreshing it is to be able to read Dutch poetry, ‘free of Anglo-Saxon interference’ (‘Literature Enables’), seeming to forget that any Saxon influence is as likely to permeate Dutch writing as English, and minimises – or re-routes – the influence of English on her poetry collections: ‘because my English collections are translations from the Afrikaans, they are not influenced by sources other than the Afrikaans, which includes an English influence’ (‘Literature Enables’)[[105]](#footnote-105). Possibly, Krog's literary ‘thefts’ – her plagiarisms – often very deftly performed – fall under a larger rubric of the ambivalent ‘honour’ that obsessively informs her book. Krog positions herself as honouring/dishonouring the Afrikaner in ways which are at times disturbing but seem to arise from a genuine anguish at a double position; she does so, crucially, in the first book in which she turns from Afrikaans to English as the language of publication.

**9. *Forging the Self, Birthing the Nation: Krog as* Volksmoeder**

In another piece of writing concerning Madikizela-Mandela, her 2009 article on Njabulo Ndebele’s novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, Krog again raises the matter of honour, but this time authorial honour. She queries Ndebele’s use of the Penelope myth, asking why he

had not looked far and wide to find an *African* female ancestor for Winnie, instead of framing her in terms of the classic foundation of Western civilisation's notion of perfect womanhood. After all, Winnie has always been, and is still being, judged from a Western perspective. *Besides that, I, as a writer, would have regarded it as a matter of honour to find and use my own classical African foundation.* (‘What the Hell Is Penelope Doing in Winnie’s Story?’ 56; my emphases)

Krog's invocation of honour here is uncanny – it recalls, and seems to retrospectively valorise, her own casting of Madikizela-Mandela through the lens of anthropological writings on honour – i.e. those of Pitt-Rivers and Bourdieu concerning honour in Kabyle (and thus, nominally, African) society. That Krog should inscribe her own story as writer as one of honour is telling, and apt – and alsoperforms a certain circle of identification between herself and Madikizela-Mandela (described in *Country* as coming from a culture of honour). This makes the uncanny echo of Madikizela-Mandela’s language at the TRC – her denial of all accusations as ‘absurd’ and ludicrous’ – in Krog’s description of allegations against her as ‘absurd’ and ‘ludicrous’ (‘Stephen Watson’ 74, 75) all the more intriguing.  What is more, Krog, from the reader’s perspective, might meta-textually be seen in the same way as she portrays Madikizela-Mandela – as a ‘law unto herself’, breaking generic frames and conventions, not answerable or accountable to anything other than her honour as writer. In this view, writing, the writer is perceived as aristocratic (at tension with the national, democratic voice) and exceptional. It is fitting that Krog should subtly identify herself with Madikizela-Mandela, for Krog creates for herself in *Country* a ‘mother of the nation’ role – a title by which Madikizela-Mandela is known. Indeed, it might be said that the license not to be accountable (or ‘called to account’) comes with being a ‘mother of the nation’ – one is the subject (producer) of, rather than subject to, the nation.

In her article on *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, Krog equates Madikizela-Mandela with another icon of South African womanhood, Sara Baartman – an image of a sculpture of Baartman by Willie Bester appears on the cover of *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. What Baartman and Madikizela-Mandela share is how they have been invested with national fantasy, a result, one might argue, following Anne McClintock and Meg Samuelson,[[106]](#footnote-106) of particularly gendered formations of the nation. (As we shall see, Baartman also appears as a mother-of-the-nation figure in *The Heart of Redness*, discussed in the next chapter.) In her article, Krog implicitly casts all women as somehow made up of Baartman and Madikizela-Mandela and all identity as radically (and wilfully) self-constructed. Krog describes such self-construction as a way of being at, or arriving at, a place at which one might be at peace with oneself: ‘this iron-parts-welded-together-body becomes a self-construction, a woman like the other women in the book, welded together part for part to be at peace with themselves and their lives’ (59). To infer this from Baartman and Madikizela-Mandela is extraordinary, the narrative appears to have taken a leap elsewhere, following a different imagining which subtends the entire drift of the article. Krog claims that the sculpture is not construction, welded by others, but *self*-construction. It is a thesis at odds with her focus on the communality of the four women who are Ndebele's subjects. It suggests an autocthonous automon, self-created and creating. Strikingly, Krog’s article begins with a comment on how Madikizela-Mandela ‘forges’ herself (55). ‘Antjie Krog’, arguably, is a construction ‘forged’ through poetry, or writing[[107]](#footnote-107). She works out of a confessional tradition of poetry in which the self is created through poetry, arising phoenix-like from destruction and pain. (And in the poem which closes *Country*, Krog declares herself transformed through her work on the TRC, ‘scorched’ to ‘a new skin’ [279].)This is a conception of the poetic which recalls the vision of Plath, of whom Krog describes herself a ‘groupie’ (‘Last time’), and whose model of confessional (and self-creational) poetry has proved highly influential[[108]](#footnote-108). In her article ‘Fact Bordering Fiction’, Krog speaks of ‘forging’ a self, through the use of the first person in her work. Here, having described her narrative manipulations, and how her use of a friend's story has lost her the friendship, she asks, well, why does she not write ‘fiction’, why does she instead write about what she describes as the ‘real’ (38). She answers: ‘I do not know ‘he,’ or ‘she,’ or ‘they’ well enough to tell their story convincingly. As the whole point of writing is to interact with the ‘you,’ I am left with ‘I.’ (38). She proceeds to give eight reasons as to why she uses ‘I’, among them:

Thirdly, if I say the word “I,” I call forth the word “you.” You have to respond. And you will allow me to access you under your own conditions, within your own ambiguities and fractious facts. But if the “you” who is not “I” responds, then you and I can at last start trying to find “us” as well as “he” or “she” or “they”. (39)

Krog's articulation is odd in that she does not register that the ‘I’ is itself a discursive position, but takes it as a stable reference point; as another reason she uses ‘I’, Krog asserts that it is ‘the only word I really know and can give an account of’ and ‘I have complete control over the word “I”’ (39). Moreover, she asserts a forceful, even invasive, relation to the ‘you’ – ‘you *have* to respond’ and ‘you will allow me to access you’ – and does not register that this ‘you’ may be the internal to the ‘I’, an otherness within the ‘I’, that allows for the ‘I’'s deconstruction as totality. Krog also asserts that because she has ‘complete control’ over the ‘I’, ‘I can forge a new “I”, another “I’’’ (39). Again, her force, in the verb *forge*, is striking and carries an uncomfortable resonance of forgery – which, after all, is the act of appropriating a signature, the action/sign by which the ‘I’ is asserted by a specific person and contracts, and gives an account of, itself to a larger community.

Arguably, there is a tension between Krog’s treatment of alterity (and respect for difference) and her wish to construct, or seek, a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 7), an imagined community – her subsuming all testimonial voices equally under the sign of the national. The scripting of the nation, an ‘imagined community’, is always to some degree ‘forged’ (as the Ascherson epigraph to this chapter suggests) – entailing a violence that effaces difference and alterity. Arguably, the sense of violence at work in such imaginings and rescriptings of equality is exacerbated in a state such as South Africa where significant material disparities persist among its citizens, forbidding any easy reciprocity.

Krog's sincere assertion of the ‘I’, and her placing of it at the service of telling the entire nation's story, is congruent with the elevation of sincerity in nationalist movements. Gerald Newman, writing of the rise of a cult of sincerity ineighteenth-century England, notes that honesty or sincerity is not a specifically English phenomenon, but a symptom of nationalist discourse: ‘it is a mere truism of academic observation that the emergent national ideal, no matter in which country it is created and no matter what its specific attributes, is everywhere credited with general qualities of innocent simplicity and deep emotional responsiveness’ (127). Krog demonstrates, and attempts to elicit from her reader, such responsiveness. She also frames the Afrikaner precisely within this discourse, thus repeating it. Krog writes of ‘the Afrikaner's blunt honesty and fearlessness to grapple with the impossible’ (98) and portrays her parents in ways that conform to Newman's ‘national ideal’: ‘I think of my father. And other blood nationalists like him. Ordinary people. Good people’ (98) and ‘I think of her [Krog's mother] and how I love her. How I was brought up with what is the best and the proudest in the Afrikaner’ (98).

 Arguably, while Krog plays on her Afrikaner identity to perform an examination of Afrikaner guilt and complicity, she does so in a way that mystifies such identity, and fails to critically explore the problems of nationalist identity more generally. In terms of authorial self-construction, Krog casts herself as *national* figure and voice. Moreover, she exploits collective suffering, bound by national identity. In so doing, she draws on, and writes herself into, a poetics of suffering in Afrikaans literature as well as into a broader tradition of Romantic nationalism[[109]](#footnote-109). Interestingly, Newman credits the cult of ‘sincerity’ with idealising originality of expression in writing and casting literary imitation, in William Cowper's words, as ‘servile’ (qtd. in Newman 133). It is also, according to Newman, when authors begin to be admired specifically for their *moral* qualities. Perhaps the nation-building mood of contemporary South Africa, with its insistence on the indigenous, helps to explain the outrage that met the idea that Krog could be capable of error, let alone imitation or copying from a foreign writer.

One of the authorial positions Krog ‘forges’ for herself is, as I have suggested, that of the *volksmoeder* (a figure which her notes at NELM show she was particularly interested in while researching *Country*[[110]](#footnote-110)). This implicit self-construction as mother-of-the-nation intersects with fascinating tropes of parthenogenesis and autocthony that extend beyond the text, and into the debates about Krog’s alleged plagiarism.

In the acknowledgments page of a volume of her poetry, *Body Bereft* (2006), which appeared not long after Watson’s article, Krog carefully cited any possible influences and echoes, stating:

The acknowledgement of sources in poetry has undergone radical change in recent years. Previously it was the task of academics and reviewers to discover the sources and apply them as context. Now the onus is completely on the poet to stipulate that she doesn’t want her readers to think that every poem has had a “virgin birth’’. (112)

This figure of the virgin birth of words is a resonant one, for within *Country* Krog represents language as birthed autocthonously. Krog has Kondlo state that to witness the testifiers at the commission is ‘to be present at the birth of language itself’ (28). And after the first testimonies quoted in the book, Krog reflects that she is ‘[p]resent at the birth of this country's language itself’ (29). Arguably, the reinscription of sources away from their contexts in *Country* itself strains (or ‘labours’) towards a type of miraculous birth, attempting to figure a new, autochthonously and exclusively *South African* language, and in this impossibility being compelled to ‘forge’ it instead.

**10. *Testimony, Plagiarism and ‘the Black Voice’***

In conclusion, I return to the relationship between Krog’s reworking of testimonies and her plagiarisms. Though they are problems of a very different order, they appear to be directly related, to work together towards a certain ‘naturalisation’ or ‘authentication’ of Krog’s text as *African*. Krog works towards casting her work as indigenously African, thus justifying her continued position of ‘belonging’ and ‘authority’ in South Africa in a post-apartheid dispensation of black rule. At the close of the book, Krog pictures herself looking across at the mainland from Robben Island; she is

looking back to the continent. There is a rawness in my chest. It is mine. I belong to that continent. My gaze, my eyes are one with the thousands of others that have looked back over the centuries towards Africa. Ours. Mine. Yes, I would die for this. It slips out, like a smooth holy sound. And I realize that it is the Commission alone that has brought me to these moments of fierce belonging. (277)

Krog’s position here is a far cry from that in her powerful poem ‘Land’, where she mournfully addresses a land which ‘never wanted’ her (line 3), that shook her off (line 12), ‘never belonged’ (line 19) to her (*Down to My Last Skin* 114). The TRC has facilitated her belonging to, and rightful place in (an ostensibly just, and transformed) South Africa. The TRC has enabled the sense not of loss of privilege and power, but a sense of the rightfulness of her place in Africa – a sense of ownership: ‘This is mine’. At the same time, the passage recalls colonial gazes – which look ‘back over the centuries towards Africa’, seeing it as a place prehistoric. (Krog’s ‘rawness’ in her chest at this point, a moment of identification, reinforces this apprehension of Africa as the site of the raw and primeval.)

What is particularly striking about Krog's borrowings – and which makes them all the more unsettling – is that she presents them as personal reflections and insights, seized upon epiphanously or articulated in heated conversation. In so doing, she constructs a particular authorial persona – passionate, thoughtful, sensitive, rigorously scrupulous and highly articulate, with a seemingly unique, idiosyncratic take on what she witnesses. By asserting that she wishes to tell *her* story (171), Krog carves out an individual position and persona for herself. She adopts a confessional stance, of vulnerability as poet, which draws in the reader, eliciting her sympathy, but this ‘rawness’ is performative. It is a pose of innocent artlessness which Krog has previously used to powerful effect in her poetry*.* One of Krog's most famous poems, ‘Ma’, offers itself as a gift to her mother, it poses as a poem without rhetoric or artifice, a ‘barefoot poem’ (‘*'n kaalvoet gedig’*) (*Dogter van Jefta* 12), but is highly rhetorical, even if unconventionally so, and it is in this that its power lies[[111]](#footnote-111). Structured roughly chronologically, *Country* gives a similar impression of ‘naturalness’/artlessness, being a ragbag/barefoot mix of documentation, enquiry and poetic impression that is eventually offered, seemingly naively, as gift, contribution or plea. At the close of the book, Krog announces that the TRC is indeed a good thing, that she ‘wants this hand of mine to write it’ (278), and proceeds to close with a poem which addresses an unspecified ‘[y]ou whom I have wronged’ (279), asking for forgiveness and to be included, taken along into the future of this ‘you’ – a notional, yet to be other you, that recalls the ‘beloved’ (27) whom she addresses with the phrase ‘you who inherit the future’ (27) early in the text. (As we have seen, within *Country* Krog admits a degree of manipulation and rhetorical structuring, justifying it not so much in the name of art as sincerity – she alters facts in order to *express herself* (170). That is, rhetoric is subsumed to sincerity rather than the expression of sincerity, the ‘I’, deconstructed by its rhetorical ontology and seen precisely as linguistic performance. )

Sanders praises Krog’s foregrounding of address (through her incorporation of letters and lyric poems and her addressing a fictional ‘beloved’) as suited to the TRC, which, too, ‘depends on an address to the other’ (163), and he sees the fictional affair as ‘allegorising’ a type of defensive psychic splitting that occurs when the subject is overwhelmed by trauma and wishes to protect those close to her and finds a proxy for her violence. According to Sanders, at the hearings ‘the statement-taker, questioner, and translator all absorb, as proxies for the perpetrator, the violence of the victim’s anger, anguish, or grief’ (162). I see a ‘splitting’ or ‘fault-line’ which has a different precipitation – Krog’s untenable conflation of two genres: testimony (performed by the victims at the TRC) with confession (which she performs). Krog’s fictional affair dramatises what is perceived as a duality of ‘betrayal and confession’ – if ‘I write this I exploit and betray, if I don’t, I die’ (49) – which rests on what might be called a ‘tortured poetics’. She portrays herself as suffering in the same way as the testifiers. Radstone notes that in such scenarios, where testimony and confession are made equivalent, the confessing self is emptied outwards and ‘cleansed’ of history (176).

There is a sense in which Krog’s plagiarisms and ventriloquisms – which entail a misrepresentation to, and deception of, the reader and a betrayal of the testifiers– ‘allegorise’ the duality of betrayal/confession and transference of violence to an addressee more powerfully than the affair might. If ‘allegory’ is literally an ‘other’ voice or story, there is a doubled sense in which Krog's plagiarisms and ventriloquisms are ‘allegorical’, appropriating the voice of the other, and also telling, or gesturing to, a different story. Or, what James Clifford calls an ‘allegoric’ (rather than ‘symbolic’) approach to the text might helps us read *Country* more critically, attendant to its material contexts. Clifford argues that ethnographic writing, despite its aspirations to scientific objectivity, is ‘inescapably allegoric’ (100). Clifford notes that ‘What one *sees* in a coherent ethnographic account, the imaged construct of the other, is connected in a continuous double structure with what one *understands*’ (101). In *Country*, where the figurative and ‘allegoric’ nature of writing is to some degree denied or repressed through Krog’s insistence that what she presents is ‘non-fiction’, allegoric ‘doublings’ constantly recur – as for instance in the figuring of the effacement of Sicelo Mhlawuli’s ‘fingerprints’ (an invented narrative which points, allegorically, to the effacement of the individual at work in Krog’s reinscription of testimony). When read contextually, attendant to material specificities, Krog’s testimonies point to a different narrative than that of storytelling as ‘healing’, suggesting a violence inherent to narration, and particularly to the conscription of specific voices into a grand national narrative. Anthony Appiah, critiquing African nativism as suppressing ‘the agon of history’ (because it does not take stock of its own imbrication in, and shaping by, Herderian nationalism), argues that ‘the task of the organicist aesthetic’ has always been ‘to conceal the startling violence that sustains the dominion of culture’ (89). In Krog an aesthetic governed by her vision of the new, unified nation is in tension with the violent erasures that an imagining of a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ may perform when significant material inequalities persist and are occluded.

The relationship established between Krog’s first-person narrator, ‘I’, and the reader by the use of direct address is performative, an effect of discourse, inseparable from it. Yet clearly, given the hold Krog has on her readers, it translates, cumulatively, beyond the text, into their appreciation of her, and what Eaton describes as the ‘cult of personality’ that surrounds her (5). This surely is partly because the ‘I’ is posited as non-fictional and confessional, is tied to Krog's name, via her signing of her ‘Envoi’ to *Country* among other things. Krog’s ‘Envoi’ suitably stands in place of an ‘Acknowledgments’ page and implicitly acknowledges, via its very title, that her book is structured ‘poetically’. Suitably, given her titling of this as ‘Envoi’, she closes with another confession-cum-plea. Having given her thanks in the third-person throughout the ‘Envoi’, Krog closes with a sudden, second-person address for understanding and forgiveness: ‘I have told many lies in this book about the truth. I have exploited many lives and many texts – not least those of my mother and my family on the farm. I hope you will all understand’ (281) and it is signed simply with the familiar first name ‘Antjie’, a token of nakedness or naivety. Placed at the end of the ‘Envoi’, the confession/appeal mimics the placement of the poem of lyric address that closes the main text. With the sudden, direct address to the reader, and the mirror placements, boundaries between the borders of fiction and non-fiction are further blurred.

Although in her ‘Envoi’, Krog confesses to a poetic style -- and thanks her editor for helping her find one -- to my mind, the reader is likely to identify this with the overtly poetic, often anguished, reflections, in which Krog's voice becomes vatic and impassioned. It is unlikely that the reader would identify them with the structurings that are hidden -- particularly as Krog has repeatedly stated that she edited the testimonies only minimally, and for punctuation, and that her work is *non*-fiction. So, while there is some confession of fictionalisation, there is also a push towards naturalisation, the impression of unfiltered observation. Even the poetic sections read like direct impression, rather than reworkings. Much of Krog’s writing tends towards what K.K. Ruthven names ‘authenticity effects’ (149). Various authenticatory devices which Ruthven discerns in the writing of Daniel Defoe, ‘who incorporates…stylistic features commonly associated with factual reportage’ (149), are visible in Krog too – namely the ‘the use of vivid but ‘irrelevant’ details, the seemingly haphazard structuring (a concatenation of seemingly disparate episodes) and the recourse to an authorial signature which promotes an ‘indexical’ reading of the relationship between first-person narrator and author and the reading of signs as referents. (The last is especially important.) Krog also has recourse to the idea of language as natural, and of the mother tongue, through her figuring of herself as a type of *volksmoeder* birthing a new national language. By displacing what is essentially a type of literary plotting or structuring (a ‘poetic style’) into the mouths of the testifiers, Krog *naturalises* and *authenticates* her text as document/reportage, what she insists is ‘non-fiction’ (‘Last time’). The testimonies are portrayed, in effect, as ‘from the lips of natives’ (in that familiar trope fromnineteenth-century folklore), in an act of auto-indigenisation (in which her lips become ‘native’ and thus can speak for the new South Africa – ‘all voices, all victims’ [277]). Indeed, she highlights the bodily (including the figure of lips) and, by drawing on testimonies concerning physical pain and torture, gives her reading the authority of *bodily* suffering. Here she plays on different types of authenticity, including, arguably, a racialised authenticity, in which Africa and the African stands for the body and as a place of origins and the ‘raw’: raw materials, here raw pain, ‘a mine’, a ‘ground’ for appropriation and exploitation, ready to be worked up and rendered valuable/productive (‘put to work’ and made manageable), ‘capitalised’ on by technologies of ‘writing’ and ‘voicing’. Krog portrays the testifiers as unable to properly testify for, or ‘voice’ themselves, as broken by pain (following Scarry’s idea that pain destroys language). Indeed she repeatedly exaggerates the ‘wordlessness’ of the testifiers. The ‘raw’ pain of Calata’s cry becomes for Krog the inaugural event of the TRC, from whence she can ‘birth’ a ‘new language’. (And Calata’s cry is figured as the ‘primeval’ past of ‘this country’, in another clichéd evocation of Africa.) Here, the construction of voicelessness on the part of the testifiers serves Krog’s self-authorisation, and the justification of her project, the appropriation of the testimonies to a ‘poetic’ self-exploration and self-creation, as a newly Africanised Afrikaner. Part of Krog’s auto-authorisation includes the figuring of her new language as distinctively African, and she asserts her commitment, and *belonging* to Africa – after all, she comes to assert that ‘she belongs to that blinding black African heart’ (259), and that she would ‘die’ for Africa (227).

But arguably this assertion of belonging is pre-emptive, facilitated by a rhetoric of reciprocity, equality and community that is not borne out by the material inequalities which continue to mark South African society. In this respect, Krog’s insistence, in ‘Last time, this time’ on the matter of a respect for ‘equality of input’ as determining her citational practice, is remarkable. Krog justifies her unconventional methods of acknowledgment as particularly apt to her project and its historic moment:

For me, we were forging a new vocabulary in an open and democratic society where finally the past had been made known. Everybody was a textmaker. Everyone’s input was equal.

She goes on to claim that

my desire to respect this equality of input would have been undermined by a bibliography, as it would have foregrounded certain texts as ‘established truth’ while perhaps implicitly relegating the testimonies of victims to something ‘less’.

Krog establishes here a connection between her use of testimony and her methods of acknowledgement that bears consideration. Krog in effect claims that she did not always reference academic sources because she felt that the apparatus of reference might seem to privilege the authority of what she calls ‘established truth’ over that of the testimonies. But what a close contextual reading of *Country* alongside other texts shows is that Krog's idiosyncratic methods of acknowledgement do not serve to render all texts equal but rather to reauthorise select texts and readings (and to lend to academic texts, ‘established truths’, the authority of testimony). Because of Krog's re-ascriptions and blurrings of reference, what are her selective readings and interpretations of the TRC, and of language and of pain, are not presented as such – that is, as particularly situated readings, informed by Scarry and Dorfman and others – but are rather seen to be articulated by a black intellectual, Professor Kondlo, or, to emerge first hand from black suffering, the weight of which in South Africa has an undeniable authority. Similarly, the observations about honour made by Pitt-Rivers and Bourdieu are transposed to Archbishop Tutu, and the ‘shepherd’ is made a representative figure of a Western pastoral tradition, although Krog insists his words are repeated exactly. What is striking about Krog’s use of Scarry and Dorfman, in particular, is not just her obscuring of their authorship but her reascription of their theories to specifically *black* authors – Kondlo and the testifiers. Krog, in a sense, colours them black, or performs a type of blackface.

 In ‘Fact Bordering Fiction’, Krog claims that all her work since 1994 – the year of South Africa's first democratic elections – has been in response to, and in conversation with, what she calls ‘the black voice’ (38). She goes on to write that ‘*Country of My Skull* in 1998 was a specific response to the specific black voices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ (38). I would suggest, contrary to this, that Krog's lack of specificity regarding the testimonies allows her to use what she construes as ‘the black voice’ in order to authorise a particular narrative of the TRC. In this story the past is purged through sacrificial pain and a new story or nation and national language is written into being though storytelling. Through the ‘forging’ of a new vocabulary, the past is *made* known (it is an act of construction which secures, or papers over, the past, as much as opening any archive; in the chapter on Mda we will see a similar interrelation between the ‘refiguring of the present’ and, or through, the ‘reclamation of the past’.) At the close of the book Krog offers herself as national spokesperson, the author of the new, asserting ‘I want my hand to write it – for all voices, all victims’ (278). Insofar as she reinscribes testimonies and texts with a free hand, Krog claims what might be termed a (literally) ‘reproductive’ power and agency over the testifiers in her bid to birth, or contribute towards what is figured as a specifically, autocthonously South African language.

CHAPTER THREE

### (DIS)AVOWALS OF TRADITION: FORGING ‘A USABLE PAST’ IN ZAKES MDA’S *THE HEART OF REDNESS*

**1. MDA’S USE OF JEFF PEIRES’S *THE DEAD WILL ARISE***

In 2008, Andrew Offenburger, a PhD student in History at the University of Yale, in an article in *Research in African Literatures*, denounced ‘Duplicity and Plagiarism in Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*[[112]](#footnote-112)’. Offenburger alleged that the use made by Mda, in his novel *Heart*, of Jeff Peires’s history *The Dead Willl Arise* constituted ‘abuse’ (173, 174, 175 – Offenburger uses the term repeatedly). Although Mda does, in a prefatory note, thank Peires for his ‘research’, this, according to Offenburger, does not sufficiently acknowledge the extent of Mda’s debt to Peires (Offenburger appends to his article a table of some 88 passages that appear to be copied from Peires). Offenburger casts *Heart*, together with Calixthe Beyala’s *Le Petit Prince de Belleville* (‘*The Little Prince of Belleville’)* and Yambo Ouologuem’s *Le Devoir de Violence (‘Bound to Violence’)* as examples of ‘African postcolonial’ fiction troubled by accusations of plagiarism. But he does so only to disaffiliate *Heart* from the novels by Beyala and Ouologuem, marking it as an exemplary case of plagiarism: ‘beyond the limits of postcolonial and postmodern creative license’ (176).

 In the wake of Offenburger’s article, Stephen Gray wrote a piece for the *Mail & Guardian* in which he condemned Mda as yet another South African writer given to plagiarism (‘Copy Rites and Wrongs’), declaring that

The recent exposures in the world of South African literature of fakes and phoneys who use others’ work without permission, cashing in on it as if it were their own originally, has shifted towards none other than that cultural icon, Zakes Mda.

Mda responded in *Research in African Literatures* (his and Offenburger’s article appeared in the same issue) and in the *Mail and Guardian*. Debate continued online, and readers of the *Mail & Guardian* wrote in to defend and support either Mda or Offenburger.

In this chapter I return to the dispute between Offenburger, Mda and Gray. The focus is not on whether Mda uses Peires (which Mda does not deny) but on delineating the pressures that shape his occlusion of Peires’s voice and that might contextualise Mda’s borrowings as acts able to be read meaningfully within a larger historical context and literary historiography. While Offenburger allies *Heart* with other postcolonial African texts accused of plagiarism, he does not consider the long history of plagiarism and ventriloquism in accounts of the cattle-killing itself (nor did he consider Mda’s appropriations in relation to recent cases of plagiarism in South Africa, all by white authors). The Xhosa cattle-killing, the subject of Peires’s book, is one whose retelling, as Jennifer Wenzel has noted, has from the start been curiously marked by plagiarism, ventriloquism and various contestations of authorial voice (37). In what follows, I return to the cattle-killing, its historiography, and its literary adaptations, in order to situate Mda’s own retelling of it (and his own authorial voice). I then consider the debate between Mda, Offenburger and Gray, before turning to a consideration of Mda’s use of Khoikhoi folklore in *Heart*.

### *The Cattle Killing and Its Historiography*

The events of 1856-57 in the Eastern Cape of South Africa in which the indigenous Xhosa speaking people destroyed nearly all of their cattle and grain on the instruction of the prophetess Nongqawuse, nowadays commonly termed in English ‘the cattle-killing’, are endlessly contested; even the appellation ‘cattle-killing’ is disputed. Jeff Guy argues that it was the destruction of grain that was ultimately fatal, something which the term ‘cattle-killing’ obscures (229-31), and Helen Bradford argues further that the term imposes a colonial reading on a period of events referred to in Xhosa as the Nongqawuse period (*U-Nongqause*) and which is seen to have included a variety of catastrophic events (‘Akukho Ntaka’ 216). But the slaughtering of cattle, more dramatic than the destruction of grain, is the event that has tended to capture the imagination, particularly given the central role of cattle in traditional Xhosa society. Cattle, as the primary form of social exchange and mediation, have accrued wide symbolic significance. The chief Moni is reported to have warned King Sarhili against the killing with the statement that ‘Cattle are the race, they being dead the race dies’ (qtd. in Wenzel 54). If the events of 1856 to 1857 have come to figure the destruction of the Xhosa as an independent people, the figure of the killing of cattle, so crucial to the configuration of Xhosa society, seems an apt term.

Very few facts concerning the cattle-killing are generally agreed upon – only that Nongqawuse, a teenage girl (aged approximately fifteen), reported that strangers, claiming to be people who had lived long ago, had appeared to her instructing the Xhosa to kill their cattle and destroy their grain and that their doing so would ensure that the dead, or rather ‘new people’, would arise and drive out the colonists. According to Peires, the dominant, retrospective Xhosa interpretation of this was that the strangers were colonial agents – perhaps including Sir George Grey, the governor of the Cape – and that the entire cattle-killing movement was instigated by the colonial authorities in order to destroy Xhosa independence (*Dead* 12). The contemporary colonial authorities had their own conspiratorial reading of the events: they were the result of a ‘chief’s plot’, whereby the chiefs sought to reduce their people to starvation and thus provoke war, a reading which serves to displace responsibility for the scale of the disaster. This is a disaster in which Grey’s government might be described as conspiring and a responsibility for which Grey and the English must bear a considerable share insofar as Grey, according to Peires, did little to alleviate the suffering of the Xhosa, but rather capitalised on their decimation to draw them into the colony as cheap labour. Peires estimates that more than 400 000 cattle were killed; at least 40 000 people starved and more than 125 000 were displaced; and that the colonial authorities used the opportunity to expropriate some 600 000 acres of land (*Dead* 340).

The history of the cattle-killing is a contested one not only because of conflicting Xhosa and colonial interests in the story, but also because of differing Xhosa and colonial traditions of recording the past – in writing and orally. Moreover, there were very few written historical accounts of the cattle-killing – by either Xhosa or English writers – in its immediate aftermath. Instead, the story has tended to circulate via divergent oral and print literary-fictive renderings. The first written Xhosa historical account was penned some thirty years after the incidents, albeit it by a contemporary of Nongqawuse’s, William Wellington Gqoba, who would have been around 17 at the time of the cattle-killing. Gqoba’s account was published in 1888 in two articles in the Xhosa newspaper *Isigidimi samaXosa* and later abridged into one article and reprinted in a 1906 anthology, *Zemk’Inkomo magwalandini*, edited by W.B. Rubusana (Wenzel 34). This abridged version of Gqoba’s account was in turn translated into English by Xhosa writer A.C. Jordan and published as ‘The Tale of Nongqawuse’ in his book *Towards an African Literature* (1973). As Wenzel notes, it is this truncated translation – the only published translation to date – that forms the basis of much historiography of the event (34).

Wenzel notes also how a contemporary colonial account of the cattle-killing by Frances Brownlee has become the basis of much historiography of the event, resurfacing – usually unacknowledged – in various accounts, by both black and white writers: the version penned by Brownlee, the wife of Charles Pascalt Brownlee, a commissioner in British Kaffraria during the time of the cattle-killing, resurfaces in her husband’s *Reminiscences of Kaffir Life* (1896), George McCall Theal’s *History of South Africa, from 1795 to 1872* (1915), John Aitken Chalmers’s biography *Tiyo Soga: A Page of Mission Work* (1877), Mary Waterson Waters’s play *U-Nongqause* (1924) and even H.I.E. Dhlomo’s play *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1936). Authorship is repeatedly obscured and reassigned, including across colour lines; Wenzel notes how Theal closes his own presentation of the prophecies, derived from Frances Brownlee, with the claim that this ‘tale’ is that told by the Xhosa: ‘Such is the tale which the Kaffirs told each other, of the manner in which MHLAKAZA and NONQAUSE became acquainted with the secrets of the spirit world’[[113]](#footnote-113) (Theal, *Compendium* 52, and qtd. in Wenzel 65). As Wenzel notes, here orality (and implicitly ‘fiction’, a ‘tale’) is inscribed as inferior to print (and to history) – Theal records this (France’s Brownlee’s account) as if it were a traditional Xhosa tale and casts it as spurious, particularly in relation to his seemingly authoritative *history[[114]](#footnote-114)*. (We will see a similar elevation of history over fiction in Offenburger.)

Dhlomo’s reinscription of Brownlee’s words is particularly interesting, and apposite to the discussion of Mda and Peires, in that, as Bhekisizwe Peterson suggests, there is in Dhlomo’s plays ‘an attempt to write *aside*, to displace, white accounts of African experiences…in the presentation of precolonial history and society without Eurocentric prejudices’ (qtd. in Wenzel 97). But, as Wenzel argues, ‘writing aside’ should be read here intransitively: Dhlomo writes ‘alongside’ European historiography (97), occasionally incorporating it, and thus ‘dialoguing’ with it rather than ‘displacing’ it.

Other accounts of the cattle-killing too are marked by plagiarism and ventriloquism, or the re-ascription of authority. In her attempts to look at what other, non European historiographical accounts of the cattle-killing Dhlomo could have drawn on (rather than Brownlee), Wenzel turns to J.H. Soga’s *The South-Eastern Bantu* (1930) – and encounters ‘a second intertextual web involving J.H. Soga, the missionary Mary Waterton Waters, as well as Dhlomo, Shepherd [R.W. Shepherd, who ran the Lovedale Press], and Pringle [Thomas Pringle]’ (99). Surprisingly, Soga, who, according to Wenzel ‘sought an integral African history narrated on its own terms’ (99), turns to the missionary Waters as authority in his account of the cattle-killing in his *The South-Eastern Bantu*: ‘The pith of the messages of Nongqause and Mhlakaza may be put in words extracted from a book by M.W. Waters…and although the words have been placed in the mouth of Nongqause by the writer, they may be taken as a realistic interpretation of what was intended by the original’ (243, qtd. in Wenzel 99). The words from Waters’s play that Soga goes on to quote are surprisingly anticolonial in spirit; the ancestors apparently speak through Nongqawuse to say: ‘We have seen the oppression of our people by the Whites. We can no longer keep silence. We shall come to save the nation from destruction’ (243, qtd. in Wenzel 99). According to Wenzel, although Soga states that ‘tradition’ is his authority in his book, Soga’s recourse to Waters is ‘only one way in which missionary/colonial perspectives shape his account’ (100).

Apparently, Waters’s play is yet another account of the cattle-killing to draw on Frances Brownlee’s account without acknowledgement (Wenzel 99), and Waters in another play recounting the cattle-killing, but this time published in English rather than Xhosa, *The Light-Ukukanya: A Drama of the History of the Bantus, 1600 – 1924* (1925), also lifts poems from Thomas Pringle without acknowledgment. Waters places Pringle’s ‘Song of the Bushman’ in the voice of a character named ‘Hottentot’[[115]](#footnote-115), completely without any attribution (Wenzel 102), and has her character ‘Civilization’ speak Pringle’s poem ‘The Caffer’, but ascribes it to ‘Slater’ (Wenzel 103). Waters also attributes to ‘Slater’ rather than Pringle, his poem ‘Makanna’s Gathering’, which in Waters is placed in the mouth of her character Makanna and presented as a ‘war song’ (Wenzel 103). Wenzel notes that Waters cuts the third stanza of Pringle’s poem, in which ‘Makanna calls on his people to ‘make your choice – / To conquer or be slaves’; neither option is compatible with Waters’s Civilization’ (Wenzel 103).

Waters’s plagiarisms are also ventriloquisms (and are comparable to Krog’s colouring of her borrowings as the locutions of specifically black testifiers and intellectuals – although, a crucial difference here is that Waters does not present her work as non-fiction). Wenzel discusses Pringle’s own well-meaning but somewhat contentious ‘ventriloquism’ which, as Malvern van Wyk Smith notes, ‘aimed to give a voice to what he perceived to be the voiceless’ (‘Origins Revisited’ 30, qtd. in Wenzel 104), and also notes, fascinatingly, the way in which Pringle’s poems, read alongside the Waters, offer a counter-narrative to the primary narrative of Waters’ play. Again, one thinks of Krog, and the way in which the symbolic violence of her ‘forgeries’ suggests a different narrative to that of writing and voicing as ‘healing’ or reconciliatory, so that the plagiarism serves to enact two conflictual readings.

Another case of ventriloquist imposture in the historiography of the cattle-killing cited by Wenzel is that of the historian ‘Nosipho Majeke’, who includes the cattle-killing in her history *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (1952). Nosipho Majeke was the pseudonym of Dora Taylor, a member of the Non-European Unity Movement and in fact a white historian, something only revealed in the 1980s (Wenzel 107). *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* opens

FOR A PEOPLE engaged in a liberatory struggle it is necessary to rewrite the history of the past. It is part of the very process of liberation to expose the distortions of history which are presented by the herronvolk [*sic*] as truth and taught to the young in schools and universities. (1)

*The Role of the Missionaries* is seen as such a project of rewriting the past, with Taylor siding with the oppressed rather than the herrenvolk and electing the former as her identity. Wenzel notes that, somewhat ironically, the book, republished in 1986, has garnered a radical black readership among whom it is not always known that Majeke is the pseudonym of a white writer and ‘remains available for appropriation by a cultural politics that opposes not ‘herrenvolk’ and ‘oppressed’ but white and black’ (Wenzel 107).

In comparison to the numerous white-authored ‘accounts’ of ‘native’ life and history, there is a relative paucity of book-length black print histories of South African history, particularly prior to 1994 (Opland notes that early Xhosa writers managed to ‘fight with the pen’ mainly via newspapers and, occasionally, by having their books printed overseas [‘Fighting with the Pen’ 12-13]). Black authors have had to contend with a significant obstacle in the form of an informal, but significantly distorting, censorship, on account of largely white ownership of printing presses and the publishing industry[[116]](#footnote-116). As Wenzel suggests, it is perhaps unsurprising then that accounts such as Soga’s should turn, for instance, to Waters. Mda perhaps encounters a similar situation in writing *Heart*, a celebration of African identity whose reliance on a white print history (and, I will argue, a colonial folklore collection) is partially obscured.

### 1.2 *Forging a ‘Usable Past’: Poesis and History Writing in* The Dead Will Arise

It was not until 1989, 132 years after the cattle-killing, that the first extensive written history of it appeared, namely Peires’s *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856-57*[[117]](#footnote-117). Peires’s was not only the first extensive print history of the episode, it made significant new claims about the chief actors in the episode, and offered what might be termed, colloquially, a ‘novel’ interpretation. Noting in his preface why no historian before him had persevered to offer a ‘full’ (11) account of the cattle-killing, Peires describes the particular difficulty of the material: ‘the primary sources, the evidence on which the historical account is based, are riddled with lies, both deliberate lies and self-delusions’ (11).

Against such lies, Peires sets out to discover the truth, particularly regarding with whom responsibility for the killing should rest. Peires writes in his preface that the impetus behind the book was the desire to reconcile two conflicting interpretations of the cattle-killing – the predominantly Xhosa version, ‘Grey’s plot’, which held that the colonists deliberately beguiled Nongqawuse, and that of the colonists – the ‘chiefs’ plot’, which held that Xhosa chieftains instigated the cattle-killing in order to spark war with the colonists. (There is a striking echo here with the passage taken from Hughes by Krog – the desire to ‘reconcile’ two ‘myths’ or ‘stories’, via a third interpretation, characterises both.) Peires concludes that neither story is historically verifiable; nevertheless, there is a grain of what we might call ‘poetic’ truth in the idea of Grey’s plot insofar as Grey took full advantage of the destruction wrought by the cattle-killing. Indeed, Peires maintains that Grey might be credited with the disaster of the cattle-killing insofar as he capitalised on it: ‘In this sense, though not in the one related by the old men of Xhosaland, Grey was the true perpetrator of the *isihelegu sikaNongqawuse*, the catastrophe of Nongqawuse’ (12).

Elsewhere, Peires states that in Xhosa oral tradition it is not just Grey who is the perpetrator, but ‘Grey and the missionaries’ together, asserting that most Xhosa people attribute ‘guilt’ to both (‘Suicide or Genocide’ 52). He mentions that although Majeke (i.e. Taylor, mentioned earlier) did not repeat oral history in her account of the cattle-killing , she did in some sense continue it by assigning blame to the missionaries, and describing the cattle-killing as ‘missionary inspired’ (qtd. in Peires, ‘Suicide or Genocide 52’)[[118]](#footnote-118). Peires himself might be said to participate in such a tradition of cattle-killing narratives: strikingly, one of Peires’s key findings was that Mhlakaza, Nongqawuse’s guardian, was Wilhelm Goliath, a disaffected former servant of Archdeacon Merriman, and a Christian convert with fanatical leanings. Peires claims that this knowledge would have been suppressed by the colonial administration as it would have shown the ostensibly civilising mission as disastrous in its consequences (*Dead* 362). At the same time, of course, Peires’s interpretation allows him to focus in the cataclysmic cattle-killing all the destruction wrought, over centuries, by this ‘civilising mission’. With this identification of Goliath with Mhlakaza, Peires supplements, or fleshes out, the ‘poetic’ truth that Grey – or, rather, what he stood for – and the missionaries were responsible for the cattle-killing.

Peires’s identification of Mhlakaza with Goliath has been contentious. For Bradford, it threatens to ‘do violence to the tenets distinguishing historians from novelists’ (‘Women, Gender and Colonialism’ 369). Guy resonantly describes Peires’s pursuit of ‘readibility’ as entailing the cutting of ‘too many historiographical, methodological and epistemological corners. Historical links are forged out of hints in the sources – as in the relationship between Goliat [*sic*] and Mhlakaza’ (227). The distinction between history and fiction has been much commented on in the discussion surrounding *Dead*, and indeed is stressed by Peires in that book – he repeatedly affirms that his work is *not* fictional (17, 342). (As we shall see, this distinction is anxiously stressed by Mda and Offenburger too.) My reading of the relationship of history to fiction, and of Peires’s historical account, follows Hayden White in attending to historical narratives as ‘verbal artefacts’, figurative despite themselves, and in seeing poetry and history, fact and fiction as determined by different generic conventions and truth claims rather than inhabiting linguistically distinct spheres. White notes that ‘historical narratives are…verbal fictions…the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in in literature than they have with those in the sciences’ (*Tropics of Discourse* 82[[119]](#footnote-119)). Morever, there is a literally ‘fictive’ or ‘poetic’ (in the sense of poiesis as shaping, indeed forging) element in history writing insofar as it presents, in language, representative objects. As White writes,

[n]ovelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones[[120]](#footnote-120), but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the *object* of representations is a poetic process. (*Tropics* 125)

History and fiction, like plagiarism, then, are determined pragmatically, according to certain conventions, rather than being inherent textual phenomena. White suggests that in positivist accounts which subscribe to a fiction (or fantasy) of entirely factual, figurative-free representation, the ‘poetic moment’ goes into ‘remission’ (126). It produces its double at its contours. Something of this is seen in *Dead*, where Peires’s identification of Mhlakaza with Goliath – an identification which is scripted as a matter of ‘belief’ (this is discussed in futher detail shortly) – stands in for a more general interpretive thesis about the corrupting influence of Christianity on precolonial Xhosa culture.

Interestingly, Peires describes a somewhat similarly ‘poetic’ method of history writing to White’s when he discusses the representation of the cattle-killing in Xhosa oral tradition. In an article on the history of the cattle-killing, Peires maintains that oral history works through a process of ‘telescoping’:

In telescoping, the deeds of an entire generation are attributed to a single person; complex sequences of events are reduced to a single dramatic scene; inconvenient facts are brushed aside and loose ends are chopped off; a moral is added to underline the contemporary relevance of the story. (‘Suicide or Genocide’ 54)

Peires asserts that the truth told by Xhosa oral history in its assignation of blame to Grey and the missionaries is ‘telescoped’, truth ‘of a different order of reality’ (‘Suicide or Genocide’ 54). But it’s not clear that such telescoping doesn’t to some degree occur in other histories, such as his own. Peires, via his focus on individual players (listed as ‘*dramatis personae*’at the start of his book) and what Guy describes as his corner-cutting (27), himself provides a ‘telescoped’ account, in which Mhlakaza and Grey come to be emblematic figures.

As we shall see, Mda follows, and builds on, Peires’s identification of Goliath, ‘the first Xhosa ever baptized into the Anglican church’ (*Dead* 13) with Mhlakaza, reading the latter as corrupted by Christianity. Indeed, Mda rescripts Xhosa history in a way that seeks to claim a pre-Christian authenticity. The very title of the *Heart of Redness* points to this – according to John Knox Bokwe, the first Xhosa convert to Christianity, Ntsikana, leapt into a pool to wash the redness from his body, instituting a Xhosa custom of immersing oneself in water and washing off red ochre on the occasion of conversion (11-12).

Mda also follows Peires in his reading of the political allegiances of the ‘*amathamba’* and the ‘*amagogotya*’. As Peires notes, those who believed the prophecies and carried out the orders allegedly given by the strangers were known as the *amathamba* and those who did not, the *amagogotya* (*Dead* 189-90)[[121]](#footnote-121). Peires translates these as ‘believers’ and ‘unbelievers’ respectively, but notes that ‘the division between the *amathamba* and *amagogotya* ran much deeper than the division between belief and unbelief, and the Xhosa, in conferring these names, seem to have recognised the fact’ (206). Peires elaborates these differences by contextualising the terms within the contemporary circumstances of colonial incursion and changes to Xhosa life brought by it. *Thamba* literally means ‘soft’, a designation which in traditional Xhosa culture is complimentary, indicating ‘abnegation of self and a willing submission to a greater duty than self-interest’ (199). Peires writes that ‘renunciation of self lay at the heart of the old Xhosa ethic of mutual aid and communal solidarity, now under threat’ (199). Against this ethic of the *amathamba,* the ‘soft ones’, is posed the ‘self-interest’ (199) of the *amagogotya*: ‘*Gogotya* means ‘hard’, just as the opposite, *thamba*, means ‘soft’, but, significantly, *gogotya* is usually translated as ‘stingy’ or even ‘disloyal’’ (201).

According to Peires, the *amagogotya* were mainly chiefs and the wealthy, those who ruled or had many cattle, whereas the *amathamba* were mostly poorer people and those whose cattle had already been decimated by lungsickness. Peires, thus drawing class into his analysis, proposes that the cattle-killing was largely a popular movement that gained heightened authority and momentum with King Sarhili’s endorsement of the beliefs, and notes how the unbelieving chiefs tended to lose followers to ‘proNongqawuse members of the royal lineage’ (200).

 Peires also proposes that King Sarhili’s belief stemmed partly from a desire to affirm Xhosa custom, and was formed in direct response to colonialism and Christian evangelising (*Dead* 106-108). The chiefs who initially opposed the movement were predominantly those who ‘normally followed the lead of the colonial authorities’ (*Dead* 118). Peires claims that, broadly speaking, those chiefs of an anticolonial disposition were strong believers, whereas those who opposed the movement were disposed to the colonial government (*Dead* 192), but notes that ‘any attempt to equate attitudes towards the Cattle-Killing with attitudes towards the colonial government breaks down in a rash of exceptions’ (*Dead* 192). Nevertheless, Peires asserts that, overall, the cattle-killing was popular and anticolonial in spirit: ‘[i]t is thus no exaggeration to describe the Cattle-Killing as a popular mass movement of a truly national character, uniting both chiefs and commoners, the major social classes of the precolonial social order, in a communal defence of their way of life’ (*Dead* 201). Peires’s assertion that the movement was a unifying one is somewhat curious given his own discussion of how much division the prophecies caused, writing that ‘[t]he Cattle-Killing split every chiefdom and, indeed, many homesteads from within’ (*Dead* 205). Peires’s own reading is, perhaps, one informed by a contemporary climate of political nationalism and a tendency to read history as the unfolding of national destinies. Certainly Peires describes the cattle-killing as the event that ‘irrevocably transformed the Xhosa nation into South Africans’ (*Dead* 34), even though no unified South Africa existed as political entity at that point (Peires reads backwards, imposing a long history which would see the Cape unified with the other colonies). Somewhat similarly, Wenzel notes that the cattle-killing ‘meant the beginning of the end for the Xhosa nation’ (3). Wenzel makes a further, subtle point, though – namely that the movement’s interpretation and memorialisation might be read as constitutive of anticolonial Xhosa and African nationalism or solidarity (81). That is, whereas a singular, united Xhosa nation, self-conscious of its own collective identity and united in its aims, is not easily identifiable in the movement, or prior to it, the events’ retellings (including, arguably, those by Peires and Mda) have served in the creation of a sense of Xhosa national – and black – consciousness[[122]](#footnote-122). Interestingly, Jordan notes that Xhosa praises in the wake of the cattle-killing show that ‘the vision of the tribal bards themselves was broadening, and their tribes had begun to regard themselves as units of a much bigger whole than hitherto’ (81). (The emergence of retrospectively unified San and Khoikhoi identities is comparable.)

Notably, as Peires points out (*Dead* 387), the first Xhosa account of the events allies the prophecies with anticolonial resistance. Gqoba’s article suggests that Nongqawuse herself framed the prophecies in terms of anticolonial resistance: in the abridged, translated version of Gqoba given in Jordan, Nongqawuse is described as saying ‘that there was another chief, mounted on a grey horse. His name was Grey, eitherwise known as Satan. All those who did not slaughter their cattle would become the subjects of the chief named Satan’ (qtd. in Jordan 73). Given that this account was written thirty years after the events, and that it necessarily relied on rumour (which is partly how the prophecies spread), it is unclear whether Nongqawuse really did frame the prophecies as such, but that they were read and disseminated as such does suggest, as Peires argues, that the movement was anticolonial in spirit. Moreover, Nongqawuse’s prophecies were preceded by rumours of a black nation across the sea who would help the Xhosa defeat the English – the nation, the Russians, who in 1854 had defeated Sir George Cathcart, a former governor of the Cape, in the Crimea, were imagined by the Xhosa as black compatriots, indeed ‘the spirits of Xhosa warriors who had died fighting in the various wars against the Colony’ (Peires, *Dead* 96). As we shall see, it is the alliance of the believers with anti-colonial resistance, as interpreted by Peires and implicit in Gqoba’s account, that Mda appears to pick up on in *Heart*, in which the terms ‘believers’ and ‘unbelievers’ are used (and *amathamba* etc. explained, on page 86).

Strikingly, Peires ultimately grounds his own argument in terms of ‘belief’ and, as it were, affiliates himself (not only rhetorically) with the ‘believers’ (those on the side of anti-colonial resistance). In his preface he asserts a journey from skepticism to firm ‘belief’:

I started this book in 1981, feeling somewhat skeptical about both ‘Grey’s Plot’ and the ‘Chiefs’ Plot’. Six years later, having examined all the evidence…I am more than ever convinced that there was no plot on either side. Moreover, I am convinced that we do not need a plot or a conspiracy to explain the Cattle-Killing Movement. I believe, and I trust….I further believe, and I trust… (*Dead* 12)

In the same passage he sets aside ‘plot’, in terms of conspiracy; but one might read this, in a doubled, deconstructive sense, as a disavowal of his own ‘plotting’ or ‘emplotment’ (in White’s sense) in favour of belief. In a sense this is an avowal or confession of its own, insofar as Peires’s identification of Mhlakaza with Goliath serves to emplot *Dead*. Strikingly, Peires shortly asserts that ‘Once we understand Mhlakaza’s background and the personal motivations which inspired his religious experiences, we realize we have no need of the ‘Chiefs’ Plot’ or ‘Grey’s Plot’’ (*Dead* 13). Peires’s replacement of these ‘plots’ with the figure of Mhlakaza gestures to what is his own reconstituted emplotment of the narrative – in a manner which coincides with, or provides the proof for, his own beliefs.

In his Afterword to the 2003 edition of *Dead*, Peires contextualises his completion of the manuscript of the book within the period of his own anti-apartheid resistance (in the Eastern Cape in the 1980s). Peires provides this context, and the story of how he became a Member of Parliament in the post-apartheid government, as a means of describing how the book ‘became an orphan’ – that is, by explaining the context of its formation, he at the same time disavows its personal relation to him (and how this might have shaped its writing): ‘The purpose of these reminiscences, setting out the context in which *The Dead Will Arise* was written, is to explain how the book became, if not an orphan, then at least a child abandoned by its author’ (*Dead* 359). This trope also speaks to the familiar scenario of the loss of authorial control of meaning upon publication, as the text becomes open to various readings. Sure enough, Peires goes on to critique the criticisms it came in for, especially ‘postmodern critique’, of which he is fairly scornful (*Dead* 359). (He mentions White in particular, but admits his hasn’t actually read him [*Dead* 384].) Peires is ‘too busy doing other things to defend my book’ (*Dead* 359). Notably, those who query his identification of Mhlakaza with Goliath are described as ‘doubters’ (*Dead* 360).

Although Peires’s book was well-received, winning the 1990 *Sunday Times* Non-Fiction Award (an award which, incidentally, *Country of My Skull* also won, in 1999), and, unusually for an academic work, reached a comparatively wide-audience, Peires, in a 1990 article, to some extent disavowed the work, or at least its usefulness in contemporary South Africa. He tells how his Xhosa friends were interested in his interpretation only insofar as it lent credence to the idea of Grey’s plot, and how his Xhosa students at the University of the Transkei likewise were only really interested in Grey’s plot. Peires’s perhaps somewhat bitter conclusion is that: ‘[t]he Xhosa don’t need white academics to give them a usable past. They already have one’ (‘Suicide or Genocide’ 55), a point he reasserts shortly: ‘[t]he Xhosa already have a usable past, and they don’t need an accumulation of detail to understand it better’ (55). (This past is that ‘telescoped’ one in which blame rests with Grey, and Peires’s claims here reinforce the sense that his detailed history supplements the ‘telescoped’ Xhosa tradition.) Peires is concerned here with the relevance of history writing, which he believes should be of immediate political and communal use, the furnishing of what he terms ‘a usable past’ (‘Suicide or Genocide’ 55). That is, he sees history writing as serving a collective need for a contemporary self-fashioning and self-understanding. Peires suggests that a usable past – for it to indeed be usable – must be authored by a member of the group to which it is directed. It is not just that Peires’s history ostensibly provides a surfeit of detail but that its authorship by a white man detracts from its usefulness and credibility. Part of what is at stake in the providing of a usable past, then, is the very act of authorship – the act of authoring itself is constitutive of an alternative present and the positionality of that author in relation to the past is crucial.

The term ‘usable past’ was coined by American literary historian and critic Van Wyck Brooks in his 1918 essay ‘On Creating a Usable Past’, an essay ‘addressing itself to the problem of creating a national culture in America’ (Hoopes 3). Brooks, a ‘romantic’ and ‘organicist’ (Hoopes 216), believed America as a nation lacked a sense of organic community and a common ‘usable past’ of which it could be *proud* and appealed to writers to create one. Brooks critiqued previous histories for always placing America in the shadow of Europe, and it is perhaps unsurprising that Peires should turn to his reclamatory call when faced with writing a history of the cattle-killing, which, prior to Peires’s text, was often referred to by English speakers as the national ‘suicide’ of the amaXhosa, and commonly viewed as a source of shame among Xhosa people.

If Peires’s history offered itself as a ‘usable past’ to black South Africans, or was meant as such, it was an offering rebuffed – except perhaps in the instance of Mda’s use. Notably, Peires, in the Afterword to the 2003 reprint of *Dead* described himself as ‘sincerely honoured by the notice that Zakes Mda has taken of *The Dead Will Arise*’ (389). (Read next to Krog’s discourse on honour, and in relationship to plagiarism as an act of honouring or dishonouring, Peires’s statement becomes all the more significant.) Mda, arguably, manages to render Peires’s history as ‘gift’, at least partially. The trope of gifting appears in Peires being one of Mda’ dedicatees – in *Heart*, Peires is thanked for his research not in an acknowledgments section, but in the ‘Dedication’, making *Heart* a type of counter-gift.

In the discussion of *Heart* that follows, I suggest that Peires’s interpretation provides the basis for a potentially celebratory treatment of Xhosa history and belief, in a book ‘proudly’ African, part of a cultural moment concerned with the creation of a national culture, in which ‘proudly South African’ became a marker for locally made goods[[123]](#footnote-123). Peires might be said to provide a ‘usable past’ for Mda, who renders Peires’s interpretation more popular and provides it with greater ‘credibility’ (and currency – the book was reissued after the publication of *Heart*) by writing it into a narrative that celebrates contemporary Xhosa culture. But Peires’s print history is also a problematic source for Mda, insofar as his interpretation is one imposed, or adduced by a white print historian – it carries a particularly legacy. After all, there is a complex relationship between print, colonialism and the ‘Word’, and a consequent affiliation between orature and anti-colonial resistance, that is touched on in *Dead* itself*.*[[124]](#footnote-124)

### The Heart of Redness*: Reclaiming the Past and Refiguring the Present*

 *The Heart of Redness* (2000), Mda’s third novel, is perhaps his most frequently cited work (at least in South Africa) and certainly the most epic in scope. Commonly described as magical realist in style, it interweaves two narratives: the historical story of Nongqawuse and the cattle-killing, to which Mda introduces certain fictional characters, and a fictional, post-apartheid story. In retelling the story of the cattle-killing, Mda turns to a key event in the formation of South Africa, described by Peires as that which ‘irrevocably transformed the Xhosa nation into South Africans’ (*Dead* 34). In his juxtaposing of this moment with post-apartheid South Africa, Mda chooses two moments of national destruction/formation – two times of national re-formation – for his subject, and, arguably, the text itself engages in and partakes of a collective project of national re-formation, the furnishing of a common ‘usable past’ by South Africa’s culture-brokers in the wake of apartheid. It occludes arguably the most traumatic period of Xhosa history, from the time when the Xhosa lost their independence to the end of apartheid, some 140 years later, a period referred to in the book simply as the ‘Middle Generations’. Instead, Nongqawuse’s promise – which ushered in the ‘sufferings of the Middle Generations’ (8, 37, 137) – is belatedly made good, or ‘redeemed’. (Peires offers a similarly ‘redemptive’ reading of the cattle-killing, as did Dhlomo.) *Heart* is very much inscribed in the new, and a vision of the new, as were Nongqawuse’s prophecies – she was visited by the ‘new’ people and predicted a new era, a constitutive break with the present. *Heart* not only concerns itself with its post-apartheid moment, but is concerned with the African Renaissance (President Thabo Mbeki’s vision for a new African era), o, ffering a ‘herald’[[125]](#footnote-125) of it in the figure of the parthenogenetically born Heitsi Eibib, and is inscribed to ‘new lives’ (‘Dedication’).

The post-apartheid section of the narrative concerns the protagonist Camagu, a man of Xhosa origin returned to South Africa after nearly thirty years of exile in the USA; his finding a home in Qolorha in the Eastern Cape, broadly his ancestral home, and also the cradle of the cattle-killing; and his negotiation of the literally ‘twin’ traditions of ‘belief’ and ‘unbelief’ he finds there. Into the historical narrative of the cattle-killing, largely derived from *Dead,* Mda inserts an array of fictive characters, namely the twin brothers, Twin and Twin-Twin, the sons of Xikixa; Qukezwa, a Khoikhoi woman who marries Twin; Heitsi Eibib, the child of Twin and Qukezwa; and John Dalton, the leader of a group of English soldiers responsible for the murder of Xikixa (*Heart* 20). Notably, Twin and Twin-Twin take opposing attitudes of belief and unbelief towards the prophecies of Nongqawuse, and much of the historical narrative is woven around the story of the twins’ falling-out over the prophecies. (Twinning, as we shall see, is both a thematic motif and structural principle in *Heart*.)

 The contemporary narrative that Mda constructs concerns the direct descendants of Twin, Twin-Twin, Qukezwa and John Dalton – namely Zim, Bhonco, a second Qukezwa, a second John Dalton and a second Heitsi Eibib. The descendants tend to reduplicate their ancestors not only in name: Zim, the descendent of Twin, is, like him, a firm believer in the prophecies of Nongqawuse, while Bhonco, the descendent of Twin-Twin, is a firm unbeliever. The rift between Twin and Twin-Twin persists as a feud between their descendents, through several generations. Zim has a daughter, Qukezwa, who is a believer and shares many of her historical foremother’s characteristics. Bhonco has a daughter, Xoliswa, who is an unbeliever. The contemporary John Dalton is a trader rather than a soldier, but like his forefather he speaks fluent isiXhosa. The implication of such reduplication is that history is a curse born genetically – and suitably Bhonco and Xoliswa both bear, bodily, ‘the scars of history’ (*Heart* 261), scars which flare up, in times of trouble, as reminders of the past’s inescapability and their own historical determination, and are inherited from Twin-twin (*Heart* 233-234). The local white settler-colonial descendants – now described as ‘emigrants’ leaving for Australia and New Zealand – avoid remembering the past, and staying in South Africa, lest ‘the sins of the fathers’ (*Heart* 137) be visited on them.

Like their direct ancestors, Bhonco and Zim clash, this time in relation to a proposed ‘development’ scheme to acquire land in Qolorha and build a casino and holiday resort there. Mda himself, like his protagonist, has a PhD in development studies (Camagu has one in ‘development and communication’), and this section of *Heart* rehearses some of the issues concerning community development in Africa addressed by Mda in his book *When People Play People: Development Communication through Theatre* (1993)*.* In this book Mda attempts toidentify a ‘truly African’ theatre’ (9), key to which is local participation rather than external imposition:

By living and creating with the community, a new and genuine theatre language is being evolved. Although this new theatre continues to use the same age-old proverbs and riddles, songs and dances these forms are not imposed on the people by outside forces who think that is how African theatre should be. (10)

Here it is vital that the ‘age-old proverbs’ are recycled from within the community (rather than taken from external sources, or imposed by external understandings and readings of traditional culture), for the ‘new and genuine’ to emerge. Crucial then to originality and authenticity (the ‘new and genuine’) are authorship and positionality, the wielding of power and authority. In *Heart*, Camagu is something of an intermediary (and outsider) figure – not quite a local, but authentically ‘African’ enough to lead, or act as a catalyst for, new forms of community development. He is the ‘auctor’, the author-catalyst.

Bhonco welcomes the development scheme as something that will bring jobs and ‘modernity’ (92) to Qolorha, and Zim opposes it, as something that will destroy the natural environment, conceived of as ‘heritage’, and will benefit only a few investors rather than the local people. Mda, like Peires, refers to the *amathamba* and *amagogotya* as ‘believers’ and ‘unbelievers’ (Mda explains the words on page 86), and presents the believers as allied with anti-colonial resistance (as in Peires, and as is implicit in Gqoba’s account). In *Heart* it is the modern day descendants of the believers that resist the ‘development’ scheme that would rewrite the (traditional) landscape as English (willow trees will be planted and the proposed resort named accordingly) and alienate them from their surroundings. Although the scheme is touted as being in the service of ‘national’ development, it is seen to be in the service not of the people, but of the elite few, a hollow nationalism wielded as slogan in order to enforce compliance and further the interests of a certain social sector, here a ruling class composed of the government and a rich elite**.** As Wenzel points out, the proposed development scheme, with its promise of jobs and regeneration, is shadowed both by the promises of Nongqawuse’s visions of plenty and by the (false) promise of colonial ‘civilisation’ and ‘progress’ – indeed ‘development’. Whereas the latter is shown, belatedly, as a false promise (made in bad faith), the former is to some extent recuperated or made good – belatedly, Nongqawuse’s pool becomes a national heritage site, preventing the casino development.

 Camagu is drawn into the feud between Bhonco and Zim concerning the development and eventually affiliates himself with Zim, proposing as an alternative to the holiday resort an eco-friendly backpackers. John Dalton also affiliates himself with Zim and Camagu, in opposition to the proposed scheme, but a further sub-plot sees Camagu and Dalton fall out over viable job-creation alternatives to the development scheme. Camagu and Dalton each have their own small businesses which employ local people and tap into local culture. Camagu employs MamCihra and NoGiant to harvest seafood and to make traditional Xhosa dress, described as having become ‘very popular among the glitterati and sundry celebrities of the city of gold since the advent of the African Renaissance movement spearheaded by the president of the country’ (162). Mda here nods to Thabo Mbeki’s government and his vision of an African Renaissance and at the same time, via a disparaging reference to the ‘glitterati’ and ‘city of gold’, links it with a certain consumerism and suggests the commodification of African culture[[126]](#footnote-126). Nevertheless, in *Heart*, the market for ‘authentic’ African costume is welcomed insofar as it provides local jobs and the embrace of Xhosa dress is seen positively as an act of pride, of affirming African culture in the face of centuries of disparagement. Thus Camagu confronts Xoliswa, who disapproves of the fashion for local dress as backward-looking, with the assertion that Xhosa dress ‘represents a beautiful artistic cultural heritage’ (160).

Dalton runs a cultural tourism business, wherein he employs two local women to dress up in traditional Xhosa dress and perform a stylised tableau of village life for tourists (247). Camagu objects to this reification of Xhosa culture, and also to the structure of the business (whereby a white man employs two black women to perform their culture) (eventually Dalton’s cultural village will become a co-op, run with NoManage and NoVangeli [274]). Camagu protests that Dalton’s scheme is an

attempt to preserve folk ways…to reinvent culture. When you excavate a buried precolonial identity of these people….a precolonial authenticity that is lost…are you suggesting that they currently have no culture…that they live in a cultural vacuum? (248)

As we shall see, this debate enacts some of the text’s own ambivalences regarding the ‘preservation’ and ‘reinvention’ of ‘folk ways’ and ‘culture’. There is a conflation here of ‘preservation’ and ‘reinvention’ which at first sight seems odd, but which, I suggest, points to a dialectic that plays out in the text – as Mda attempts to ‘excavate’ and ‘preserve’ folklore, but in a way that reinvents, by reascribing ownership. Notably, in the passage quoted above ‘precolonial authenticity’ is not figured as fantastical, a compensatory imagining, but as irrevocably *lost* – as once having existed, in a strikingly nostalgic move, where time comes to figure or displace a more complex psychic arrangement or sense of loss (a sense of loss bound up with a sense of violently fractured and transculturated community and belonging). Camagu proposes as an alternative to Dalton’s version of cultural tourism an eco-friendly backpackers, thus tapping the potential of tourism to generate jobs, but avoiding the blatant commodification and reification of Xhosa culture. Furthermore, his business is co-operatively run and jointly owned (248).

Camagu can be seen as a surrogate author figure here too, and his choices about sustaining and promoting Xhosa culture in an increasingly globalised world (significantly, his development scheme is one that caters to travelers and tourists) reflect Mda’s. The post-apartheid moment of *Heart* shares with that of the *Nongqawuse* the inscription, or subordination, of local communities into a capitalist economy. If Xhosa people were drawn into a wage economy after the cattle-killing, by 2000 Xhosa tales (and more generally ‘South African’ ones) are global commodities, along with ethnic identities more generally. As Sarah Brouillette argues in her study of the ‘global literary marketplace’: ‘the association between an author and a national authenticity is often an excessive burden within specifically postcolonial literatures, taken on as a partial requirement of the cosmopolitan function of those literatures’ (177). *Heart*, written in English, has a similarly cosmopolitan function, representing Xhosa ethnicity to a larger South African and global marketplace. Mda’s text participates uneasily in this scenario – conscious of its own conscription and drawing attention to it, but attempting to negotiate these difficulties, partly through ‘subverting’ standard English.

If Camagu metaphorically ‘affiliates’ himself with Zim and the believers by protesting against the development scheme and trying to protect the natural environment, he literally does so by becoming part of Zim’s family, choosing to marry his daughter Qukezwa and bearing a child (the second Heitsi Eibib) with her. This is after he decides against pursuing a relationship with Xoliswa, Bhonco’s daughter, a teacher who is ashamed of ‘redness’ and enthusiastic about all things American and seemingly ‘civilised’.

 As David Attwell notes, Mda, by returning to the cattle-killing and bypassing apartheid, ‘foregrounds the encounter with modernity, not as a completed event, but as unfinished business, over which the amaXhosa – and through figures such as Dalton and Camagu, South Africans in general – must take charge’ (*Rewriting Modernity* 196). Arguably, such taking charge entails a certain ‘ownership’, not only of the legacy of modernity but over Xhosa identity and tradition and its contemporary articulation. If change, in the form of ‘modernity’, is to be embraced it is to be so in tandem with pride in Xhosa tradition, rather than a shameful repudiation of self.

 In this respect, it is significant that the contemporary camps of belief and unbelief that Mda depicts do not appear to reflect actual contemporary Xhosa attitudes to Nongqawuse (most Xhosa people contend she was the dupe of colonial authorities) but rather to allegorise opposing attitudes of ‘shame’ and ‘pride’ towards precolonial Xhosa tradition. Thus Camagu muses that it is ‘sad’

that when the nations of the world wear their costumes with pride, the amaXhosa people despise theirs. They were taught by missionaries that it is a sign of civilisation, of *ubugqobhoka*, to despise isikhakha as the clothing of the *amaqaba* – those who have not seen the light and who still smear themselves with red ochre. (55)

Similarly, Bhonco accuses Dalton, who takes tourists to see Nongqawuse’s pool, of taking them ‘to see the places of our shame’ (144); and Camagu notes regarding Nongqawuse that ‘[e]veryone seems to be ashamed of her’ (150), and regarding Zim that the unbelievers are angry with him for ‘bringing back the shame of the past’ (151). Xoliswa regards the story of Nongqawuse as part of the Xhosa people’s ‘shame’ and wishes that it ‘rest in peace’ (i.e. be buried) rather than be remembered (68). Mda has Xoliswa reflect, in free indirect speech, that Camagu is ‘bent on reinforcing *shameful* practices and uncultured modes of dress’ (261, my emphasis). In the end it is Nongqawuse that ‘saves’ Qolorha, as the text attempts to ‘redeem’ or make good her legacy – and to do so without jettisoning Xhosa culture or seeing the cattle-killing as part of a teleological Christian narrative of a journey towards ‘civilisation’, as in H.I.E. Dhlomo’s play *The Girl Who Killed To Save*. Here again Nongqawuse’s legacy is hopefully reinterpreted, and an attempt made to redeem the immense losses associated with her visions, as Dhlomo casts the suffering as a necessary step in the path to ‘civilisation’. Dhlomo’s position is an ambivalent one – while he appears to repeat the reading of the events given by Brownlee and Christian missionaries, his affiliation is to a Xhosa identity and culture, albeit a radically changed one, and Wenzel has written insightfully of the textual ambivalences and echoes in his text which reflect this split position. (Read historically, Dhlomo’s play becomes more complex and interesting than its critical reception suggests.) In *Heart* the motif of redemption persists, although, as we shall see, it is now cast as a specifically Khoikhoi motif rather than a Christian one – the Khoikhoi hero Heitsi Eibib is reinterpreted as a Christ figure, ‘a prophet and savior…the son of Tsiqwa …[who]…lived and died for all the Khoikhoi’ (22). This sacrificial logic operates, too, in other areas of the text – Dalton must, if not die, be heavily injured in order for balance to be restored in Qolorha, whose people he describes, evocatively, as ‘my people’ (248). A false leader, he is wounded by Bhonco, and this too is figured a type of ‘redemption’– the metaphor, after all is a monetary one, to do with debt and credit, as well as religious (in the Christian interpretation, original sin is figured as ‘debt’, for which Christ ‘pays the price’) – and Bhonco’s action, as we shall see, is figured as a claiming of his ‘credit’ from the white trader. Dalton ‘pays the price’ for the sins of the white community, or at least those of his forefather. Nongqawuse is reinterpreted, and ‘redeemed’ as a tragic heroine via the commodification of her story into ‘heritage’: the fact that she is from Qolorha and had her visions there, means that the area is declared a national heritage site and the casino and holiday resort development will not go ahead. The work of seeking redemption and meaning, the casting of the cattle-killing events into a meaningful and hopeful narrative, might be seen as an act of mourning, emerging in response to a sense of loss. *Heart* is very much concerned with how to mourn and commemorate the cattle-killing, an event seen to inaugurate national division, figured in the text through the trope of ‘twins’.

### 1.4 *Twinning in* The Heart of Redness

A motif of doubleness, specifically ‘twins’, persists in Mda’s text, pointing to a sense of splitting and division, in need of ‘reconciliation’. This doubleness, or duality, calls to mind a somewhat similar sense of violent fracture and ambivalence (and persistent binarism) in *Country of My Skull*, though it is more self-consciously thematised in Mda. In both works, such splitting, the trace of violence, tends to stand in opposition to organicist (and nationalist) visions of wholeness.

‘Twinning’ in *Heart* is both thematic – the twins represent belief and unbelief, two aspects of a single community – and structural: the realist and supernatural, or ‘magical’, elements are placed side by side as two aspects of a single reality. By his thematic and structural twinning, Mda affiliates himself to a specifically Xhosa literary tradition as well as to a generically African one. Twins are the focus of one the first extant[[127]](#footnote-127) Xhosa novels, S.E. K. Mqhayi’s *Ityala lamaWele* (‘The Lawsuit of the Twins’), published in 1914, and are a striking motif as well in various canonical postcolonial African novels. Occupying a distinctive place in various African traditions (notably in West Africa), twins have come to represent in postcolonial literature, Brenda Cooper suggests, a type of splitting typical of the postcolonial condition (52). Attwell suggests that *Heart* follows *Ityala lamaWele*

 in seeing twinship as a ‘single identity’, and thus poses it as antidote to the splitting engendered by the colonial encounter (*Rewriting Modernity* 199). Certainly, *Heart* is concerned with the reconciliation of the twins, their division being traceable to the time of the cattle-killing. The motif of the divided house, of brothers set against each other, in *Heart* also resonates with one of the most powerful stories of Xhosa oral tradition and history – the split in the house of Phalo, between his sons Gcaleka and Rharhabe. Peires, in his first book, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of Their Independence* (1982), resonantly chooses the kingdom of Phalo as the moment of Xhosa independence: a wholeness before a duality introduced by colonialism, as his evocatively nostalgic title suggests. Peires writes that ‘the tradition has an important function amongst Xhosa today: it explains how the Xhosa came to be divided between the Gcaleka of the Transkei and the Rharhabe of the Ciskei’ (46).

 In *Heart*, the splitting between twin siblings, and between believers and unbelievers, is allied with, and traced to, another division: that between the body and head of the fictional twins’ father, Xikixa. The division of the contemporary community is attributed by Bhonco to the loss of their common ancestor’s head, decapitated by British forces and taken as souvenir to Britain. The loss of a sense of organic, cohesive community and unitary leadership (the head ruling the body) that appears to pervade contemporary Qolorha is focused, then, in the image of ‘the headless ancestor’.

Bhonco believes that in order to restore the order of things he must kill John Dalton, the descendant of the man who beheaded his ancestor, and thus send him back to the ancestors to retrieve Xikixa’s head. (Implicitly, the present generation carries the debts of, or must pay for, the ‘sins of the fathers’ [*Heart* 137]. Concomitantly, the present generation also bears the marks of the suffering of the past – as witnessed in the scars which Bhonco and Xoliswa inherit. (White privilege and black disempowerment are figured as historical legacies not easily disburdened.) Bhonco’s reasoning is in accordance with the magical and fantastical level of the text, but this reasoning is also given some validation by what ensues on the realist level; on the realist level, Bhonco’s attack on Dalton (he hits him on the head with the ‘traditional weapons’ of panga and knobkierrie) does not kill him but does result in the tentative bridging of another rift in the community – the ‘feud’ (277) between Dalton and Camagu. Dalton, humbled, lying on his hospital bed, is in a changed position from the man who claimed vociferously that the local people are ‘my people’ (246). Now, he is able only to ‘groan[s] in agreement’ as he concedes to Camagu’s speech, wherein Camagu grants him a place in the community that is one of ‘home’:

This rivalry of ours is bad. Our feud has lasted for too many years. …There is room for both the holiday camp and the cultural village at Qolorha. We must all work together. You must come back home quickly, John. We need your business expertise at the holiday camp. (277)

 Strikingly, Bhonco and Dalton’s relationship revolves around credit or ‘ityala’ and its transaction – Bhonco is repeatedly placed in the position of asking Dalton for credit (9, 235) while he waits to be able to pay for the basic goods he buys from the trader. On the day of the attempted murder, Dalton believes that Bhonco has come to ask for credit, and barely listens to him – but he has come for something else (his forefather’s head) and to ‘pay back’ a longstanding debt or ‘feud’. The vignette near the start of the book in which we see Bhonco ask Dalton for credit and in which Dalton hums and hahs about whether to give it to him, closes with Bhonco protesting, ‘I’ll pay you!’ (10). At work in Bhonco’s attack is a fantasy of violent retribution as much as reclamation. Operating in Bhonco’s seemingly naïve ‘madness’ is a collective impulse towards restoring an historic imbalance and injustice. Similarly, in Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother*, another post-apartheid text that deals with the cattle-killing, Mxolisi, the murderer of the American girl who strays into the township, is seen as the ‘perfection’ of hatred, an exemplary, fated figure, ‘the perfect host’ of the ‘demons’ of his ‘race’ (201), and the American daughter as ‘the imperfect atonement of her race’ (201).

The desire that the fictional Xikixa’s head be returned is echoed within *Heart* by the mention of two historical stories of severance and repatriation of particular contemporary relevance when *Heart* was written – namely, the stories of Sara Baartman (168, 170) and of King Hintsa ka Phalo (77). The fates of both of these nineteenth-century figures, a Khoikhoi woman and Xhosa man, were, so to speak, revived in post-apartheid South Africa, as occasions of national spectacle. In *The Deaths of Hintsa,* Premesh Lalu offers an insightful comparative reading of the death of Hintsa as recorded in *Dead* and reproduced, with variation, by Mda in *Heart*. As Lalu notes, reading the two texts side-by-side demonstrates ‘the chasm between the administrative burden of the colonial archive and the demands of anticolonial memory’ (12). That is, Peires’s exactitude is lost in the popular retelling – whereas in Peires we are told of how Hintsa attempts to escape from the British (led by Govenor D’Urban) and is then shot and killed and his ears cut off as ‘souvenirs’, in Mda the attempt at escape (and Hintsa’s agency) is lost and the section reads as if D’Urban himself kills Hintsa and cuts off his ears. Mda also adds a detail, saying that Hintsa’s head was shipped to Britain. The detail of the head being shipped to Britain reflects a narrative about Hintsa made popular in the post-apartheid period by Nicholas Tilana Gcaleka, a self-proclaimed Xhosa diviner and chief. Gcaleka dreamt that the head was to be found in Scotland and in early 1996 travelled there, returning to South Africa with a skull unearthed near Inverness. Gcaleka’s mission to find the head became something of an international spectacle, a collaborative performance of the restitution of national identity, securing corporate sponsorship and being reported in the British and South African press.

On Gcaleka’s return to South Africa, he was summoned to an *imbizo* of traditional leaders. There the skull was confiscated and sent for scientific testing. Scientists declared it highly unlikely that it was Hintsa’s. Rather, it was probably that of a Caucasian woman. It also eventuated that Gcaleka’s professed name was a pseudonym, his actual name Khonoza Mbambatho. As Lalu notes, Mbambatho’s pseudonym not only links him, ancestrally, with Hintsa (as part of the Gcaleka clan), but marks an affiliation with Mqhayi, whose book *Ityala lamaWele*, set in the time of Hintsa, is ‘among the few recorded instances pointing to the possible beheading of Hintsa’ (188-89). The name Tilana is, according to Lalu, a place name commonly associated with Mqhayi: *IsiXhoba sikaTilana* (Tilana’s Rocky Ledge), later renamed *Ntab’ozuko* (Mount Glory) in honour of Mqhayi, was where Mqhayi lived for approximately twenty years and where he is buried (Lalu 188). There is a strange ‘intertextuality’ here between life and literature, as Gcaleka allies himself to – or inscribes himself within – a literary tradition in the act of constructing a national fiction. He appears to be ‘inspired’ by literature, as by dreams, to seek Hintsa’s head.

 Gcaleka’s claims, made in 1996, were contemporaneous with the TRC and reflect a powerful narrative of unearthing and reburial, the need for restoration and reconciliation, through the claiming of bodies, so that proper rituals of mourning could be observed. The reason Gcaleka gave for his quest for the head and his mission to return it to South Africa was that there would be no peace in South Africa until it was restored (Lalu 1). *Heart* too concerns itself with mourning – the unbelievers’ rituals for the remembrance of the past are foregrounded – and self-consciously concerns itself with questions of loss, remembrance and ‘healing’: of how to mourn historical violence and overcome its divisions. The ritual dances of the unbelievers – in which they remember and honour the losses of the past and are transported to it – are adapted from the so-called trance dances of the Bushmen, the ‘abaThwa’. Strikingly, the abaThwa appear demanding the return of their dances (*Heart* 187–89). (Just prior to this Bhonco and Zim dispute whether the dances were given by the abaThwa or stolen from them [*Heart* 166]). It is an odd moment when read next to what I claim, in the second half of this chapter, is Mda’s own ‘reclamatory’ use of (a text about) Khoikhoi religion in *Heart,* his own elegiac response to cultural loss. It is made all the more so given Bhonco’s statement that the unbelievers should return the dance to the abaThwa because ‘we are like a sparrow that is wearing the feathers of an eagle…we must invent our own dance’ (189). This new dance ‘will gain strength the more we perform it’ (189). Bhonco registers the need for invention and refiguration in relationship to the past, and the importance of performativity, indeed how authority is built through performance. The metaphor of ‘borrowed feathers’, strikingly, is one commonly used to describe plagiarism.

### 1.5 *Offenburger’s Critique of Mda: History, Literature and Plagiarism*

The figure of twinning is much commented on by Offenburger in his critique of Mda, and he connects it to what he calls Mda’s ‘duplicity’. Offenburger begins his critique by noting that Mda, at the outset of his book (in his ‘Dedication’), stresses the difference between fact and fiction. He then suggests that Mda, in his transgressions, fails to respect this distinction, and declares that: ‘The resultant analysis calls to question the blurring lines between history and literature, intertextuality and plagiarism, in postcolonial African literature’ (165). But Offenburger offers no definition of plagiarism, something which Mda notes in his response, asking, pertinently what Offenburger means by phrases like ‘excessive intertextuality’ and ‘acknowledged theft’. Stating that ‘I never acknowledged stealing anything’, Mda puts forward his own definition of what plagiarism constitutes: ‘Plagiarism, on the other hand, is theft. A plagiarist passes someone else’s work as his own without crediting the owner and with the intention to deceive’ (203). In what follows I suggest that the accusation of plagiarism comes to bear the weight of Offenburger’s opprobrium towards Mda’s blurring of ‘history’ and ‘literature’ (categories which Offenburger himself does not clearly distinguish). As with Watson’s allegation of plagiarism in *the stars say ‘tsau’*, the allegation, while somewhat shaky, serves to demarcate the ‘extra-literary’.

Mda’s use of Peires is something of a gray area: he explicitly acknowledges Peires’s ‘research’ in his ‘Dedication’, but to the average contemporary reader conversant with the novel’s generic conventions this would give little sense that Mda consistently reproduces passages from Peires near verbatim. Offenburger nevertheless claims that this is an exemplary case of plagiarism as distinct from ‘intertextuality’, which he defines somewhat weakly as a borrowing from multiple sources. Offenburger argues that because Mda works chiefly from Peires, his practices are less acceptable than those of what he terms ‘postcolonial’ writers Ouologuem and Beyala, black Francophone writers who both borrowed extensively in their work, from multiple sources, and were accused of plagiarism (176). Offenburger at once groups *Heart* with these texts and then goes on to place it ‘outside of this subversive literary tradition and beyond the limits of postcolonial and postmodern creative license’ (176). But Mda’s use of English is ‘subversive’; indeed, as I will argue, a similar motif of ‘violence’ subtends the appropriations of Ouologuem and Mda.

In his response to Offenburger, Mda explicitly refutes the idea that his practice ‘is peculiar to postcolonial writers’ (203), a type of contestatory (re)appropriation of white writing, the argument put forward by Marilyn Randall and others to elucidate the plagiarisms of Ouologuem and Beyala, and which is drawn on by Offenburger. Instead, Mda claims his is a ‘post-modern’ practice. Nevertheless, in a second refutation of the charge of plagiarism, this time in response to Gray’s article in the *Mail & Guardian,* Mda describes Gray as a ‘colonial’ stuck within the confines of an outdated English literary critical pedagogy. Mda also takes up a line of argument that demonstrates a certain cultural possessiveness towards the story of Nongqawuse and the oral tradition, implicitly distinguishing between ‘us’ (Xhosa speakers) and ‘them’:

The story of Nongqawuse and the cattle-killing is a well-known one; as children we actually grew up with it. Our language is replete with proverbs based on that story and we sang songs about her. It is our story. Jeff Peires does not own that story. So I can’t steal it from him. He did not invent it. (‘A Charge Disputed’).

Mda’s claim that the story is ‘our story’ is congruent with a consistent concern with heritage that is thematic to the novel itself; the statement also sees Mda assuming the position of spokesperson for a collective[[128]](#footnote-128). Who is the ‘we’ behind ‘our’? Presumably not only those who speak ‘our language’, but who actually grew up with the story, who lived its effects. Mda suggests that first-language Xhosa speakers do somehow *own* the story. At first, there appears to be something of an irony here in that *Heart* is written not in the first language of those to whom this story supposedly belongs, but in English, but on reflection the use of English is part of the ‘legacy’, one of the after-effects, of the cattle-killing. As Mda has Grey profess, the promotion of English was part of Grey’s vision: ‘the ruder languages shall disappear, and the tongue of England alone shall be heard all around. So you see, my friends, this cattle-killing nonsense augurs the dawn of a new era’ (*Heart* 206). For the contemporary reader of *Heart* this moment provides an odd jolt – after all, we are reading the story of the cattle-killing in English, albeit by a Xhosa writer. And we are supposedly in a ‘new era’ – that of the new South Africa, and the African Renaissance – but the ‘tongue of England’ persists as a legacy of colonialism.

To return to Mda’s statement that he cannot steal from Peires as Peires did not ‘invent the story’, Mda’s claim is striking in that it suggests that there is one single consensual and uncontested story about the cattle-killing and because it glosses over the translation and rewriting of Xhosa stories into English and into a specific, Western genre – the historical account – as well as a substantial degree of reinterpretation. One could argue that Peires, by ‘translating’, makes this his own to some extent, or, at least, he shifts the borders of cultural reference. After all, this is a story in which the English are deeply implicated, and part of Peires’s intention in undertaking the history was to try to ‘reconcile’ the conflicting English and Xhosa versions of the Nongqawuse story. It might even be said that part of the thrust of Peires’s book is to make white, English readers take ‘ownership’ of the story insofar as ownership denotes responsibility and the book puts forward an interpretation of the events that stresses colonial complicity in what had frequently been referred to as the national ‘suicide’ of the Xhosa.

 Although Mda asserts that Peires did not ‘invent’ the story of the cattle-killing, Peires may be said to have ‘invented’ the version which Mda uses, in which Mhlakaza is Goliath. Certainly, this interpretation does not appear to have a precursor in Xhosa oral tradition, and Peires derives it himself from fragmentary archival documents (and, as Davies notes in her essay ‘Raising the Dead: The Xhosa Cattle-Killing and the Mhlakaza-Goliat Delusion’, other documents exist which suggest that Goliath was not Mhlakaza). In his response to Offenburger, Mda is perhaps defensive of a peculiar irony: whereas Peires’s work draws heavily on Xhosa oral histories and interviews with elderly Xhosa people, Mda’s work appears to rely mainly on a white historian’s English-language print history. Mda’s work has been lauded for its continuance of Xhosa oral traditions, something that the claim that his words are largely derived from Peires initially seems to trouble**.** Indeed, in his response to Offenburger, Mda states that Peires ‘is not the source for the oral tradition from which I draw’ (200), though this stance is later modified – its meaning clarified, i.e. Peires might ‘record’ the oral tradition (the word Mda uses) but Peires is not Mda’s only point of access to oral tradition; insisting on his familiarity with an oral tradition and his specific desire to further it in *Heart*, Mda notes of tropes he uses:

That is why my Nongqawuse flies with the crows from a river to a distant pool (oral tradition) and Mlanjeni lights his pipe with the rays of the sun and dances until his sweat causes rain to fall (also from the oral tradition, but recorded in Peires). (201)

This is not ‘from the oral tradition *and* recorded in Peires’, but part of the oral tradition *despite* being recorded in Peires – in this way a distinction is drawn between Peires and the oral tradition, as if Peires’s history were a diversion from a tradition of narratives about the cattle-killing, rather than part of it, one of many conduits between it and *Heart*. For Mda, it seems that oral tradition must be continued by members of that tradition – it is difficult to see why else Mda’s print narrative about the event should be seen as furthering an oral tradition while Peires’s is not. Or, perhaps, Mda, like Offenburger, reads history as neutral, non-literary (which is strange given how much of Xhosa orature is historical). In an article published in the *Cape Times*, based on an interview with Mda, the writer asserts regarding *Heart*: ‘Historical characters played themselves. Mda explains that he has pulled dialogue verbatim from original documentation’ (Cohen 1). Here Mda, bypassing Peires’s mediation (or perhaps reading Peires’s history simply as ‘documentation’), emphasises that the documents he uses record original speech, ensuring the historical authenticity of his characters and gesturing to the oral dimension of his work. (This also points to a somewhat unsceptical reading of historical documents, simply as data, which I argue characterises his treatment of Theophilus Hahn’s work too.) It might be argued that Mda’s repetitive use of Peires – or, as he claims, bypassing Peires, of dialogue from documents – is itself part of an ‘oral’ tradition, of repetition. In this case, Mda would have cast Peires himself in the oral tradition as a literary/storytelling precursor. But Mda’s response took an opposite tack – while the stories about Nongqawuse were bequeathed to him orally, as part of his culture, his repetitive use of Peires was not a technique of oral history/orature but of ‘intertextuality’, a phenomenon, which in his response to Gray, Mda asserted was something understood in the academy *here* – i.e. the USA (Mda is based in the English Department of Ohio University). This was a somewhat curious turn given that Offenburger himself is American, based at a prestigious ivy-league university (Yale).

Notably, both Offenburger and Mda employ idiosyncratic uses of the word intertextual that are so vague as to be meaningless. Offenburger appears to offer a fairly standard definition of the word from Judith Still and Michael Worton’s book *Intertextuality*, but it is a partial definition and he treats intertextuality solely as a practise of conscious allusion and as existing on a continuum with plagiarism: Offenburger asks where ‘does intertextuality end and plagiarism begin?’ (165). Mda offers no definition of intertextuality, but describes it as an accepted practice; he too suggests it is a conscious practice – saying that he used Peires’s phrases consciously in order to pay homage to his source. In an interview in which he touches on intertextuality, Mda again suggests it is a matter of conscious choice; speaking of the influence of oral tradition on his writing, he states that his work

draws from it [oral tradition] very strongly. My work will always have that intertextuality, unlike Coetzee’s with the Western canon, but with ‘orature,’ as it is called, in other words, oral literature. (Interview with John B. Kachuba)

In terms of Barthes’s and Kristeva’s definitions of intertextuality, Mda’s work in English *would* have an intertextuality with English works of the Western canon, whether intended consciously or not, for any reader acquainted with works from that canon. Words carry their own resonances, their own historical freight, and readers bring to them their own associations. Mda’s account of authorship, insofar as his own work is concerned, is very far from Barthes’s and Kristeva’s ideas about intertextuality. Mda describes the author not as dead, but as a ‘God’: ‘When I write a novel I am in the God business. This is my world, I am the creator of this world, and I can make this world do what I want it to do’ (interview with Kachuba). Similarly, in another interview, he states: ‘I am in full control of the whole process...I am a dictator of the world that I create’ (interview with Williams 68). Mda here suggests an impossible control over narrative, and one which, in its will to totalise, perhaps produces a counter-narrative.

 If there is a strange congruity between the understandings of intertextuality shown by Offenburger and Mda – as something conscious – it reflects, and is intertwined with, another curious commonality in their arguments: their implicit understanding of history and literature, fact and fiction, as inhabiting linguistically distinct spheres. As White notes, an attitude which sees history as opposed to literature depends on a belief in linguistic objectivity, an authorial control that sees language used (or ‘utilised’) as a tool of revelation – to uncover, or ‘find’, an independent form that matches reality (*Tropics* 126). This is the approach taken by nineteenth-century historians (*Tropics* 124-25), and it is one with which both *Dead* and *Heart* share some features. There is a curious congruence, too, between Mda and Offenburger’s metaphors of ‘utilisation’ – Offenburger understands Mda to ‘utilize magical realism’ (165) but not to ‘utilize intertextuality’ (174, 176), and Peires to use literary ‘devices’ (177). Mda describes himself as having ‘utilized’ ‘historical record’ (‘Response’ 200). The metaphor is one of language as tool, as subservient (in a schema in which the author is a ‘god’) – not one in which language might seem to rebel, be unruly, and other than simply instrumental, despite one’s best intentions.

 Offenburger’s statement that Peires merely ‘uses’ literary ‘devices’ indicates his anxiety at a troubling blurring of historical and fictive borders which he sees exemplified in *Heart*, and more generally ‘in postcolonial African literature’(165). While noting that *Dead* reads like a novel or play, Offenburger sees this as merely ornamental and chooses to read Peires it as a ‘tip of the hat’ to the fact of the cattle-killing’s numerous literary treatments:

While *The Dead Will Arise* constitutes an historical investigation, Peires includes tacit references and an authorial tip-of-the-hat to the event’s literary (and oral) interpretations. His study engrosses the reader with its storyline form, uncommon to most works steeped in primary sources. In many ways, it reads like a novel or play. (167)

Offenburger goes on to make the curious assertion that ‘These dramatic and literary *references* draw attention to the story of the movement *and reinforce its historicity*’ (167; my italics). Offenburger reads ‘literary devices’ (such as a ‘storyline form’) as references and chooses to read them not as drawing attention to the literariness of Peires’s text (or indeed of history writing per se), but rather to its historicity. Offenburger also refutes Davies’s assertion that *Dead* strives towards being literature (Davies 37; Offenburger 177, footnote 5). This he describes as an ‘over-reaching’ assessment, stating that ‘Peires used literary devices to convey the movement’s history, which was grossly misunderstood (and misrepresented) prior to the publication of *The Dead Will Arise*’ (177, footnote 5). But arguably the cattle-killing is a topos that illuminates how historical and fictive genres ‘over-reach’ their boundaries more generally. Offenburger himself notes how intertwined fictive and historical accounts of the cattle-killing are, but sees this meshing of history and fiction as a ‘*unique* co-dependency’ (167; my emphasis).

 Offenburger also raises the matter of Davies’s argument that Mhlakaza was not Goliath. Having suggested that Peires’s history is inaccurate, he asks whether Mda should then change his story so it is historically accurate:

should Mda correct his novel for historical accuracy? If yes, *The Heart of Redness* would fail as an autonomous work of literature. If no, the novel would forever serve as an historiographical time capsule, when the shifting perspective of a central participant left its footprints in wet literary concrete.

But all novels (and indeed all histories) serve as ‘historiographical time capsules’ insofar as they occur in time and bear the marks of their historicity. It would seem that Offenburger, from these assertions, would, like Peires, have little time for White’s argument that historical narratives are

verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented as found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences. (*Tropics* 82)

Offenburger’s understanding that a work is successful as ‘literature’ if it is autonomous of history points to an understanding of literature as apolitical, of language as oddly ‘innocent’. It is a position which carries its own particular ideology. (Perhaps this explains his cursory and unsatisfactory references to the plagiarisms of Ouologuem and Beyala, an understanding of the arguments made by Miller and Hitchcott, respectively, concerning them, would suggest that language is never politically neutral.) In *Heart* – which Mda stressed in his response to Gray ‘subverts standard English’ (‘A Charge Disputed’) – the historical taint that English carries as colonial legacy is made clear.

White argues that when history’s literariness, or fictive-poetic character, is not acknowledged, it becomes its content and that what often follows is

the remission of the *poetic moment* in historical writing to the interior of the discourse (where it functions as an unacknowledged – and therefore uncriticizable – *content* of the historical narrative). (126)

Strikingly, Offenburger complains that in *Heart* ‘Peires’s analysis becomes its own historical content’ (169). But in the example that Offenburger cites, Peires himself does not offer an analysis so much as a story. (That is, in the work of Peires – who eschews the standpoint of White – the ‘poetic truth’ becomes content.) Offenburger objects to Peires’s statement ‘and many Xhosas were still awaiting his [Nxele’s] reappearance’ becoming dialogue in Mda, namely: ‘After all, the amaXhosa nation is still awaiting the return of Nxele’. But this statement is not offered as analysis in Peires, so much as fact. Moreover, in the passage from which this line is taken, Peires places in the mouth of Nxele a speech which he provides no source for and which can only be a fictional recreation on Peires’s part. And Peires proceeds directly from this speech into a type of free indirect speech, assuming the position of Nxele/the Xhosa. Here is the passage:

‘Leave off witchcraft! Leave off blood! Nxele had ordered the Xhosa. ‘These are the things that are killing our people. I am sent by the Great Chief of heaven and earth and all other things to say, lay aside these two evils, so that the world can be made right again.’ A great day was coming, a day on which the people who had passed away would rise again from the dead and the witches would be cast into damnation under the earth. (24)

Peires’s use of the imperfect tense (‘was coming’) in the passage quoted above and in the line Offenburger cites – ‘and many Xhosas were still awaiting his [Nxele’s] reappearance’ – operates as a dramatising device which draws the reader into a contemporaneously unfolding story. ‘Still’ further secures a sense of suspense, as if the moment were still to come – the dead were to arise, as Peires’s title (*The Dead Will Arise*) suggests. There is perhaps in Peires’s text the sort of hopeful, potentially redemptory, re-reading of the event that Wenzel discerns in other accounts of the cattle-killing in her book *Bulletproof: Afterlives of Colonial Prophecy in South Africa and Beyond* (2009). The criticisms which Offenburger directs towards Mda (that historical ‘analysis’ becomes content’) could well be directed to Peires, but Offenburger seems anxious to preserve a distinction between history and literature, a distinction which he believes Mda to have transgressed, and he directs all his criticism towards the novelist Mda. Similarly, Offenburger overplays the relevance to *Heart* of Peires’s possibly erroneous scholarship regarding the ‘Goliath-Mhlakaza’ hypothesis. But this hypothesis seems, if anything, to demonstrate what is most ‘poetic’ about Peires’s own history.

Both Mda and Offenburger tend to treat Peires’s work as history *as opposed to* literature, or to deny (Mda) or cast as transgressive (Offenburger) a ‘literary’ relationship between Peires and Mda. Offenburger’s article may be read as exaggerating the accusation of plagiarism (after all, Mda does acknowledge Peires) in the service of securing distinct disciplinary categories for history and literature. In Offenburger’s schema, Mda’s book, which he introduces in the familiar metaphor of the frontier as one that ‘roams the frontiers of history and literature’, overreaches its borders, trespassing on the territory of history, and muddling the distinction between history and literature. In so doing, it loses, for Offenburger, its status as ‘literature’. What is described as Mda’s plagiarism serves as proof that his work is extra-literary; here ‘plagiarism’, as used by Offenburger, serves to name that which transgresses, and furnishes the limit of, the literary. Similarly, in Watson’s accusations of plagiarism in Krog’s *the stars say tsau*, the accusation, which is vague (Watson cannot supply concrete examples of verbatim copying) is used to mark Krog’s work as ‘extra-literary’.

For Mda, his use of Peires is not plagiarism not only because he cites Peires’s ‘research’, but because he treats the book simply as a historical record – even *the* historical record – neutral ‘research’, rather than a narrative shaped by Peires’s own positionality, and ‘a verbal artefact’, an object of (literary) re-presentation shaped by a certain ‘poesis’. As Offenburger suggests (though he does not state it clearly), Mda’s debts are not just to Peires’s ‘research’ but are more ‘literary’. Mda’s obscuring of this – by his prefatory note thanking Peires for his ‘research’ (a note in which he also draws a clear distinction between real life and fiction and says they are not to be confused) – allows him to cast his own *literary* affiliations as distinctively African and oral – to gesture at an alternate, distinctively African tradition characterised by the oral. Arguably, there is a danger here of creating a kind of ersatz orality which serves only to mark African difference.

## 2. CONJURING A ‘FOLKTALE DREAMLAND’: INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGY IN *THE HEART OF REDNESS*

At the outset of his response, in *Research in African Literatures*, to Offenburger’s article, Mda makes what at first glance seems a somewhat random aside, raising a matter that is not mentioned by Offenburger – Khoikhoi cosmology in *Heart*. Stressing that *Heart* is inspired by oral traditions, Mda asserts that the Khoikhoi stories in his book are derived from indigenous oral tales bequeathed to him by his mother:

when my characters migrate as a result of the lungsickness they are led to new pastures by the stars known as the Seven Sisters, they pray for guidance to Tsiqua [sic] and his son Heitsi Eibib and they perform their rituals on the cairns that they occasionally find on the crossroads. This journey is not informed by historical record but by the oral tradition of my mother’s people, the Cwerhas of the Gxarha sub-clan, descendant from the Khoikhoi people … [H]e [Peires] is not the source for the oral tradition from which I draw ... Peires does not deal with Khoikhoi cosmology in his book. (‘Response’ 200)

In a June 2008 article, Mda goes further in his claims regarding his use of Khoikhoi elements, claiming that he is the first to place such stories and traditions on record. He writes that *Heart*

features strong intertextuality with Jeff Peires’s *The Dead Will Arise*, with its voice that comes directly from the idiom of the Xhosa language, and also with *the previously unrecorded texts* of the oral traditions of my mother’s people, the Cwerha Gxarha clan that descended directly from the Khoikhoi. (‘Justify the Enemy’; my emphasis)

Mda does not specify which ‘texts’ in *Heart* are unrecorded, but it is suggested that these are those ascribed in the novel to the Khoikhoi. In what follows I suggest that many of the Khoikhoi elements that Mda introduces are previously recorded in print, in a text with which *Heart* shares some strong verbal echoes, namely Hahn’s *Tsuni-||Goam: The Supreme Being of the Khoikhoi*[[129]](#footnote-129)(1881). Mda’s mention of his use of Khoikhoi cosmology in the context of his use of Peires seems almost uncanny – like a disavowed acknowledgement. (It is akin to the moment in which Krog draws attention to her use of testimony in her denial that she has plagiarised from Hughes and others in ‘Last time, this time’.) Hahn’s work, the first extensive written account of Khoikhoi religion, is the primary source of many other works on Khoikhoi religion (Chidester et al. 69). Indeed, many of the details of Khoikhoi life that Mda introduces to Peires’s narrative are recorded also in Hahn[[130]](#footnote-130). In what follows I discuss the curious overlaps between Hahn’s work and Mda’s, overlaps which suggest that Mda might be working from Hahn. Certainly these similarities discount Mda’s claim that he is the first to place such details on historical record.

### 2.1 *Khoikhoi Cosmology*

 In the Khoikhoi cosmology which Mda presents in *Heart*, there is a Tsiqwa, a god whom Qukezwa addresses as ‘father of fathers’ (22), and who ‘tells his stories in heaven’ (22, 249) and Heitsi Eibib, described as a ‘prophet’ (23, 249) and as the ‘son of Tsiqwa’ (75). Mda’s use of the name ‘Tsiqwa’ is unusual, and it is difficult to find the Khoikhoi creator thus named, in that transcription, in print records. Mda’s ‘Tsiqwa’ appears to signify the supreme Khoikhoi creator more commonly rendered Tsui-||Goab. A close variant of Tsiqwa, ‘Tiqua’, occurs in an account of a Khoikhoi prayer given by George Schmidt, the first missionary to the Khoikhoi people, and recorded in Hahn. Significantly, this prayer has much in common with one which Mda has Qukezwa offer in *Heart*. Hahn quotes Schmidt on Khoikhoi prayers to a father ‘Tiqua’, heard by Schmidt in 1737:

‘At the return of the Pleiades,’ says Schmidt, ‘these

natives celebrate an anniversary…The

people of a kraal will assemble to dance and to sing

according to the old custom of their ancestors.

‘The chorus always sings: ‘Tiqua, our Father

above our heads, give rain to us, that the fruits (bulbs,

&c.), uientjes,[[131]](#footnote-131) may ripen, and that we may have plenty

of food, send us a good year.’ (qtd. in Hahn 43)

Later in his book, in his notes, Hahn quotes a song to the supreme being which he points out is almost the same in content to that described by Schmidt 150 years before. Hahn transcribes the song as follows (Hahn reproduces it in interlinear fashion, providing Khoikhoi and English versions – only the English is given here, and I have run the lines together into a single paragraph):

Thou, oh Tsui-llgoa! Thou Father of the Fathers — i.e., All Father! Thou our Father! Let stream — i.e., let rain — the thunder cloud! Let please live (our) flocks! Let us (also) live please! I am so very weak indeed! From thirst! From hunger! That I may eat field fruits. Art thou then not our Father? The father of the fathers! Thou Tsui-lIgoa! That we may praise thee! That we may give thee in return (that is, that we may bless thee). Thou father of the fathers! Thou our Lord! Thou oh, Tsui-llGoa! [*sic*] (58–59)

Notably, the song which Hahn reproduces is almost identical to that which Mda has Qukezwa utter. In *Heart*, Qukezwa beseeches Tsiqwa as follows:

Father of fathers, oh Tsiqwa! You are our father. Let the clouds burst and the streams flow. Please give life to our flocks, and to us. I am weak, oh Tsiqwa, from thirst and hunger! Give me fields of fruit, that your children may be fed. For you are the father of fathers. O Tsiqwa! Let us sing your praises. In return give us your blessings. Father of fathers! You are our Lord, O Tsiqwa!’ (23)

The correspondences between Qukezwa’s speech and the prayer recounted in Hahn are striking, as are the minor differences. Where Hahn’s transcription has the supplicants pray for ‘field fruits’, that is fruits of the field[[132]](#footnote-132), as in the prayer Schmidt records, where ‘uientjies’ and bulbs are asked for, Qukezwa prays for ‘fields of fruit’, an agricultural image unsuited to pastoralists, and reminiscent of the Bible, with its injunction that you will reap as you sow[[133]](#footnote-133). Indeed the lines ‘Let us sing your praises. In return give us your blessings’ issue a plea in accordance with just such a punishment and rewards logic. The lines Hahn records suggest a different logic: ‘That we may praise thee! That we may give thee in return (that is, that we may bless thee)’. The request is that those praying may live in order to continue to offer praise, that they may ‘bless’ the creator rather than the other way around. If Mda is working from Hahn here, the issue is not simply one of plagiarism or ownership, but also of positioning – within the text and in his response to Offenburger, Mda obscures the textual and colonial mediation of this prayer. Although Mda’s is an ostensibly hybridising vision (‘hybridity’ is much cited in discussions of *Heart*[[134]](#footnote-134)), it is partially so, and this occlusion of such mediation gives a flattened out sense of South Africa’s textual map, ignoring its complex cultural imbrications.

Mda offers another scene of prayer which recalls Hahn. Qukezwa tells a story about Heitsi Eibib, crossing a river:

Heitsi Eibib prayed, ‘O Tsiqwa! Father of fathers. *Open yourself that I may pass through, and close yourself afterwards*.’

As soon as he had uttered these words the Great River opened, and his people crossed. But *when the enemies tried to pass through the opening, when they were right in the middle, the Great River closed upon them, and they all perished in its waters*. (23; my italics)

 Mda’s version of the story is strikingly similar to that given by the Rhenish missionary Reverend Hans Christian Knudsen and recorded in Hahn as follows[[135]](#footnote-135):

Heit-sieibib [*sic*] or Kabib was a great and celebrated sorcerer among the Namaqua. He could tell secret things, and prophesy what was to happen afterwards. Once he was travelling with a great number of people, and an enemy pursued them. On arriving at some river he said, ‘My grandfather’s father*, open thyself that I may pass through, and close thyself afterwards.’* So it took place as he had said, and they went safely through*. Then their enemies tried to pass through the opening also, but when they were in the midst of it, it closed again upon them and they perished.* (Knudsen in Hahn 55; my italics)

The story recounted by Knudsen was one told to him in the mid nineteenth-century by a group of Khoikhoi formerly inhabitants of the Cape Colony and it is possible that there may well be some assimilation here of the biblical story of Moses; there is also the possibility that Knudsen, who, when he attempted to render the Bible into Nama retained figures from Khoikhoi cosmology (he translated the gospel of St Luke into Nama), is deliberately drawing parallels for his own purposes[[136]](#footnote-136). In *Heart* any colonial and print mediation of this story is passed over, and the story placed in the mouth of Qukezwa, a sort of mother of the nation figure (she conceives a child whom she names Heitsi)[[137]](#footnote-137). Mda has Camagu reminisce, when thinking of his son Heitsi, about how Qukezwa has taught him ‘that the Khoikhoi people were singing the song of Heitsi Eibib long before the white missionaries who came to these shores with their similar story of Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea’ (250). Mda thus poses a chain of oral transmission (‘song’) for this story, and in his response to Offenburger he reasserts this sense of oral transmission, with himself as a conduit of it. In his assertion that his source of Khoikhoi cosmology is his mother’s people, there is a curious iteration of the motif of maternal transmission (with Qukezwa relaying the song to Camagu) in *Heart* itself.

Mda’s overt, and somewhat unusual casting of Heitsi Eibib, generally understood as a trickster figure (Chidester et al. 69), as a *prophet*, indeed ‘the earliest prophet of the Khoikhoi’ (23 and again on page 249) also point to Hahn, who writes that interpreters translate ‘Heitsi Eibib’ as ‘prophet’ on etymological grounds (132). In *Heart,* Heitsi Eibib becomes a Jesus figure, not only a prophet, but ‘a prophet and saviour’, ‘the *son* of Tsiqwa’ (75; my emphasis). There is no corroborating evidence that Heitsi Eibib was understood by the Khoikhoi to be the son of Tsui-||Goab, and this appears to be a singular interpretation on Mda’s part. In *Heart*, the sense that Heitsi Eibib is a Christ figure is reinforced by the description of him as he who ‘lived and died for all the Khoikhoi, irrespective of clan’ (23) and later again as ‘a prophet, the son of Tsiqwa, who died for the Khoikhoi people’ (75). This idea that Heitsi Eibib died for ‘his people’ also recalls Hahn’s description of ‘Tsui-||Goab’ (a variant of Tsuni-||Goam) as he ‘who fought daily the battle for his people’ (127).

 The casting of Heitsi Eibib as prophet also serves a certain structural symmetry within *Heart*, and might be seen as an aspect of its pervasive twinning. As Meg Samuelson notes, in *Heart* the child Heitsi, seen as an avatar of the originary Khoikhoi prophet, is posed as a ‘true prophet’ in contrast to Nongqawuse, seen as the stooge of those corrupted by Christianity (and described by the unbelievers as a ‘fake’). Twin-Twin warns his believing brother to ‘stick to your own god and his true prophets’ (76) and the first Qukezwa even surmises that the cattle-killing is the fruit of following a foreign god, and returns to ‘the god of her people’ (255). In this way Mda affirms indigeneity. There is also a larger symmetry at work, though – the story of Heitsi Eibib is implicitly cast in parallel with the Christian myth, and there are strikingly biblical echoes in Mda’s rendering of Khoikhoi cosmology. What is notable is that he does not employ such echoes so as to portray the influence of Christianity on Khoikhoi cosmology; rather, they serve to construct a parallel (rather than qualitatively different) tradition.

As Samuelson notes, Mda’s insistence, via Camagu, that the song of Heitsi was sung ‘long before’ the missionaries appeared (*Heart* 250), departs from historians who argue that the Khoikhoi ‘imbibed’ the redemptive symbols of the resurrection’ from the missionaries (and thence passed them on to the amaXhosa) and ‘keeps Khoikhoi beliefs inviolable’ (Samuelson 69). Strikingly, on this point Mda also departs significantly from Peires – whom he elsewhere follows so closely; while Peires makes no mention in *Dead* of Heitsi Eibib, he stresses the intense Christian fervour of the Khoikhoi rebels who fought with the Xhosa during the War of Mlanjeni and claims that their influence introduced to the Xhosa ‘a new and revolutionary band of Christianity’ (160). Peires presents a graphic picture of these Khoikhoi rebels: ‘Mission products all, the Khoikhoi read their Bibles regularly and they prepared themselves for battle by the devout singing of hymns’ (160). Strikingly, in Mda’s version he represents the first Qukezwa and her partner, Twin, singing songs of Heitsi Eibib during the War of Mlanjeni (23). Mda appears to take from Peires the image of the Khoikhoi and Xhosa soldiers singing in preparation for battle during this war, but where Peires notes the Christian fervour of the Khoikhoi rebels, Mda has Qukezwa appeal to Tsiqwa:

‘O Tsiqwa,’ she pleaded, ‘give us strength to win this war! To drive those who have come to desecrate our sacred grounds into the sea!’ (22)

By entirely effacing any Christian influence on Khoikhoi mythology, Mda removes the taint of the ‘derivative’ and creates an originary African (as opposed to Western) cosmology for his story.

There is a similar reinscription of Khoikhoi belief as originary – and parallel – rather than shaped by colonial influence in Mda’s treatment of the cluster of stars commonly known, in English, as the ‘Seven Sisters’. Mda makes much of these stars, which appear to operate as a frame for a constitutively different epistemology – to provide the contours of a different, precolonial worldview, or cosmos. Curious in each instance is Mda’s insistence on the term ‘Seven Sisters’ as an indigenous Khoikhoi designation for the cluster of stars, and the description of the stars as ‘the seven daughters of Tsiqwa’. Qukezwa tells Twin: ‘They are the seven daughters of Tsiqwa, the Creator. The Seven Sisters are the star mothers from which all the human race is descended’ (23). Later the narrator reiterates: ‘the Seven Sisters, the stars from which the Khoikhoi were descended. The seven daughters of Tsiqwa’ (51). At the close of the book, Qukezwa is described as communing with ‘the bright stars that were also known as the Seven Sisters’ (255). In English, the informal name ‘Seven Sisters’ is understood to derive from the older name the Pleiades, which literally means ‘the daughters of Pleione’ (*OED*). In classical mythology Pleione and Atlas had seven daughters – hence the moniker ‘Seven Sisters’. The naming of the constellation as such, i.e. as the Pleiades, has always been somewhat curious in that Pleione and Atlas had seven daughters, whereas only six of the several hundred stars in the cluster are ‘easily visible to the naked eye’ (*OED*).

 The Pleiades are important in traditional Xhosa culture, in which they are generally known as the *iSilimela*, and in which they ‘signalled the start of ploughing’ (Peires, *The House of Phalo* 7). They also signalled the start of the Xhosa year and the month, June, in which young Xhosa men underwent their initiation into manhood: Jeff Opland records and translates an *izibongo* to the Pleiades by Mqhayi, in which they are described as ‘the stars for counting off years/ For counting the years of manhood’ (*Words That Circle Words* 237). The Pleiades are mentioned too in Ntsikana’s ‘Ulo Thixo Omkhulu Ngosezulwini’ (He, the Great God in Heaven), commonly known as his ‘Great Hymn’, composed sometime in the early nineteenth century. In Ntsikana’s hymn to the creator, Thixo, the Pleiades are singled out, their creation attributed to Thixo: ‘That Creator Who created, created heaven. This maker of the stars and of the Pleiades’ (Bokwe’s translation, given in *Ntsikana: The Story of An African Convert* 26). By singling out the Pleiades, Ntsikana subsumes, or adapts, an important element of Xhosa cosmology into a Christian cosmology. Mda, describing the stars as the offspring of Tsiqwa, in a formulation that to some extent recalls Ntiskana’s famous hymn to Thixo, might be said to ‘forge’ an alternative syncretic Khoikhoi-Xhosa religious tradition to a Xhosa-Christian one, to place in Qukezwa’s mouth a praise that mirrors and echoes the Great Hymn, but is directed to an indigenous god rather than ‘the god of the white man’, as Thixo is repeatedly characterised in *Heart* (15, 48)*.* This racialised characterisation of Thixo as the ‘god of the white man’ is in accordance with the interpretation of him put forward by Nxele, Nstikana’s contemporary and great rival. As explained in *Heart,* ‘Nxele had preached about Mdalidephu, the god of the black man; Thixo, the god of the white man; and Thixo’s son, Tayi, who was killed by the white people’ (15). Hahn suggests that the Xhosa name Thixo is derived from the Khoikhoi name for a supreme creator and provides a Xhosa authority, the son of Chief Sandile, for this interpretation:

Edmund Sandilli, the son of the late Sandilli, who is now a prisoner at the convict station in Cape Town, told me that they use u-Ti - ||go for God, a word they borrowed from the Hottentots [*sic*]. (47)

In Khoikhoi languages the Pleiades appear to have been known as the iKhunuseti (branches) or variants of this (Hahn 144). There appears to be no corroborating textual evidence for Mda’s claim that they were known to the Khoikhoi as the ‘Seven Sisters’. In insisting on the ‘Seven Sisters’ as a Khoikhoi appellation Mda appears to be following the logic of Hahn, the comparative philologist, in his quest for a ‘key to all mythologies’ (as the object of such comparative philological undertakings is parodied by George Eliot in *Middlemarch*). Hahn attempts to do this by uncovering networks of affiliation between the etymologies of different names, across cultures and languages, for the Pleiades. While Hahn discusses Khoikhoi names for the Pleiades, notably the iKhunuseti (meaning branches, in the sense of trees and also of a family), and suggests that Tsiqwa, who provides rain, might be responsible for these stars (which he also at one point describes as the ‘rainstars of the Khoikhoi’[109]), he does not suggest that the stars were known to the Khoikhoias the daughters of Tsiqwa or as the Seven Sisters. He twice says, though, that they were interpreted as the wives of Tsui-||Goab (74, 108), and does himself suggest that they were the daughters of Tsui-||Goab, in a ‘poetic’ flight in which the rhetorical force of rapid paratactic phrases takes the place of analysis:

But iKliunuti is also applied in the meaning of branch, lineage, family. Thus, I once heard a man speaking of the iKhunuti — i.e., families of a clan. In the Orion myths we have iKhunuseti, the Pleiades, the daughters of Tsuil Igoab ; and if they are the daughters, the Father’s — i.e. Tsuil Igoab’s — name must have been iKhunusib [*sic*]. (144)

Mda, in having Qukezwa describe the stars as the *seven* daughters of Tsiqwa, goes a step beyond Hahn, and thus, in *Heart*, suggests that the Pleiades are universally interpreted as seven sisters and that this interpretation arose independently in Africa and Europe. Mda thus suggests that if the stars are now popularly known as the Seven Sisters, this is because of Khoikhoi tradition rather than colonial European influence. Mda, I suggest follows Hahn, ‘poetically’ in conceiving of a unitary vision of equivalences – ‘the psychical unity of the mind’ (as Hahn describes his thesis in *Tsuni-||Goam*), a type of universalism.

 To return to the story of Heitsi Eibib’s parting of the waters as told by Hahn, it should be noted that the inclusion of this story, with its biblical parallels, is exceptional on the part of Hahn, whose interest is in ascertaining an ‘authentic’ tradition of Khoikhoi cosmology and discerning independent parallels between different peoples rather than acculturations. Hahn writes that:

An unmerciful fate has overtaken the Khoikhoi; the most powerful tribes have been annihilated, and with them their traditions, sacred as well as profane. Those still extant have lost so much of their national peculiarities by contact with civilization, and have adopted such a number of Indo-European beliefs and customs; and the Christian ideas introduced by missionaries have amalgamated to such a degree with the national religious ideas and mythologies, that for this reason I have in the following pages preferred to give less than I could give, lest I should be accused that from a certain natural interest in, and sympathy with, the Khoikhoi, I had been carried away to assign to them a higher station in the scale of culture than they are entitled to claim. I wanted to represent the religious ideas of the Khoikhoi and the worship of their Supreme Being in its true light, and had therefore to leave out every legend or myth, which, although it may be genuine, gives to the foreigner reason to believe that it savours too much of missionary influence. (30-31)

Hahn’s is a split position, between ‘science’ and ‘religion’ – his firm and pious belief in the Christian myth necessitates the belief that there is one worldview and a ‘universal mind’; other, *differing*, worldviews are merely childlike articulations of the ‘one true religion’, whose ‘sophistication’ (proximity to the Christian myth) signifies their place ‘in the scale of culture’. He is obliged to seek among different societies parallel ‘mythological’ beliefs that prove *by their independence* the one true narrative according to which humanity is founded and the ‘universality’ of the mind (and hence the potential of all people to be converts to Christianity). While Hahn can lament, as shown above, the destruction and persecution of Khoikhoi people, his belief in Christian ‘civilisation’ also makes for statements of considerable brutality.

 Mda’s position in *Heart* clearly is very different – he seeks to affirm indigenous belief (and certainly does not view it as inferior to ‘civilisation’), yet he is also curiously in step with Hahn in his location of independent parallels between Khoikhoi and Christian religious beliefs, and his quest to posit what might be described as an ‘authentic’, distinctively *African* tradition untouched by Christianity. As noted, in his retelling of Heitsi Eibib’s parting of the waters, Mda stresses that this story was told ‘*long before* the missionaries and their similar story of Moses’ (250; my emphasis). Here the positions of local Khoikhoi and missionaries on the ‘scale of culture’, measured ‘developmentally’, on a timeline of historical progress, is simply reversed. Hahn’s logic (and what might be described as ‘worldview’) to some degree persists.

### 2.2 *‘He Who Buildeth His Stories in Heaven’: The Author-God*

In the course of his discussion of the seemingly analogous function of the Pleiades in different religions across the world, Hahn, commenting on the connection made by the Israelites between their god and the Pleiades, and quoting from Amos, writes the following:

It is certainly to be considered of extraordinary importance that the Pleiades and Orion are mentioned together; it cannot be merely accidental. And of the Lord the same Prophet Amos says, ‘It is He that buildeth His stories in heaven?’ And have we not heard and seen, in the second chapter, how Tstiillgoab also buildeth his stories in heaven? [*sic*] (147)

In the second chapter to which he refers here, Hahn discusses the praises given to Tsiqwa at the time that the Pleiades appear (cited previously). He also provides stories which emphasise the importance of the moon in Khoikhoi culture. Hahn’s assertion that Tsui-||Goab ‘buildeth his stories in heaven’ is echoed in Mda’s repeated assertion that Tsiqwa is he ‘who tells his stories in heaven’ (249). Mda has Camagu think this near the close of the book and earlier has the first Qukezwa introduce Tsiqwa to Twin as such: ‘Tsiqwa is the one who tells his stories in heaven’ (22). There is little external corroboration in the historical record for the assertion which Hahn poses as a rhetorical question, almost plea – that is, for the existence of a supreme ‘storytelling’ god among the Khoikhoi people who exists in ‘heaven’ and is a clear analogue of the Israelite god. But this posing of a *storytelling* god serves Mda’s metafiction – Mda variously describes Qolorha as the handiwork of an artist-god and in his critical writing asserts that the author is a ‘god’ in the text (interview with Kachuba).He thus draws parallels between the creation of the world *ab origine* and artistic creation, also conceived by him as to some extent *ab origine* – traced to the maternal and oral (his stories of the Khoikhoi he derives from his mother’s side of the family) rather than embedded in print culture.

 Qukezwa, notably, conceives by a type of immaculate conception (the figure of parthenogenesis recalling that gestured to by Krog in her figuring of the birth of the ‘new’ South Africa). This is in accordance with the Khoikhoi legend of Heitsi Eibib’s conception, wherein he has no earthly father: he is variously reported to have been conceived after either a young woman or a cow chews a blade of grass (Hahn 68-69). But it also figures the text’s dream of its own divine inspiration.

 In *Heart*, the child Heitsi is also to some degree a celestial being, that is, the offspring of the stars or moon. Mda, like Hahn in his account of Khoikhoi cosmology, repeatedly emphasises the ‘sidereal’. ‘Sidereal’, which literally means ‘to do with the stars’, denoted for philologists such as Hahn and Wilhlem Bleek a category of worship. For Bleek, ‘sidereal worshippers’ were those who ‘attributed particular religious importance to the moon and other heavenly bodies’ (Banks 155).[[138]](#footnote-138) In *Heart*, the initial Qukezwa is a ‘daughter of the stars’ and Heitsi is conceived when the moon is full (149) and the moonlight and ‘silvery’ appearance of objects are repeatedly stressed (151); Qukezwa protests later that it is pointless for her and Camagu to go riding on Gxarxha as ‘there is no moon tonight’ (203), and indeed ‘the silvery night [on which Heitsi is conceived] cannot be recaptured’ (203). In *Tsuni-||Goam*, Hahn makes much of his claim that Tsui-||Goam is a sky god, seemingly in order to sustain his problematic assertion that the Khoikhoi had a cosmology *akin to,* but uninfluenced by,the Christian one. Chidester et al. describe how in Hahn’s account ‘Khoikhoi religion could be traced back to an original worship of the sky’ (69), but note that more recently ‘analysts have rejected this notion that Khoikhoi religion is based on the worship of the moon or other celestial phenomena’ (69).

 If Mda stresses the sidereal in his recounting of indigenous cosmology, he is not alone. Michael Wessels has noted how, in their concern with the Khoikhoi and the San, post-apartheid writers have tended to focus on celestial imagery and on various creation myths, imposing on these aboriginal narratives a nineteenth-century Western epistemology concerned with locating origins (69)[[139]](#footnote-139). Mda’s tale too, when employing Khoikhoi elements, focuses on tropes of creation: not only does he imagine a miraculous rebirth of Heitsi Eibib, his most extended reflections on Khoikhoi cosmology concern Tsiqwa and his creation of the world through storytelling (pages 23 and 249).

 Despite Mda’s avowed sense of the author as in supreme, all-knowing control, a ‘god’ in the text , there are moments when he does not appear to have full mastery over his authorial creation, but rather to be haunted, or ‘possessed’, as it were, by other authorial worlds and epistemologies. I would suggest that Mda does not always treat his ostensibly non-fictional sources, *Tsuni-||Goam* (or indeed Peires) skeptically enough – as *text* rather than information – and that this can lead to a sense of haunting – or ‘possession’ – by the prior text. Something of this is seen in a section of narrative concerning the War of Mlanjeni. Here Mda allies the Khoikhoi with anticolonial resistance rather than showing the more complex relationships of loyalty and betrayal between Khoikhoi, Xhosa, British and Boer[[140]](#footnote-140). Mda mentions how the Khoikhoi, under the leadership of Hans Brander, aided the Xhosa in the War of Mlanjeni (21), but he does not mention that those who did so were rebels that formerly assisted the colonists. Here he departs significantly from Peires, his chief historical source, who states clearly that Brander and his men were rebels (*Dead* 39). While it is clear in Peires that Khoikhoi colonial auxiliaries mutinied, in Mda this is rewritten in ambiguous fashion: the occurrence of mutiny is noted, but it is suggested that this is the mutiny of British troops, ‘Queen Victoria’s men’, on account of the ‘hard time’ given them by the Xhosa and Khoikhoi:

General Maqoma and the Khoikhoi chief, Hans Brander, were giving the Imperial armies a hard time. Mutinies became the order of the day. Queen Victoria’s men refused to go to the Amathole mountains to be slaughtered like cattle by the savage amaXhosa. (21)

Peires in contrast writes about how

much of the heavy fighting in previous wars had been done not by settlers or troops, but by black auxiliaries, many of whom were now in open revolt. It was indeed the ongoing succession of Khoikhoi army mutinies which kept the Xhosa war effort going. (43)

Peires continues to note that ‘[i]n July 1851 Smith was forced to discharge his remaining Khoikhoi conscripts for fear of further mutinies and to prevent a general Khoikhoi rebellion throughout the Colony’ (43). Mda’s rewriting of this, in the passage quoted above, appears to be salvaged not just from Peires but from the historical sources he quotes – hence the curious description of the Xhosa as ‘savage’. The British mutiny, by ‘Queen Victoria’s men’, which Mda suggests was in place, was in fact one somewhat sensationally *predicted* by a correspondent for the *London Illustrated News* quoted by Peires. Peires notes that the correspondent ‘did not stop short of predicting outright mutiny by the British troops’ (44) and goes on to quote him:

Many [soldiers] openly declare that they will go there [the Waterkloof] no more to be *butchered like cattle*... Courage here is of no avail; discipline and steadfastness under fire only render the men better targets for the lurking *savages*. (qtd. in *Dead* 44; my emphasis).

Mda’s details of troops not wanting to be ‘slaughtered like cattle’ by ‘savages’ appear to be gleaned from this document reproduced in Peires. While Mda clearly wishes to produce parody, his narrative voice is sometimes quite unstable – an effect attributable to a seemingly unthinking repetition of his historical sources. Thus, while the text celebrates Xhosa culture and is critical of the civilising pretences of colonialism, Mda occasionally finds himself speaking in the language of colonial discourse (as in the reference to the ‘savage amaXhosa’ cited earlier). Another, similar instance – of what might be described as a curious voicing of, or possession by, a colonial text – occurs when the narrator moves into the voice of Sir George Grey. Peires, discussing Grey’s ideas on colonialism, developed during his governorships in South Australia and New Zealand, writes that

Instead of tolerating the savage customs which kept their adherents bound in eternal thrall, Grey argued, colonial Governors should push ahead as fast as possible with the imposition of English law in the place of the ‘bloodthirsty’ aboriginal law. (*Dead* 70)

In Mda, the ironising distance, signalled by ‘Grey argued’ and the use of quotation marks around ‘bloodthirsty’, is lost:

Then he [Grey] entertained the listeners with his stories of Australia, where he had succeeded in imposing English law in the place of the bloodthirsty aboriginal law. He had made it a point that aboriginal people were not allowed to congregate together and practice their uncivilized habits. (136)

It is as if Mda essays a type of free indirect discourse, but this is abortive, the characters too stock-in-trade to provide much imaginative sympathy beyond a certain jocular knowingness. After the paragraph quoted above, which shifts uneasily between a type of free indirect discourse and simple authorial narration, relating Grey’s ‘entertainment’ of his listeners with stories of his previous governorships, Mda has Grey move abruptly into direct speech: ‘ “That’s what I plan to do with the Xhosa people as well,” he explained, giving a conspiratorial wink’ (136). Mda’s detail of the ‘conspiratorial wink’ is unconvincing, painting a picture of Grey as an open conman. While Peires describes Grey as exploiting ‘conspiracy theory’ (72) by accusing Maori men of conspiring to rape settler women (71), he does not portray Grey as employing anything as transparent as a ‘conspiratorial wink’ when proceeding with his plans for colonial domination, which, as it was, were nearly always garbed in the dress of sincere philanthropy. If anything, the conspiratorial wink is frequently Mda’s mode of storytelling – and could describe his fairly broad, stark gestures to the reader.

### 2.3 *Conjuring ‘A Folktale Dreamland’: Magical Realism*

 When, near the start of the novel, Camagu stumbles upon a funeral wake on top of a Hillbrow tenement building, he is struck by the singing of NomaRussia, whose song has a ‘freshness that cries to be echoed by the green hills, the towering cliffs, and deep gullies of a folktale dreamland’ (25). It appears that she is from Qolorha and it is here that Camagu, entranced by her ‘mothering spirit’ (28), follows her, discovering the green hills, towering cliffs and deep gullies conjured by her voice, the very ‘folktale dreamland’ suggested by it. Mda himself describes Qolorha, for the most part, as just such a place. While there is an element of social realism in Mda’s posing problems of development and unemployment, Qolorha is self-consciously described as a place of unearthly beauty and the characters who inhabit it are stock types, more allegorical than realist. Qolorha is a ‘world’ of its own, a microcosm governed by Mda’s magical-realist cosmology, posed by him as largely oral in origin and worldview. Mda not only stresses that his use of Khoikhoi religious elements comes from oral tradition, but that this tradition is his source of the fantastical in his work more generally – the fantastical being regarded in that culture as perfectly everyday (interview with Williams 70-72). What is often described as Mda’s ‘magical realism’ is for Mda a poetics appropriate to his African origins.

 In *Heart*, we see the search for an appropriate African poetics – or, rather, the unpleasant fate of abandoning an African aesthetic – allegorised. Near the close of the book, we discover that the man NomaRussia was mourning is Twin, the brother of Qukezwa, who went to Johannesburg in search of his fortune (following an opposite trajectory to Camagu) and to sell his artwork, but who failed miserably and died in poverty. It is assumed that the reason that his art did not sell is that he forsook his former, spontaneous, folk style of carving in favour of a realistic method taught to him by the white trader John Dalton. In love with Xoliswa, whose beauty accords to ‘Western’ standards and who disdains Xhosa tradition, Twin carves similarly ‘beautiful’ people (267). The fates of Camagu and (the second) Qukezwa are twinned chiastically with those of Twin and NomaRussia. Qukezwa and Twin, siblings, are descendants of the original Twin and Qukezwa, spouses; the later Qukezwa allies herself with tradition and to some extent converts Camagu to it and hence (it would seem) flourishes, the later Twin, swayed by Dalton and the beauty of Xoliswa, an unbeliever, abandons his roots, and suffers accordingly. The artist Twin’s fate, his suffering after abandoning his folkish muse for a western ideal of beauty, reflects that of his foremother Qukezwa, who rues following the prophecies of Nongqawuse, with their Christian inflection, rather than following her own gods. Mda’s own stated aim as an artist is to be true to what he construes as his African origins and as a fundamentally different (distinctively African) worldview in which magic and reality exist side-by-side (interview with Kachuba). Mda’s inscription of Twin’s fate might be read as commenting metafictionally on his own aesthetic strategies, particularly the desire to construct an authentically African tale, and reflective of the duality of his own aesthetic: torn between dream allegory and social realism. The schism that ensues, marked as magical realism, Mda in turn brands as essentially, originally African – insisting that this composite mix of elements, though visible in the work of Gabriel García Márquez, comes from African slaves (interview with Williams 72). Mda asserts that ‘many people mistakenly think Latin American writers invented magic realism, whereas in fact they merely popularized it’ (interview with Williams 72). Here ‘magical realism’ is read not as postcolonial, but as precolonial, originary.

What has been termed Mda’s ‘magical realism’ in *Heart*, then, is one way of registering a Xhosa or non-Western tradition or world view, a means of asserting difference. Mda says that while he is happy for critics to use the term ‘magical realism’ to describe his literary mode, he does not himself deliberately set out to write a ‘magical realist’ text (‘Creativity after Apartheid’ 5), and shows an ambivalent relationship to the idea of a transcultural filiation between his work and those of Latin American magical realists. Mda notes too that he only became acquainted with Márquez’s work in 1992, and had been incorporating magical elements in his work since the 1960s, and mentions in particular a story he wrote when a teenager and the interplay of the supernatural and objective reality in his early play *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* (‘Creativity after Apartheid’ 6). He asks then, having traced this element in his work back to his childhood, ‘How did I write in this mode then, without external influences?’ (6), and answers that he comes from ‘a culture of storytelling’ (6). Mda repeatedly disavows ‘external influences’ and traces his art to a specifically African source. He also tends to naturalise it, by showing it as something learnt in childhood, as if unconsciously.

 It might be said that in *Heart*, Mda attempts to find, or relay, another way of knowing – a different world view – which he casts as African, and that his literary experimentalism, what has been termed his magical realism, might be traced to this. There are, arguably, generic constraints here. It is interesting that it is Coetzee, with his metafictional experiments and engagements with alterity (Coetzee describes the novel as *an other* mode of knowing to history [‘The Novel Today’ 4]) whom Mda should describe (in ‘Justify the Enemy’) as his chief inspiration for turning to novel writing. Mda does so even as he seeks to affiliate himself away from the Western canon, which he describes Coetzee’s works as being in dialogue with, and towards an African tradition.

Arguably Mda does to some extent work within a ‘Christian’ framework – in the sense that his language is haunted by Biblical echoes and that, despite the text’s seemingly magical realist worldview, there is also – at least in the historical section of the narrative, derived largely from Peires – something of the nineteenth-century novel, with its ‘god’s eye view’. Peires’s history is written partly in the style of a nineteenth-century novel, and begins, at least, in the voice of an omniscient narrator telling a simple story rather than offering an historical analysis or theory. *Dead* shuttles between straight narration in the style of the nineteenth-century novel and historical digressions on, for instance, Xhosa religious beliefs. Peires himself points to the novelistic aspect of his book, implicitly comparing it to one of the ‘great three-decker novels of the Victorian era’ (342)[[141]](#footnote-141). As noted, Mda himself conceives of the author as a singular and supreme being, a monotheistic ‘god’ in his text, in various statements he has made. Interestingly, in hisarticle ‘Justify the Enemy’, Mda laments that black South African writers have worked mainly in the tradition of the English nineteenth-century realist novel:

For many black South African writers, the only literary models were the nineteenth-century realists. Theirs was the only literature in English to which we were exposed by the educational system…Nineteenth-century realism was defined by its mix of omniscient narrator and close attention to characterization. In our contemporary fiction we retained the omniscient narrator because it gave us the storyteller’s freedom to render opinions and judgment and summarize at will, as stories in the oral tradition are wont to do.

Mda thus recasts the omniscient narrator as a traditional feature of storytelling, while at the same time gesturing to the potential influence of the nineteenth-century realist novel on his own work.

 Arguably, Mda, like a nineteenth-century realist novelist (or indeed historian), attempts to create a cosmos of his own over which his eye, that of the author-god, rules. It is a world which might be described, in the words near the opening of the novel, as a ‘folktale dreamland’. Camagu, enthralled by NomaRussia’s singing, could be a figure of the author here, ‘seduced’ by a nostalgic vision of precolonial authenticity, inspired by orality (song). While Camagu returns to Qolorha, Mda creates an imaginary folktale one, following an aesthetic emphatically described as folk, or indigenous (but which is shaped by nineteenth-century European romanticism). Mda deliberately employs folklore and, it seems, attempts to create, or serve, an indigenous folk aesthetic. As noted in the discussion of ‘native authenticity’ in Chapter One, folklore is a strong feature of romantic nationalism. Alan Dundes notes of the rise of folklore studies in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe, that:

Closely tied to currents of romanticism and nationalism, the serious study of folklore found an enthusiastic audience among individuals who felt nostalgia for the past and/or the necessity of documenting the existence of national consciousness or identity. (1)

 There are also numerous examples of what Dunde calls ‘fakelore’ in the annals of folkloristics[[142]](#footnote-142). *Heart* exhibits a similar nationalist nostalgia (significantly nostalgia literally means home sickness rather than a longing for the past). And Mda’s positing of the Pleiades as known to the Khoikhoi as the ‘Seven Sisters’ might be described as a type of ‘fakelore’. Or, seen differently, Mda might be described as picking up the mantle of communal spokesperson and instituting his own ‘folklore’ – that is, his writing might be seen as constitutive of a popular national narrative. As a black South African, Mda has a certain authority over black tradition – a performative authority – which he chooses to wield in a particular way, in the service of a particular narrative. It would appear that in *Heart* Mda creates his own syncretic folklore, and does so from print culture as much as oral tradition. Rob Amato notes a similar tendency in Mda’s plays, suggesting that Mda is a

satirical, magical realist, post-modernist, post-structuralist, post-deconstructionist version of Credo Mutwa, the literary *sangoma* (diviner) who, with Blake-like assurance, invents cosmologies and mythologies for his own purposes, implying them to be old and African. (xiii)

 Certainly, it is difficult to find consensus for Mda’s claim that Khoikhoi cosmological elements persist in sectors of Xhosa culture, in a largely unbroken tradition. Scholars are divided as to the extent of the influence of the Khoikhoi on the Xhosa. Hahn wrote that it was a ‘curious fact’ that the ‘Bantu’ had had little influence on the Khoikhoi, while the latter, he claimed, had had an ‘improving influence’ on the former (*Tsuni-||Goam* 90). The Xhosa, he claimed, were less ‘ferocious’ than the Zulus because of Khoikhoi influence (90). Hahn’s model fits a racist hierarchy in which the Khoikhoi were believed spiritually and intellectually superior to the ‘Bantu’ (a hierarchy which, as we saw in Chapter One, has a complicated interrelation with questions of land, property and ownership). The nationalist Xhosa historian J.H. Soga, on the other hand, declared it an ‘erroneous belief that the Xosas [*sic*] absorbed the Hottentots and are, therefore, partly of Hottentot origin’ (*The Ama-Xosa* 13). He asserts that

One peculiar feature of isi-Xosa [*sic*] is that it is practically non-absorbent, incorporating only a word here or there in extremely limited numbers from neighbouring tribes, its purity being practically unaffected, so that it remains in the unadulterated form in which it was found when Europeans first came into the country. (*The Ama-Xosa* vi)

According to Peires in *The House of Phalo*, Xhosa and Khoikoi religions remained substantially different and Khoikhoi elements generally were not introduced into Xhosa cosmology: ‘Since the basic ideas of Khoisan religion were not adopted by the Xhosa, its influence cannot be said to have been very profound despite the widespread borrowing of religious loanwords’ (65). Peires suggests though that ‘the indirect influence of Khoisan religion in preparing the way for Christianity through familiarising the Xhosa with analogues of God and the Devil may have been considerable’ (*The House of Phalo* 65). To return to Mda’s invocation of his mother’s Khoikhoi ancestry, and the oral tradition of her people, as shaping his text, there is in this trope of maternal transmission a curious overlap with Hahn’s beliefs concerning the Xhosa. In *Tsuni–||Goam*, Hahn points to the clicks in Xhosa as evidence of Khoikoi influence and explains the way in which clicks entered the Xhosa language in a remarkably literal way; asserting that the Xhosa, being polygamists, would have taken Khoikhoi wives, he argues:

they [women] are the guardians of the language, and of the religion of the tribe. The children imbibe with the mother’s milk the first accents of the language of the tribe, and with the language the religious ideas. The Germans have the pregnant and beautiful expression ‘*Muttersprache*’. (95)

In *Heart* this is literalised – Mda casts Xhosa and Khoikhoi belief as ancient and transmitted maternally, with Qukezwa, the Khoikhoi foremother, bequeathing a tradition of reverence for the indigenous to her namesake descendant. The idea of the mother tongue is a common nationalist one, and the trope of stories naturalised and appropriated by being heard in childhood recurs in van der Post and Krog. Both Krog and Mda mentioned ‘growing up’ with stories when accused of plagiarism. In Mda (and to some extent in Krog) we have a curious inversion – while the mother tongue is forsaken (the book is after all, in English), it is also invoked and paid tribute to, or ‘honoured’.

 If Mda is at odds with Soga in his interpretation of the influence of Khoikhoi religion on the Xhosa, he is at one with other prominent figures of Xhosa culture in his erasure of the impact of the missionaries on Xhosa religion and in his tracing of independent parallels, rather than lines of influence, between Xhosa and Christian religion. According to Opland,

A firm oral tradition held that the early Christian preacher Ntsikana received his inspiration independent of the agency of Christian missionaries…that they had found their own path to the Christian truth, a line of argument echoed in a number of early publications. (‘Fighting with the Pen’ 13)

 Opland cites Mqhayi’s *Ityala lamaWele* and *Idini* (1926) particularly as texts which, even in print, continue this line of argument; *Idini* concludes with ‘notes drawing parallels between Xhosa and Biblical practices’ (13).

### 2.4 *‘Fight with the Pen’: Transculturation and Writing as Weapon*

*Heart*, then, is split between a celebration of hybridity (Khoikhoi and Xhosa intercultural translation) and a nativist, or anticolonial, appeal to a precolonial purity and authenticity (in its obscuring of Christian influence on Khoikhoi and Xhosa culture). Moreover, relation to the Khoikhoi, as the original inhabitants of South Africa, secures a sense of autocthonous belonging (despite cultural fragmentation, loss of traditional Xhosa culture). As Mda has Qukezwa say, the Khoikhoi are the ‘original owners of the land’. (The whites, by their own admission, have bought it ‘with a bottle of brandy’ [139]. The matter of the ownership of land is central to the plot: developers wish to acquire land to build a casino and holiday resort but are stopped by the declaration of Nongqawuse’s pool as a *national* heritage site.)

Mda’s effacement of Christian influence on the Khoikhoi and creation of an originary African cosmology for his story may be described as a reclamatory move, in a book very much concerned with reclamations as necessary to restore to a fractured poscolonial community some sense of authentic, organic ‘wholeness’. The text not only deals with the reclamation of Xixika’s head, but alludes repeatedly to Sara Baartman’s remains. And perhaps the repatriation of Peires’s text (itself culled from Xhosa textual sources) and Hahn’s acts as a type of reclamation – a recasting of set narratives as ‘indigenous’ and ‘usable’ via re-attribution to Mda’s authorship (and a more communal tradition which he is said to represent). Significantly, Mda, in his response to Offenburger, notes that while he does use Peires’s ‘phraseology’, this phraseology, while attributed to Peires ‘is largely the phraseology of some of Peires’s primary sources and transliterations from isiXhosa’ (203). Mda thus points to a common, indigenous source to which he has a prior claim. It recalls Mda’s claim that he cannot steal from Peires simply because Peires does not own the story of the cattle-killing: ‘it is our story’ (‘A Charge Disputed’). While Mda does acknowledge Peires’s contribution to Xhosa culture, dedicating his book to him, as counter-gift, no acknowledgement is made of Hahn, or indeed the lasting effects of the missionary effort he was a part of (while not a missionary, Hahn was the son of one, and owed his existence in Africa to this effort). Rather, Mda’s use of Hahn is structured as, or enacts, a *reclamation* as black South African – *not* the acceptance of a ‘gift’; for what would enable the giving of such a gift in the first place is, to follow Bourdieu, a fundamental injustice in the social ‘disposition’, an injustice that does not deserve ‘honouring’ (‘Marginalia – Some Additional Notes on the Gift’)[[143]](#footnote-143). It might also be said that to ‘reclaim’ and ‘redeem’ (in its monetary sense) have parallel, or overlapping, meanings here: Mda reclaims texts that are an inheritance denied to him, of which he has been ‘robbed’. He redeems an historical ‘debt’, by ‘taking credit’.

In both his downplaying of his use of Peires and in his occlusion of Hahn, Mda disavows the impact of print culture on oral tradition, and the latter’s mediation by the former. The context of the history of print culture in South Africa is pertinent here. As noted, print culture is intimately bound up with colonial violence, and with the missionary effort. As Opland notes in his article ‘Fighting with the Pen: The Appropriation of the Press by Early Xhosa Writers’, for indigenous peoples writing and the printing press have been both instruments of violence and a means of responding to that violence. Something of this is seen, aptly enough, in a poem concerned with cattle and written in the aftermath of the cattle-killing: I.W.W. Citashe’s ‘Zimkile!’ (1882), the first stanza of which runs as follows

Your cattle are plundered, compatriot!

After them! After them!

Lay down the musket,

Take up the pen,

Seize paper and ink:

That’s your shield. (translated by Opland in *Xhosa Poets* 226-27 and qtd. in Wenzel 77)

For Citashe, ‘pen and ink’ take the place of ‘cattle’, or rather the pen and ink are means of rescuing the cattle by means other than, but akin to, war. ‘Cattle’ here appears to figure the nation, a sense of national cohesion, and Citashe’s turn to language is apt – for both cattle and language work, as symbolic goods, to bind together and mediate a society. Language is commonly described as a type of currency – a form of exchange between people, and one which is variously productive or meaning making. In ‘*Zimkile!*’ writing is also a form of ‘war’ or contestation, but, crucially, it is not just this: it serves also to reclaim lost cattle, to build national consciousness. Citashe’s poem does not just urge his compatriots to tell stories (after all, Xhosa had a rich tradition of orature), but to take up a particular technology in doing so: pen and ink, i.e. writing, a technology closely associated with colonialism, but increasingly seen as one that the Xhosa could put to their own use. The need for written and print forms of communication would be all the more urgent given the increasing fragmentation of Xhosa society in the wake of the cattle-killing; in the early newspapers of the Xhosa, and the literary works of the generation that has come to be labelled the ‘New Africans’, it is possible to perceive a type of print nationalism, as described by Anderson, at work. Wenzel, discussing the way in which Citashe’s poem became an emblem of resistance among the New Africans and the role of print in an incipient African nationalism, resonantly uses the word ‘forge’ to describe the processes at work, noting that ‘Newspapers helped forge these communities [of  ‘Xhosa ‘school people’, Zulu *kolwa* and other mission-educates groups’]’ (77) and that ‘forging a useable past became particularly urgent in South Africa when segregationists articulated reductive, atomizing versions of discrete ‘tribal’ pasts’ (78-79).

Citashe’s linking of the familiar metaphor of writing as weaponry (the pen and the sword) with cattle, their loss and recovery, together with Wenzel’s notion that writing helped ‘forge’ communities, makes for an interesting contextualisation of Krog’s vignette about cattle rustling as legitimate reappropriation (of both material and symbolic goods) and the fact of her own plagiarisms (and possibly, in the vignette about stock theft itself, ventriloquisms) and ‘forgeries’ in the service of a particular nation-building.

The idea of writing – or, rather, the printing press – as a necessary weapon in a war of black anti-colonial resistance is seen also in comments made by a contributor to the Xhosa newspaper *Isigidimi samaXosa* (‘The Xhosa Messenger’), Booi Kwaza. Kwaza laments that the paper is owned by whites, ‘foreigners’, and writes that

amongst the white people the war is not being fought by means of sticks and spears, but by means of the pen and the brain. Countrymen, the time has come when something must be done by us. The first thing we must acquire is a printing press. (qtd. in Jordan 102; my ellipses)

Kwaza asserts: ‘we must have a paper owned by the black ones’ (qtd. in Jordan 102). Kwaza here gestures to a larger ‘war’ about the censorship of black opinion in *Isigidimi*, run by Lovedale Press. Eventually, J.T. Jabavu, the editor of *Isigidimi* from 1881 to 1884, left to found a new paper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* (‘Black Opinion’) (Opland, ‘Fighting with the Pen’ 12). It was not only necessary, then, in order for a sense of black consciousness and solidarity to grow for black intellectuals to circulate their writings widely via print, but for black ownership of the means of production. But, as Njabulo Ndebele noted in his 1984 essay ‘Turkish Tales’, a century after Kwaza’s plea, print ownership has largely rested in white hands, and black writing has emerged under the stewardship of white editors. It is perhaps partly for this reason that there exists a residual affiliation of anticolonial resistance with orature, and print with a capitalist economy introduced to South Africa with colonialism. Orature in turn comes to signify a precolonial African authenticity. But this binary reading of writing and orality is overly simplistic and, as Wenzel notes, proposes a ‘zero-sum game’, an erroneous model. She proposes another model, or economy, of the relationship of orality to literacy, which has the beauty of suggesting the traumatic losses of oral culture incurred with colonialism as well as the persistent and residual effects of orature in anticolonial writing: following Walter Ong’s insight that orality may be ‘residual’ in the written word, she proposes that literacy is the ‘afterlife’ of orality. Crucial here is her rejection of a particular, racist teleology: ‘The historicist logic of a progress narrative holds that orality plus time equals literacy, redness plus time equals civilization’ (181). ‘Afterlife*’* denotes instead a persistent recurrence and haunting.

To return to Peires’s account of the cattle-killing, it is striking that those who opposed the cattle-killing movement were often Christians and/or predisposed towards the colonists, that is those who embraced the ‘Word’, and with it, to some extent, writing and print technology. This affiliation of anticolonial resistance with orature (gestured to by Peires) is something which Mda seems to endorse in *Heart*. Camagu chooses the largely unschooled Qukezwa, whose beautiful, traditional split-tone singing recreates the world, over Xoliswa, a school ‘mistress’ fashioned in the mission school mode of new, ‘progressive’ African. In *Heart*, it is on the side of belief – or orality, of the messages heard (not read) by Nongqawuse – that the text allies itself, discerning a seemingly irreconcilable split between belief and unbelief.

To return to the figure of the pen as weapon able to recuperate traditional culture, in Citashe’s poem, it could be said that Mda’s re-appropriations of property taken or denied, a response to dispossession, via the pen, are undertaken in the name of ‘orature’ – a tradition of orature. Certainly, Mda, in his celebratory revision of Xhosa history, foregrounds the oral. It is as if by occluding the impact of print culture on his own writing, Mda occludes the violent rupturing of Khoikhoi and Xhosa societies by colonialism. In this respect it is striking that the novel jumps between the moments just before Xhosa independence was destroyed and when African rule was restored to South Africa with the end of apartheid, thus glossing over the long intervening years of colonial and apartheid rule, referred to in the novel simply as ‘the sufferings of the Middle Generations’ (8, 37, 137). *Heart*, which responds to a Xhosa national trauma, the cattle-killing, might be seen as operating as compensatory fantasy in response to cultural loss.

What is one to make of Mda’s use of Hahn, and of their respective translations of Khoikhoi culture? I would suggest that while Hahn seeks to preserve Khoikhoi culture in the name of a somewhat dubious scholarship, Mda seeks to renew it and to celebrate its legacy in the service of creating a new post-apartheid national identity that grounds itself in narratives of autocthony. While Mda follows Hahn in downplaying Christian influence on the Khoikhoi, he does emphasise Khoikhoi influence on the Xhosa. Mda does not treat culture as entirely static then. Rather, he has recourse to the Khoikhoi in an attempt to forge an originary *African* literary tradition, albeit in print. While this is in many respects a sympathetic project, the fate of non-Xhosa-assimilated Khoikhoi peoples is not explored, and there is the danger that by romanticising the Khoikhoi as timeless figures of autocthony now assimilated into Xhosa culture, the political plight of contemporary groups of Khoikhoi and their actual circumstances are overlooked. I would suggest that Mda does not read Hahn sceptically enough (as *text*, rather than information), even while he disavows his influence on him, and marks his distance from him. As with Peires’s ‘research’, Mda appears to treat Hahn as ‘documentary’, a source of data, or ‘raw material’ (to embrace the ‘fiction of factual representation’, in White’s words[[144]](#footnote-144)). The obscuring of intercultural mediation described by Chidester in ‘Classify and Conquer’ (73) as typical of the work of nineteenth-century philologists such as Hahn is further obscured (and, oddly, a type of tradition perpetuated) in Mda’s insistence on a purely oral tradition for the stories he retells. In both cases (Hahn and Mda) the chimera of authenticity serves to perform a certain type of authority – a ‘natural’ authority, and hence one of the highest, indisputable order.

Notably, Chidester, in another article which discusses the glossing of intercultural mediation in colonial ‘science’, begins with an anecdote concerning plagiarism and ventriloquism. He describes how his writing on indigenous religions reappears in the mouth of a nameless, 102 year old ‘gogo’ (granny) cited by a journalist, Afrika Msimang, in an article on Africa’s religious heritage, ‘Going back to our past with praise’. As Chidester notes, the issue here is not so much plagiarism, as the poignant impossibility of reclaiming any pure origin, of simply reclaiming the past:

our attempts to recover the history of indigenous African religion, myth, and ritual are difficult because of the very nature of that history as an ongoing process of intercultural contacts, relations and exchanges. (‘Sciences of Myth, Myths of Science’ 2)

Mda, insofar as he reiterates the worldview of Hahn, might be said to inhabit the same field of discourse as him, to be shaped, translated or transculturated by it. As Attwell has suggested in his book *Rewriting Modernity*, Fernando Ortiz’s concept of ‘transculturation’ is a useful lens through which to view South African cultural production (*Rewriting* 17-20). Transculturation, as defined by Ortiz in *Cuban Counterpoint* (1940), emphasises both the violence and loss of *de*culturation and also the inventiveness of ‘*neo*culturaltion’. Ortiz writes that:

I am of the opinion that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the processes of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. (102)

 Transculturation, then, complicates notions of origin and source and recasts cultural transactions as multidirectional rather than unilinear. Arguably, Mda’s unacknowledged borrowings are used inventively towards the creation of a new, indigenised South African cultural identity that emphasises pride in Africa as a place of origin. But even while Mda celebrates the post-apartheid present he seems, via his disavowals, to point symbolically towards the violence that underwrites, and continues to mark, so much of South African cultural production.

**AFTERWORD**

This research project began as an exploration of plagiarism debates in post-apartheid South Africa, but in attempting to grapple with the complexities of these allegations and responses ­its frame of reference has steadily widened to encompass a broader consideration of South African literary production. What emerges is a field significantly marked by cross-cultural contestation and appropriation, in which plagiarism is very often a ‘cultural weapon’: a means of both asserting and contesting power. The word, as in Kristeva’s definition of intertextuality, becomes a site of contest, a ‘permutation of texts’, a ‘productivity’ (‘The Bounded Text 36).

 The thesis has offered two detailed case studies from post-apartheid South Africa, and briefer considerations of other post-apartheid plagiarism scandals. In addition, in seeking to historicise the dispute between Krog and Watson over the Bleek-Lloyd collection, I have explored antecedent representations of Khoi and San peoples and literatures, learning that they are often plagiarised themselves. Pursuing Sigrid Schmidt’s observation that many ostensibly authoritative and first-hand accounts of the Khoi and San are plagiarised from print sources, I have sought to re-examine some of these texts, identifying as a recurrent trope the reascription of a textual source to ‘the lips of natives’. This trope, I suggest, works in the service of constructing a racialised authenticity that persists in the work of Krog and Mda, both of whom reascribe textual sources as distinctly oral and African (Krog makes them testimonial; Mda, part of a maternal tradition).

Similarly, in considering the historiography of the cattle-killing, we encounter, following Wenzel’s scholarship, frequent plagiarisms, ventriloquisms and reascriptions. Here too the trope of the ‘lips of natives’ recurs, as seen in George McCall Theal’s insistence that the story of the cattle-killing retold by him, in English, and lifted from Frances Brownlee’s account, was the ‘tale’ the Xhosa ‘told each other’ (*Compendium* 52). Similarly, in his *Kafir Folk-lore* we see him describing his composite English tales as told by the Xhosa ‘in their own words’ (vi). Strikingly, he juxtaposes ‘theft’ and narrative dexterity – the Xhosa are described as excellent at verbal parrying, and this is related to their ‘addiction’ to ‘cattle lifting’ (27)[[145]](#footnote-145). It is a juxtaposition of theft with verbal dexterity that we see again in Krog – where her own deft verbal reappropriations are implicitly figured as a type of cattle-rustling.

The texts considered here range widely, across genres and periods, and I have shifted between eighteenth-century travel accounts and twenty-first century poetic adaptations. Apart from in the main case studies, my readings have been necessarily cursory and I am wary of extrapolating from them generalising claims. My main aim in this thesis is to have offered critical re-readings of two highly influential texts – *Country of My Skull* and *The Heart of Redness* – whose contexts, I think, matter, and I hope that the readings in this thesis help to shift some of the critical assumptions about them. With these provisos in mind, I will try briefly to offer, not conclusive arguments, but some comment on what these readings might do, or what questions they raise. I will also briefly touch on plagiarism in relation to the wider cultural and political moment of the two main case studies of this thesis – the ‘new’ South Africa – suggesting that plagiarism and the ‘new’ exist in a generative tension.

In considering the colonial archive, I have restricted my focus to the recycling of stories of the Khoikhoi and San and of the Xhosa cattle-killing. I would guess, though, that similar reascriptions and reappropriations recur across texts concerning South Africa’s other indigenous peoples. Indeed, Dan Wylie, examining the Shaka myth, as popularised through white writing, uncovers its emergence in a series of heavily plagiarised texts, each recycling, and building on, previous pastiches (‘Textual Incest: Nathaniel Isaacs and the Shaka Myth’). Wylie notes that the most popular text on Shaka, E. A. Ritter’s novel *Shaka Zulu*, is a ‘monument to plagiarism’ , but that despite this is ‘assiduously referenced as a credible source’ (419). Wylie points out that the unthinking repetition of former texts allows for a perpetuation of stereotypes, and he offers a very good description of the wider cultural and ethical implications of what is at work in plagiarism:

The point is that plagiarizing without due acknowledgement is a means of refusing the source’s individuality, of its potential fallibility, of its unique embeddedness in its specific “conditions of possibility”, to use Foucault’s term. Consciously or unconsciously the assumption is that the theft of the source’s language, connotations and concepts can be legitimized by a larger project, can be ploughed back into a public landscape, need no longer be accountable. (420)

Certainly, both Krog and Mda’s appropriations work in the service of a particular cultural nationalism – and are, to use Wylie’s phrase – ‘ploughed back into a public landscape’: made part of a ‘quilt’ (Krog) or ‘folktale dreamland’ (Mda). Similarly, many of the early travel writers, philologists and folklorists who borrow without attribution see their work as contributing to the larger project of ‘science’. What is striking is that these writers very often *are* concerned with authenticity: their declarations of authority and veracity, despite their reascriptions and embellishments, are not always merely a cynical ploy (in which the ‘real’ is disregarded), but often attest to a fierce commitment to the ‘larger project’ at hand. Mda notes of his writing of *The Heart of Redness* that ‘it was very important to me to be accurate when it came to the historical aspects’ (interview with Williams 74). His use of Hahn suggests that he was concerned to find a *real* record of the Khoikhoi. Krog’s insistence on her work as non-fiction suggests, conversely enough, a particular commitment to the real. Or, at least to the authenticity of her own artistic vision, which for her is *the* real.

As noted, both Krog and Mda cast their works as emerging from an originary African source, and as oral. But this Africa-as-origin is, as Chapter One demonstrates, a fiction of dubious provenance, built up, ironically, through repetition, plagiarism and reascription. The attempt to ‘Africanise’ literary production, to shift the balance of power, is sympathetic, but what if this means, as in Krog, ignoring, or not holding oneself accountable to, the specific ‘black voices’ of the country, in favour of this ‘larger project’? If one is to take the work of the TRC seriously, it is crucial to take into ‘account’, or pay serious attention to, dissenting voices such as that of Yazir Henri[[146]](#footnote-146), difficult as it may be to accommodate them into prevailing paradigms of the liberatory value of testifying – which, crucially, is recurrently figured as a process of *giving*, that is, as an act which bestows a particular obligation on its addressees. The somewhat uncritical reception of Krog’s work in isolation from the testimonies it is often praised as advocating suggests a literary criticism disengaged from the material circumstances that shape it. Here, following Bourdieu, in his analysis of honour in Kabyle society, and his later work on aesthetics and the gift, we might perceive in literary criticism a fault-line – where ‘self-interest’ and complicity are masked by a vocabulary of honour and prestige, and its participation in a larger economy effaced. Language, narrative, storytelling are fetishised, removed from the social, economic and political contexts from which they originate. In post-TRC South Africa, extravagant claims have been made for the transformative power of storytelling, but what the texts considered in this thesis appear to suggest, in their recurrent juxtaposition of imagery of storytelling and books with tropes of theft and plunder, debt and credit, is the intimate relationship between language, power, ownership, property and authority: stories and their material contexts. Indeed, language itself is a type of ‘property’ in so much as it is a domain negotiated by, and reflective of, the relationships between those who use it. As the anthropologist David Graeber notes, property does not denote a relationship between a person and a thing, but between persons in relation to something else (‘Debt’). Words are ‘property’, and have ‘properties’, in that they have meaning only within a wider discourse, through communal use, and ‘sharing’. Plagiarism is thus directly tied up with disputes over the social control of meaning, and is scandalous because it transgresses not just a proprietorial boundary between source text and copy, but because language is experienced as common property.

 The violent legacy of the English language is also gestured to in the texts under consideration here. Bhonco’s attack on Dalton, the white English trader of colonial descent, who wields the account book which regulates Bhonco’s *ityala* (credit, and, indeed, his social standing), calls up fascinating questions about the relationship of trade, debt, credit and the book in South Africa. Bearing in mind Stephen Gray’s metaphor of literary exchange as ‘trade’, and the inscription in Peter Möller’s plagiarised travel account of the story (told by a trader) of ‘Hottentots’ insisting on their ‘plunders’ being recorded in ‘the big account book’, one might consider how South African literary production could be ‘reconciled’ with the ‘big account book’ of its history: a history not simply of the ‘giving’ of writing and the printing press (as Skotnes puts it [*Claim* 73]), but of theft, dispossession and the destruction and marginalisation of indigenous languages. I would argue that in both Krog and Mda, their borrowings are inextricable from their ambivalent relationship to English, the language in which they are compelled to write if they want a broad audience in South Africa and abroad (if they want to address ‘cross-border’ readers outside of their own linguistic group). Krog notes that ‘she doesn’t see English as ‘*belonging*’ to one group or another (‘Literature Enables’), and her appropriations and Mda’s might be said to work towards the indigenising of English as a meaningful local language. They also illustrate with particular force the violence of writing itself, which as Derrida argues in *Of Grammatology*, always involves struggle and hierarchical ordering (110): a concept of writing which works against the idea of a broadly national language in which all can be equal. But in these appropriations there is what Mazzeo calls, ‘a nationalist fantasy of appropriation without hybridity’ (‘A Mixture’ 155), a melancholic refusal of history which issues in strange ‘poetic’ allegories: figurative doublings of the texts’ own workings. Both texts attempt to write the language of the *new* South Africa, a language which Krog describes the TRC as ‘birthing’ (*Country*) and as entirely democratic, in which all authorities are rendered equal, and no textual authority privileged over an oral one (‘Last time’). Similarly, Mda, at the close of his book has Dalton reconciled to the community, welcomed ‘home’, a needed part of its future – indeed, Dalton has played a crucial part in the ‘saving’ of the local community: he has applied for Nongqawuse’s pool to be declared a national heritage site, thus preventing its development by businessmen. All is reconciled through the creation of a shared national heritage – a heritage which once was shameful but which is ‘redeemed’ through the community’s collective efforts. But this utopic scenario is foreshadowed and undercut by that other ‘redemption’, the redemption of Bhonco’s *ityala* – the dual spiritual and economic meanings of redemption gesturing to the text’s own split between its desires for a renewed, unified, egalitarian South Africa and the reality of persistent material inequalities and structural violence, despite a new political dispensation.

I would suggest that the plagiarisms in Krog and Mda are inextricable from their commitment to the new, the organic, the national and their *voicing*. A number of studies of plagiarism in other historical periods point to a generative relationship between nationalist rhetoric and plagiarisms. Thus Robert Miles, in his article ‘Abjection, Nationalism and the Gothic’ suggests that

the recurrent Gothic interest in fakes, faking, and plagiarism, belongs to the nationalist trajectory of the Gothic, where fakery is a process abjected in the ideological process of constructing an authentic – which is to say, pure – national identity. 'Nations' have always constructed myths of origin. But in the mid eighteenth-century, the processes driving nationalism and ideology intensified. The Gothic's pervasive interest in dramatizing the abject logic of 'fakery'... is a sign of its commitment to exploring the emerging, and contested, boundaries of the Nation. (68)

In Krog and Mda, ‘contestations’ of the boundaries of the emergent nation are played out through their plagiarisms – a reading of which reveals a counter-narrative to the surface narratives of national celebration, in which a price for the sharing of cross-cultural knowledge is extracted and paid for in acts of cultural violence.

**APPENDIX**

The following section of Watson's article repeats my letter, down to the use of bold and ellipses. Watson makes a few minor alterations, and one curious error of transcription (the replacement of a quotation mark with a colon) which amounts to a misquotation of Krog, and which suggests he has not read the Hughes or Krog closely himself (he also repeats a mistake of mine); I have placed these alterations in italics and my original words in square brackets behind these alterations:

A passage in *her* [Antjie Krog's] *Country of my Skull* quotes the English poet Ted Hughes’s essay ‘Myth and Education’ (first published in 1976) without *any acknowledgement of* *the fact* [acknowledging] that *she* [Krog] is using Hughes’s insights, theories and words. Compare Krog’s excursus on myth —

 A myth is a **unit of imagination** which makes it possible for a human being to accommodate two worlds. **It reconciles the contradictions of these two worlds in a workable fashion and holds open the way between them**. The two worlds are the inner and outer world. Myth makes it possible to live with what you cannot endure. **And if the myth has been learnt well it becomes a word—a single word** that **switches** on the whole system of comforting delusions (190)

— with Hughes’s discussion, in which he uses ‘story’ and ‘myth’ interchangeably:

 A child takes possession of a story as what might be called a **unit of imagination**. A story which engages, say, earth and the underworld is a unit correspondingly flexible [. . .] **it reconciles their contradictions in a workable fashion and holds open the way between them** [ . . .] **If the story is learned well**, so that all its parts can be seen at a glance, as if we looked through a window into it, **then that story has become like the complicated hinterland of a single word**. **It has become a word**. Any fragment of story serves as the ‘word’ by which the whole story’s electrical circuit is **switched** into consciousness, and all its light and power brought to bear. (*Winter Pollen* 138-39)

Krog’s identification of *‘two worlds: which are the ‘inner and outer worlds’* [‘two worlds’ which are the ‘inner and outer worlds’] also appears to be taken from Hughes’s argument. The assumption of these two worlds is the basis of his argument and he begins discussing them on page 143 (‘the outer world is only one of the worlds we live in. For better or for worse we have another, and that is the inner world . . .’) and continues referring to them, by *using* [Watson's addition] the phrases ‘inner world’ and ‘outer world’, throughout *his* [the] essay.

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1. Both books, *the stars say 'tsau’* and *Country of My Skull* adapt archival material – the |Xam narratives recorded in the Bleek/Lloyd archives and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission transcripts, respectively -- that has become central to articulations of a new South African identity.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As Louise Bethlehem has noted, the figure of mapping, what she calls a ‘carto-topographic drift’, is a constant of South African literary historiography (‘Under the Protea Tree’ 27). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Respectively abbreviated to *Country* and *Heart* for the rest of this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Similarly, in his speech at the inaugural South African Literary Awards in 2005, Pallo Jordan asserted that the ‘earliest attempts to render the words, thoughts, ideas and feelings of a human as writing were executed on African soil, along the Nile River valley’(‘Speech’). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Barthes writes that ‘*writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, ‘depiction’ (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered – something like the *I declare* of kings’ (1468). An irony here is that this act’s meaning surely depends on who utters it . [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As Michael Wessels notes, the |Xam narrators did not appear to distinguish between different types of narratives, but used the word *kum* (singular) and *kukummi* (plural) to describe the narratives dictated to Bleek and Lloyd and thence variously classified, in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, as fables, poems, myths etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lloyd also bought Stow’s copies of Bushman rock paintings and facilitated their publication (although only four copies were published in her lifetime, in Stow’s *The Native Races*). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Their relocation at this point was thanks to Roger Hewitt, who sought them out for his doctoral research. Hewitt, when he enquired after them from the UCT library, was told that they were lost. He offered to pay librarians to find them and they were relocated. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This argument was first put forward by Shula Marks, in her 1981 article ‘Bold, Thievish and Not to Be Trusted: Racial Stereotypes in South Africa in Historical Perspective’. It is elaborated by A.E. Voss, in relation to literary representations of the Bushmen in English South African writing in his 1987 essay ‘The Image of the Bushman in South African English Writing of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries’. Sandra Swart extends the discussion by considering representations of the Bushman in Afrikaans literature, in ‘Mythic Bushmen’. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Indeed, the subject of the ‘origin of language’ was considered so overworked that in 1866 all ‘communication’ concerning it was banned by the French *Société de linguistique* (Stam 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For instance, Edward Said in *Orientalism*, Robert Young in *Colonial Desire*, Saul Dubow in *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, Bill Ashcroft in *Caliban’s Voice*. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The other popular genre is the children’s story, again as if perpetuating nineteenth-century conceptions of the Bushmen, this time as childlike (Jenkins). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. There was a seminar on plagiarism, alluded to by Watson at the close of his essay, at which Krog spoke. The seminar was held at the home of the vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Njabulo Ndebele, and was by invitation. Eve Gray, one of the panellists, made a very fleeting mention of Krog’s alleged plagiarism, but it was otherwise unaddressed. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. With regard to Jooste, Johnson stated that ‘Pamela is our author and I feel responsible. The woman is a professional and a person of enormous integrity’ (qtd. in Kirby, ‘Darrel Bristow-Bovey’). In response to Watson’s article, Johnson issued a statement that ‘We [Random House] support fully and without reservation Krog’s efforts to protect her reputation from, particularly, the personal attack recently published in *New Contrast*’ (‘Statement’). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ‘Plagiarism: The Cultural Oubreak’ is the title of Verstraete’s thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. As Michael Wessels points out, Krog’s project does resemble Watson’s more than any other, and in particular in those ways in which his own collection differed significantly from previous adaptations of the *kukummi*. *Return of the Moon* was the first collection to draw on the Bleek-Lloyd notebooks (rather than *Specimens*); to deal solely with the |Xam (rather than conflating them with other San peoples, as in the case of Markowitz, Cope, Marais etc); and to provide contextual notes informed by contemporary research. Similarly, Krog works with the notebooks and restricts herself to the |Xam *kukummi* (though she includes !Xun drawings). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. This review was republished on *Litnet*, at Gagiano’s request, after Krog had referred to it in her response to Watson. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sack’s adaptation of ||Kabbo’s *kum* is placed in quotation marks, although ||Kabbo is not named. Curiously, the long poem also contains a fragment of a recording from a tourist site which declares of the San that ‘they couldn’t understand such things as ownership’ (50). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. As Watson notes, Krog follows his example here too, but her introduction does not suggest very thorough research – Watson notes in particular her assertion that *Specimens* (1911) was edited by Bleek and Lloyd, when Bleek had died decades earlier, in 1875, and her assertion that ‘no stories were recorded from !Xun speakers’ when ‘there are several thousand pages of !Xun narratives in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, some of which appear in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*’ (‘Annals’ 51). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Lloyd’s Book V-15, p.5101-5102. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Watson notes that ‘Krog’s version of this, entitled “the broken string”’, reads:

People were those

who broke for me the string

therefore

the place became like this to me

on account of it

In *Specimens* ‘The Broken String’ runs as follows:

People were those who

Broke for me the string.

Therefore,

The place ( ) became like this to me,

On account of it [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Frazer’s work was a hodge-podge of ‘myths’ of ‘savage’ peoples, that, according to Leach and Weisinger, was built up primarily through plagiarised excerpts. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The 1993 Penguin edition gives the epigraph in the original |Xam as well as the English translation, thus underlining the sense of its authenticity. The title page carries the epigraph which previous editions bore: ‘The story,’ the Bushman prisoner said, ‘is like the wind. It comes from a far-off place and we feel it’. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Marais had published articles on the subject in *Die Burger,* in 1923, and in *Die Huisgenoot.* The articles in *Die Huisgenoot* were published over 1925 and 1926, and ran under the title “Die Siel van die Mier" (The Soul of the Ant). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The story was an instance of ghostwriting on Marais’ part *–* he wrote it in late 1921 or early 1922 as a competition entry for the fifteen-year old Anna Henn, the daughter of friends, to enter to the magazine *Die Boerevrou* (Rousseau 344)*.* The magazine did not respond to the entry, let alone publish it, but the family kept a copy of the story and it was published in book form 45 years later, as a children’s story (Rousseau 344). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Marais’s *Dwaalstories en Ander Vertellings* was first published in book form as part of a ‘Self-lees-serie’, and it seems, was aimed at building a sense of national pride. It included stories of heroic Afrikaners who became legendary, such as Rachel de Beer, whose story is told, along with that of Annie Lotrie, in ‘Twee Dapper Afrikaner-meisies’ (34-49). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. In an interview, Krog asserts that Marais visited Bleek and Lloyd and that a |Xam person told him that the |Xam ‘conversed’ with animals (‘Creative Non-fiction’ 63) . The story must be apocryphal -- Marais would have been four years old when Bleek died. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Koorts and Slotegraaf note that:

In order to compare the narratives a subject index (Table 1) was compiled of: Bleek, W.H.I. (1875) *Second Report Concerning Bushman Researches*, Lloyd, L. C. (1889) *Short Account of Further Bushman Material Collected*, Bleek, W.H.I. *&* Lloyd, L.C. (1911) *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, and Von Wielligh, G. R. (1921) *Boesman-Stories. Deel I: Mitologie en Legendes*.

 As Koorts and Slotegraaf show, there are only two stories that do not also appear in Bleek and Lloyd. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. In a postscript to the foreword of *Boesman-Stories: Deel II*, he wrote:

When I had almost finished writing this Part, I came upon Dr W H I Bleek's *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* … Reading through *Bushman Folklore* I was struck by the strong resemblance between the stories he and I present. Because how is it possible that a primitive people could have distributed their folktales over so wide an area and preserved it so well? At closer inspection it appears that Dr Bleek and I collected our material at about the same time and in the same area. (von Wielligh 1920:iv; trans. Koorts and Slotegraaf, and qtd. in them) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Vaughan (born Robert Scourfield Mills and known also as Owen Rhoscomyl) was a Welsh nationalist who had served (on the side of the British) in the Boer War and married in South Africa, returning to Britain in 1902. Described in the Welsh National Archives catalogue entry as an ‘adventurer and author’, Vaughan had lived in America, where he worked as a cowboy and on mining camps. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. For example *Nights With Uncle Remus*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1919) and *Uncle Remus; or, Mr. Fox, Mr. Rabbit, and Mr. Terrapin (*London: Chatto and Windus, 1901). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. ‘I have taken down the Secwana from the lips of Natives (letter from Rev. AJ Wookey [Vol I, p.9]) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. As we shall see, towards the end of this chapter, the story recurs – once again as a supposedly first-hand account – in a nineteenth-century travel account of a journey through Southern Africa. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Theophilus Hahn was dismissive of Krönlein’s authority, describing him as a ‘missionary who pretends to have some knowledge of the Khoikhoi’ (*Tsuni-||Goam* 142). Apparently Hahn did, nevertheless, use Krönlein’s work, and without acknowledgement: according to Tom Güldemann, ‘Hahn simply re-cited items from Krönlein's N|uusaa erroneously under a spurious language name, together with other early material on !Ui languages furnished to him by W. Bleek’ (19). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Also, a letter from Bleek to Grey suggests that there might have been some sort of financial reward for folklore submitted to the Grey Library: ‘I am afraid I shall have to appeal to friends of Folklore in England for means to enable me to reward Missionaries and for collecting Native Folklore before the fearful strides of civilization due to our diamonds and gold, are doing away with all Native originality’ (letter to Grey, quoted in Martin Hall 147) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hahn makes sure to note that his work was written in August and September 1879, and notes that Roskoff’s appeared in Leipzig, 1880. Roskoff’s own preface is dated October 1879, Wien. It is curious that Hahn’s work should have been written just before Roskoff’s preface, suggesting almost that Hahn might be dating his work accordingly. It also seems odd that Hahn’s own preface should be written so long after composition. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For example, he urges that a fund be set up to locate speakers of rare Khoikhoi dialects, for the purpose of ‘collecting from their lips these long-forgotten dialects’ (118). Elsewhere he notes that there are ‘chiefs from whose lips valuable information...could be collected’ (119). With reference to a particular story, he writes ‘The Namaqua, from whose lips I heard that legend’ (135) – making the ‘lips’ plural and metonymic. He notes of some Khoikhoi word he presents that he ‘has written them down from the mouth of three individuals’ (10) – again a single ‘mouth’ stands in for a number of individuals. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Müller described Schegel’s work *The Language and Wisdom of the Indians* as opening a ‘mine’ (qtd. in Hahn, ‘The Science of Language’ 7). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. That of the missionary Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. ‘uit den mond en ommegang der Hottentotten zelf’ (qtd. in Good 81). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Here I am following the work of Malvern van Wyk Smith, who in his essay ‘Origins Revisited: Dissent and Dialectic in Early South African Colonial Writing’ cites four travel narratives in which the accounts of time spent in South Africa appear to be entirely fabricated: Damberger’s; *Travels of Sylvester Tramper* (discussed shortly); L.F. Jauffret’s *Travels of Rolando, or A Tour Around the World* (1804); and George Marshall’s ‘Epistles in Verse, Between Leonora and Cynthio, in Three Cantos. Descriptive of a Voyage To and Fro the East Indies’ (1812).

 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. ‘Clack’ is a monkey whom the author adopts on his travels. He is in many ways a variant of that ‘parrot’ that Coetzee, in ‘He and His Man’ has the fictional Crusoe figure return to England with, as a memento of his travels. As ‘Clack’s’ name signifies, his ‘chatter’, like that of the parrot, serves as a reminder of a troubling (and repressed) animal-human continuum, in which ‘language’ no longer serves to clearly demarcate humans from other animals, and is haunted by its own innate characteristic of repetition. Clack is also an obvious substitute for the figure of the ‘Hottentot’ (they are described in the same terms), as the ‘parrot’ is for Friday – to whom Crusoe teaches English. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Recent scholarship (by Huigen and Glenn in particular) has offered a powerful critique of some of Pratt’s influential theories, querying her scholarly methods (particularly her reliance on abridged, translated and secondary sources). Nevertheless, her description of the writer-explorers as gatherers of ‘information’ seems to me apt. Again and again, reading through early travel accounts, one is struck by the writers’ insistence on the strict factuality of their accounts, and the way in which they dissociate themselves from the fictional. In this way a particular ‘scientific’ authority is built up. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. According to Locke in *Two Treatises of Government*, ‘there are still great tracts of land to be found, which the inhabitants thereof, not having joined the rest of mankind in the consent of the use of their common money, lie waste, and are more than the people who dwell on it, do, or can make use of, and so still lie in common’ (Chapter V, sec. 45). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See the appendix for the contested passages from Hughes and Krog, and how they were set out by Watson (and in my letter). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. In my letter to Krog I overlooked the mention of ‘man’s inner and outer world’ at the top of page 138, claiming that Hughes begins discussing the two worlds on page 143 (an error which Watson repeats). It is from page 143 onwards that Hughes pays them sustained attention, elaborating on what they denote. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. ‘Myth and Education’, collected in *Winter Pollen*, an anthology of Hughes’s criticism, was first published in 1976 in *Writer, Critics and Children* (London: Heinemann). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Notably, this is not the only phrase Krog repeats, as was suggested by Morris and de Kok in their articles in Krog's defence. The phrase is obviously, as Morris states, ‘commonplace’ and would not on its own suggest plagiarism here. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. After posting her initial rebuttal, in which she claimed that these interviews prompted these words, Krog mentioned other sources on myth – Johan Degenaar, Ian Buruma and Carl Jung. When these are cited in *Country of My Skull* it is 47 pages after the contested passage and Krog is specific about what these writers are to be credited for: ‘the following conversation, and those in the final two passages’ (237). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The child Krog, visiting a friend, asks of her friend’s maid: doesn’t she miss her children? No, says the friend -- ‘Maids don’t feel like other people about their children’. Krog knows from a previous visit to her friend’s house that ‘Maids don’t get cold like white people’ – the response to Krog’s enquiry as to why the woman does not have a heater. And she already knows from her own home, the farm, where the maids do not have running water, that ‘they don’t like washing’. Each time the child’s qualms, and her instinctive human identification with the said woman, are allayed by the idea that black women are somehow other, an idea communicated in the derogatory word maid, which obscures the woman’s humanity. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Krog writes in her rebuttal that it is ‘ludicrous to label a similarity in idiom’ a plagiarism. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The issue of plagiarism does not hinge solely on this idea – or, more pertinently, these words -- but it is worth pointing out that whereas in their immediate context in *Country of My Skull* the statement that ‘these two worlds are the inner and outer world’ is jarring and arbitrary, in Hughes the vision of two such worlds premises his argument for the value of myth in education and is integral to it. Near the end of the essay Hughes comes to the following conclusion, explaining why he has led the reader into a long digression (pages 143-150) about the inner and outer worlds in this essay on ‘Myth and Education’:

The inner world, separated from the outer world, is a place of demons. The outer world, separated from the inner world, is a place of meaningless objects and machines. The faculty that makes the human being out of these two worlds is called the divine. That is only the way of saying it is the faculty without which humanity cannot really exist. It can be called religious or visionary. More essentially, it is imagination which embraces both outer and inner worlds in a creative spirit. Laying down blueprints for imagination of that sort is a matter for education, as Plato divined. (151) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. That is a copy that does not have the allusive critical edge of parody. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Notably, Hughes’s legal inheritance of her poetic estate, and jurisdiction over it, was a subject of controversy. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Kondlo repeats observations that Hofmeyr makes about gender, space and oral tradition in the first part of her book, ‘Telling Tales’ (23-25). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ruden writes of her own critical review of *Country of My Skull:* ‘I was angry at how Krog reacted to the witness's efforts to be seen as misused. She threw a few inane comments from literary theory at him’. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Somewhat curiously – given Krog's assertion that Kondlo is a pseudonym – she did, while working on the TRC, also interview a Xhosa male intellectual named Kondlo, Kwandiwe Kondlo, an academic based at Vista University (National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, folder 2005.16.1.3). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Spiegelman has Pavel, his psychologist, say ‘[a]nyway, the victims who died can never tell THEIR side of the story, so maybe it's better not to have any more stories’ (45). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown. Folder 2005.16.2.18. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Susannah Radstone in her article ‘Cultures of Confession/Cultures of Testimony: Turning the Subject Inside Out’ discusses how these distinct positions have come to be conflated. As she notes, confession concerns the self, whereas testimony does not necessarily. She argues that the shift “‘cleanses” the [confessing] subject of all sin at the expense of history or perpetration’ (176). The result is that the ‘listener/academic’ is privileged as witness at the ‘expense of the testifier’ (176). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Interestingly, the same claim for the personal story as also the national/collective story is made by Rigoberta Menchú in *I, Rigoberta Menchú* , an autobiography by the Guatemalan activist and Nobel Laureate, subsequently found to include fiction: ‘not only *my* life, it's also the testimony of my people…My personal experience is the reality of a whole people’ (qtd. in Beverley 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Krog quotes from ‘Sleg Vir Besigheid’, an essay by Serfontein written on the occasion of H.F. Verwoerd’s death. This essay, and Krog’s quotation of it, will be returned to in due course. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. In her 2006 article ‘The Cook, The Stew and The Taster’ Krog asserts, regarding her incorporation of testimonies, that ‘Initially I had the name of the victim plus the date and violation upfront and in bold. The testimony itself was in a different font so as to underline a resistance to appropriation’ (93). She claims that the names, dates, changed fonts and bold were removed, and the testimonies ‘carefully punctuated’ (94) by her editor, Ivan Vladislavic, in order to make the text more readable. In a 2007 article, ‘Fact Bordering Fiction and the Honesty of “I”’, Krog repeats these claims but takes responsibility for ‘carefully’ (40) adding to the ‘punctuation’ (40) herself. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Krog does not reference Nietzsche (who is commonly known as the author of this statement). The statement also acts as epigraph to Johan Degenaar’s chapter ‘Imagination, Fiction. Myth’, which Krog cites elsewhere in *Country* (137). Degenaar does not name Nietzsche either – presumably because the statement is so famous that this is not necessary. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Krog herself suggests she writes in this way – or, rather, that it is a common method of writing – in ‘The Cook, The Stew and The Taster’ where she states the following: ‘According to C. R. Rogers (1980: 145-146) in his essay, 'Towards a theory of creativity’, the creative person displays three characteristics in the creative act. The first, if she is a writer, is a drive to select or emphasize particular words in an attempt to bring out the essence of what she is trying, or has, to say’ (91). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown. Folder 2005.16.2.18. The NELM inventory lists this folder as containing notes on ‘Robert Dorfman’s book Disappearing Acts’, but the notes appear to be from a lecture by Ariel Dorfman of the same name. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Some of Dorfman's remarks, in response to a question by Peter Biehl, the father of Amy Biehl, are also transcribed on the Amy Biehl Foundation website, which states that they are the unedited transcription of a recording. See < http://www.amybiehl.org/newsletter\_3-2.php> [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. 16 April 1996 < <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrvel1/calata.htm>> [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Mrs Mhlawuli describes her husband's post-mortem report in detail – stating that he had 43 stab wounds, that his hand had been amputated, and that acid had been poured on his face. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. See Episode 1 of *TRC Special Report*, the weekly SABC report on the TRC presented by Max du Preez. Catherine M. Cole notes that Krog similarly represents Father Michael Lapsley’s testimony – describing him as breaking down in tears, when he does not in fact do so (‘Reverberations of Testimony’). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Oboe (66) refers to this passage when discussing how ‘incoherent’ testimony could be. Pieterse uses it to back up her claim that ‘The language of these victims is shattered by pain and when they attempt to find a language for this pain, the successive images they use are very often contradictory’ (167). Elsewhere she refers to the ‘confusion’ of the testimonies (177). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. This translates literally as ‘This inside me/ fights against my tongue/ it is/ unshareable/ it destroys/ words/ before he was blown up/ they cut/ his hands off/ there are no fingerprints/ how do I say this/ this/ terrible/ I want his hands back’. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. ‘Sonny Boy’ is the spelling given in the transcripts, and ‘Sonnyboy’ that given in *Country of My Skull*. I use ‘Sonny Boy’, except when quoting Krog. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. 23 April 1996 < <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/heide/ct00707.htm>> [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. As Cole notes, even Harris, sceptical of Krog's lack of accountability, quotes testimony assuming it to be that given at the TRC by the victims, rather than Krog's fabrication (*Performing* 81). Harris focuses on the testimony about Sonny Boy and writes: ‘[t]he woman's statement enacts what I see as the shifting of trauma from the body of the victim to the realm of nationally validated speech: Sonnyboy is *translated* from the dead’ (34). Harris is justly critical of Krog's attempt to conflate her personal experience with a general national experience, but does not realise that this is not simply a selective quote but an invented statement. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. This translates literally as ‘they drag him by his feet like a dog/ they scrape his brain into a hole in the ground/ they step it closed with their boots/ it was broad daylight/ and pitch dark/ it never stops in my heart/ it always comes back/ it eats me apart/ Sonnyboy, rest in peace, my child/ I translate you from the dead today’. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. 23 April 1996 < <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/heide/ct00712.htm>> [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. 25 April 1996 <<http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/heide/ct00508.htm>> [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Scarry uses the phrase repeatedly; her first chapter is titled ‘The Structure of Torture: The Conversion of Real Pain into the Fiction of Power’ (27). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. In torture, Scarry suggests, the ‘latent distinction’ between a self and a body, between a ‘me’ and ‘my body’' is made ‘emphatic’ (49). The ‘self’ Scarry describes as metaphorically ‘embodied’ in the ‘voice’ (50), and the body comes to ‘betray’ the self. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. National English Literary Museum. Grahamstown. Folder 2005.16.2.18. The first sentence of Krog’s notes is from page 29 of the *Body in Pain*, and the rest from a passage on page 35.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Scarry does not use the metaphor of puppetry, but does point to a performative scenario, describing a ‘mime of power’ (45) and ‘mime’ of shifting agency (47). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Scarry explicitly figures this process as an appropriation of territory, or ‘ground’, describing an ‘unfurling of world maps’ (36). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. The transcript is available online at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/special/mandela/mufc2b.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. See Chapter Two, ‘Coleridge, Plagiarism and Narrative Mastery’, particularly pages 24 -25, of Mazzeo's *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period.* [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Krog explicitly states this in her 2007 article ‘Fact Bordering Fiction and the Honesty of the “I”’, discussed in further detail later in this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Similarly Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman assert that ‘one of the struggles of survivors is to find the means of reestablishing authorship of their stories (*Violence and Subjectivity* 12*).* [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. See for example Meira Cook, ‘Metaphors of Suffering’; Sarah Ruden , ‘Review’; Mark Sanders,  *Ambiguities* ; Shane Graham, ‘The Truth Commission’; Ashlee Lenta, ‘Listening Again’; and Annel Pieterse, ‘We Who Belong’. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. The testimony, given on 25 June 1997, is available at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/ladyb/ladyb2.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. The transcript reads:

[h]ow many children do you have? – I have 10 children. Only eight are left behind. Two passed away. Now, on the day of this assault I was with three children at home and the grandchildren. The grandchildren are five in number and they go to school. Some of them are in Bloemfontein, others are in Thaba Nchu and others in Wepener, and the others are around Botshabelo. Some of my grandchildren belong to my son, who is mentally disturbed, and the last-born has a pair of twins, and their father is also mentally disturbed. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Coetzee discusses the mystical bond of land and blood in the *plaasroman* in *White Writing*, which he epigraphs with an extract about the myth of Cadmus (a myth of autochthonous origins) from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Sarah Nuttall argues that South African literature has been ‘badly served’ by a 'mixture of belles-lettristic and New Critical formative pedagogical influences' that has 'paid little attention to the materiality and contexts of texts’ (‘Literature and the Archive’ 283). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Here we have come full circle from Krog's first mention of Afrikaans literature – when she records going to interview a *black* Afrikaans novelist about a tale of betrayal, theft and survival (11-12) – a tacit analogy being drawn between boers and blacks, who need to stick together in the face of colonial rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. ‘Envoi’ is defined by the *OED* as ‘the action of sending forth a poem; hence, the concluding part of a poetical or prose composition; the author's parting words; a dedication, postscript. Now chiefly the short stanza which concludes a poem written in certain archaic metrical forms’. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Krog is not alone in this conflation of the two sufferings, a conflation whose increasing popularity is critiqued by Elizabeth Van Heyningen in her article ‘Costly Mythologies: The Concentration Camps of the South African War in Afrikaner Historiography’ (2008). Van Heyningen argues that the camps became so powerful in Afrikaner collective memory because they were the subject of poetry and popular remembrance, no Afrikaner history appearing until the 1950s: ‘history was replaced by a “haze” of poetry, memorials and ceremonies, testimonies and photographs, which offered an apparently authentic account, while inhibiting any critical examination, of the camp experience’ (495). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. On the second occasion (260), she merely pushes her colleague down into a chair, to make a point. On the first, she is accused of ‘assualt’ by her bulletin editor (who later withdraws the charge). Krog explains that she had unthinkingly grabbed her arm (167). Interestingly, she did so because ‘livid’ that her copy, for a news report, has been changed, asking the bulletin editor: ‘Who gives you the right to change our copy – so that it’s incorrect – without the decency to at least consult us?’ (166). Krog is furious that the bulletin will announce ‘Victims will get a thousand rand’ and then only two sentences later contextualise with ‘to access urgent medical services’ (167). She fears that listeners will think this is the overall compensation for victims, rather than money to secure immediate medical treatment. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Buruma indicates that ‘the men in leather coats’ was an appellation used by Lenz in his novel *Deutschstunde* (*The German Lesson*) (83). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Krog's repudiation of the fate of the Germans – their story being told by Hollywood – in retrospect appears ironic, as she later sold the film rights to *Country of My Skull* and it became a Hollywood production, *In My Country.* [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. South African writers have also engaged with the ethics of such representation. Coetzee has written powerfully about the ethical dilemmas that face the writer who seeks to depict the atrocities of apartheid, most notably in a well-known 1986 article, ‘Into the Dark Chamber: The Writer and the South African State’, reprinted in *Doubling the Point* (1992), a widely-cited collection of essays. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. The Chilean commission's findings were only made known once the final report had been compiled, when the President announced the findings to the nation via a televised address. The report named victims, not culprits, and the individual cases discussed contained significantly less detail than the testimonies told before the TRC. The English translation of the report is available at http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/chile/chile\_1993\_toc.html [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. The book does, however, include a reprint of Karl Jaspers' essay ‘Differentiation of German Guilt’, which Krog mentions earlier in the text (97). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. It was published on its own as the first chapter, ‘An Anthropology of Honour’, in his book *The Politics of Sex or The Fate of Schechem* (1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. 4 December 1997. <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/special/mandela/mufc9.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Krog writes that he is a colleague of hers at the SABC. Oddly, he isn't among those colleagues thanked in the ‘Envoi’, and I can't find any record of him elsewhere. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. In the same interview in which she makes these comments, Krog asserts that Afrikaans poets read Afrikaans writers so as to ‘forge our voices from them’, again repeating the metaphor of ‘forging’ (‘Literature Enables’). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. In her 1997 essay ‘“No Longer in a Future Heaven”: Race, Gender and Nationalism’, McClintock explores the ‘gendering of the national imaginary’ (89) and argues that typically in nationalism women are constructed as mother figures and ‘symbolic bearers of the nation’ (90). Samuelson, in her more recent work, *Remembering the Nation: Dismembering Women?* (2007), specifically considers the figure of Baartman as a repository of national fantasy. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. As Carli Coetzee points out ‘Antjie Krog’ is one of multiple authorial signatures employed in *Country of My Skull*; there is also ‘Antjie’ (who signs the envoi) and Antjie Samuel, who holds copyright. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. There is, of course, a basic distinction between ‘I’ and a proper name, like ‘Antjie Krog’, but the two are brought together/committed in the act of signing. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. As noted in the Introduction, this type of nationalist writing has a specifically Romantic affiliation. As Gerald Newman has argued, Romanticism and nationalism as movements developed in tandem, and facilitate each other (125). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown. Folder 2005.16.2.36 Krog underlines sections on the women’s monument and the significance of the *volksmoeder* in an article by Johan Snyman on ‘Suffering and the Politics of Memory’ (esp. p 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. The first stanza reads:

*ma, ek skryf vir jou 'n gedig*

*sonder fensie leestekens*

*sonder woorde wat rym*

*sonder bywoorde*

*net sommer*

*'n kaalvoet gedig-*

Karen Press translates this as:

ma I am writing a poem for you

without fancy punctuation

without words that rhyme

without adjectives

just sommer

a barefoot poem – (included in Krog’s *Down to My Last Skin* 12) [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. For the remainder of this chapter abbreviated as *Heart*. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. This is another instance of the trope of ‘from the lips of natives’. Theal’s *Kaffir Folk-lore* similarly declares that the tales recounted in it are all told by Xhosa people. But none of them are named. It presents itself, in effect, as an early instance of ‘giving voice’: ‘It is with a view of letting the people we have chosen to call Kaffirs describe themselves in their own words, that these stories have been collected and printed’ (vi). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. The lack of acknowledgment may be read in relation to the lack of acknowledgement of Lucy Lloyd; arguably there is a gendered power dynamic at work in each case. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. The homogenising of ‘bushman’ and ‘hottentot’ is familiar from other colonial writings. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Peires himself, in his article ‘Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited’, traces the difficulties encountered by black writers who sought to be published by the Lovedale Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Henceforth abbreviated to *Dead.* [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Majeke argues that ‘Confronted with the military force of an unknown civilization, the Xhosa would seize upon those elements in the Christian gospel which seemed most likely to offer him protection: the belief in miracles, the resurrection of the dead, the promise of peace and plenty after tribulations and sorrow. It is in this sense that we say the Nongqawuse Cattle-Killing was missionary-inspired. It was the first fruits of the subjugation of the minds of the people’ (qtd. in Peires, ‘Suicide or Genocide’ 52). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Peires, in a 2008 article contends otherwise: that history has much in common with the natural sciences, proceeding by hypotheses (‘At the Entrance to Science, as at the Entrance to Hell’: Historical Priorities for South Africa in an Age of Deconstruction’). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. White makes sure to note that he is not suggesting that fictional and historical events are the same, or that history and fiction have the same truth claims and are evaluated by the same criteria. Nevertheless, these continuities remain – there is an ‘intertextuality’ between them, in Kristeva’s sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. In the earliest Xhosa written account, Gqoba's, the followers of Nongqawuse are described as ‘[*a*]*magqobo´ka ka Nongqause*’: Nongqawuse’s Christian converts’, *amagqoboka* being the term by which Christian converts were known (Bradford ‘Akukho Ntaka’ 220) . [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Peires restricts the designation ‘Xhosa’ to the subjects of Sarhili. Today ‘Xhosa’ designates speakers of isiXhosa more generally. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. The ‘Proudly South African’ campaign, launched in 2001, was a joint government and private sector initiative. Products that comply with various criteria (such as local production and fair labour practises) are allowed to carry the ‘proudly South African’ logo. See <http://www.proudlysa.co.za>. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Opland’s 2005 article ‘The Image of the Book in Xhosa Oral Poetry’ demonstrates how in Xhosa oral poetry the book is very often allied with colonialism and seen as a ‘symbol of white deception’ (34) [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Steele notes that Heitsi is a ‘heraldic’ name (245). [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Mbeki’s African Renaissance movement is a controversial one; while his government sought to affirm African identity and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in ‘the face of globalisation’ (‘IKS Policy Document’ 12), his neoliberal economic policies promoted globalisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. In 1914, Mqhayi had already published *USamson* (1907), variously described as a novel, novelette and pamphlet, and now lost (Opland ‘The First Novel in Xhosa’). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. In *Ways of Dying*, the first-person plural narrator also suggests that stories are communal rather than the property of an individual: ‘We know everything about everybody. We even know things that happen when we are not there...No individual owns any story. The community is the owner of the story, and it can tell it the way it deems fit’ (12). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Henceforth abbreviated as *Tsuni-||Goam*. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. For instance, the use of buchu; the painting of bodies with red ochre; the placing of stones on funerary cairns; the belief that at the bottom of bodies of water lies a giant snake; the story of Heitsi Eibib parting the waters. Much of Hahn’s work was itself based on previous accounts by travellers and missionaries, and in his first chapter he builds up authority through textual citation, of Kolb, Alexander and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Eugène Marais refers to ‘uintjies’ (19) in *The Rain Bull and Other Stories*, and glosses them as ‘the bulbs of nutsedge or nut grass’. He also mentions the Pleiades, but in his story they are known as ‘the Female Ostrich’ (31). The quotation from Schmidt, with its reference to *uientjies*, is suggestive of Dutch influence on the Khoikhoi, giving a sense of a culture changed by colonialism. As we shall see, in Mda, the Khoikhoi are less culturally hybrid, and there are no stray Dutch or Afrikaans words or references. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. In an endnote Hahn elaborates: 'roots, berries, honey, and bulbs, food which is found in the field' (endnote 35, page 104) [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. For agricultural imagery of sowing and harvesting see, for instance, Galatians 6:7; 1 Corinthians 9:7-12; Job 4:8 ; Psalm 107:37 ; and Exodus 23:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See, for instance, Marie Chantale Mofin Noussi’s ‘Translation, Multilingualism, and Linguistic Hybridity: A Study of *The Heart of Redness* by Zakes Mda’ and Harry Sewall’s ‘Deconstructing Empire in Joseph Conrad and Zakes Mda’ for extended reflections on hybridity in *The Heart of Redness*. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Knudsen’s account is also given in Bleek’s *Reynard the Fox* (on page 75). Bleek notes that the original is in German. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Knudsen’s translation of St Luke’s Gospel into Nama was the Nama text which Wilhelm Bleek used for study in his doctoral thesis in philology (Banks 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Meg Samuelson explores Mda’s gendering of the nation, and the character of Qukezwa, in her chapter on *Heart* in her book *Remembering the Nation: Dismembering Women?*. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Bleek contrasted sidereal worship with ancestor worship, believing that the former arose among those who spoke sex-denoting languages (for instance the Khoikhoi) and thus personified inanimate objects (Chidester, ‘Mapping’ 17-18). In the racist hierarchy constructed by Bleek, and others who subscribed to this idea (including Hahn), the Khoikhoi were more sophisticated than those described as ‘Bantu’. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. It is an epistemology which might be traced to Bleek’s work, which, according to Banks (155, 158), focused disproportionately on myths of origin, in line with his concerns as a philologist. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Peires notes in *The House of Phalo* that ‘[Khoikhoi] resistance [to the Xhosa] continued into the 1770s and many Khoi sought the service of the Boer in preference to that of the Xhosa’ (23). [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. ‘The great three-decker novels of the Victorian era often used to end with a chapter summarising what became of the principal characters in the story...This history is not, unfortunately, a fiction’ (342) [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. As noted in Chapter One, ‘the existence of fakelore has been intricately and inseparably involved with the study of folklore from its very beginnings at the end of the eighteenth century’ (Dundes 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. In Bourdieu’s reading, gift-giving is not simply individual and agentive but part of a larger social logic, by which it is structured. Indeed, a measure of self-deceit is necessary to the workings of the larger structure (‘Marginalia’ 232). [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. ‘Fictions of Factual Representation’ is the title of the fifth chapter of White’s *Tropics of Discourse.* [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. ‘They are perfect masters of that kind of argument which consists in parrying a question by means of putting another. They are not strict observers of truth, and, though not pilferers, they are addicted to cattle lifting. According to their ideas, stealing cattle is not a crime; it is a civil offence, and a thief when detected is compelled to make ample restitution; but no disgrace attaches to it…’ (27) [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Henri’s views on the appropriation of his testimony are noted in his essays ‘Reconciling Reconciliation: A Personal and Public Journey of Testifying Before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’. and ‘Where Healing Begins.’ He also spoke at length about the distress Krog’s book has caused him at a paper he gave at a conference on ‘Trauma, Memory and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel’ at the University of Vienna in April 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)