

# Epistemological restlessness.

## Trajectories in and out of history

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In the concluding remarks made to the dialogue on conservation and restoration held at the refectory at the monastery of San Giorgio Magiolo in Venice in 2007, Bruno Latour opened up a discussion on what might constitute a trajectory of restoration. He suggested that restoring involves identifying and situating moments so as to enable “the question of what is between?”; qualifying value through assessing and selecting what is constituted as important; through this *discernement* establishing lines of continuity and discontinuity; and then characterising this trajectory either forensically as exactness or symbolically as “aesthetic faithfulness.”<sup>1</sup> In the case of Latour and his colleagues gathered in Venice the object of the restoration was the making of a copy of Paolo Veronese’s painting *The Wedding at Cana* by Adam Lowe to replace the version (the original?) which had been taken from the refectory by Napoleon to Paris in 1797. Our object is not a painting but something slightly more mundane: the *South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar*, a Tuesday afternoon meeting of academics and students jointly organised by the Centre for Humanities Research and the History Department at the University of the Western Cape, in Cape Town, South Africa.

The seminar that has convened weekly since 1993 is in many respects very ordinary - an institution similar to others held in many departments and centres of research around the world. Its most identifying feature is the format, in which the paper is taken as read and introduced very briefly by the presenter, and most of the time is devoted to the discussion. But even then it replicates other instances of organisation. There is a weekly appointment, there are presenters and discussants, questions and answers, visiting scholars who take the opportunity to present their work, or members of a department who wish to share their work with colleagues. On the other hand, there has been an ongoing aspiration to make the seminar a unique space, a cutting-edge forum of critical awareness. To cultivate and protect this intellectual project, the chairs of the seminar have throughout the years produced a tradition, a set of practices, a *savoir-faire*, and an ethos that is performed - and at times transgressed - every Tuesday and that makes the habitués feel at home.

To invite more people to visit and partake in the making of this home, the trajectory which we want to pursue leads from this place and performance of academic discussion called a seminar into a

book that comprises a selection of merely ten papers from the 450-odd presented in these meetings so far. The endeavour might seem unassuming, but our trajectory carries a desire to chart through an engagement with a specific intellectual space, the twists and turns, the continuities and discontinuities, the intensity and disciplinary incitement of a seminar as the participants took on questions of pasts beyond and out of history. These were endeavours to overcome the boundaries of often parochial and insulated national fields, of attempts to transcend disciplinary frontiers, and of new ideas, writings and directions emerging from interdisciplinary debates.

Unlike published collections of seminar and conference proceedings which characterised much of South African historiography in the 1980s, and which set in place Marxist revisionist history with an inflection of the social,<sup>2</sup> we do not want to claim a new historiographic field, such as possibly one located at or emerging from the University of the Western Cape. These claims have been made elsewhere, staking out a territory around the suspicion of empiricist approaches, the blurring of the distinction between history and historiography, the focus on contestations over public histories, and the production of different historical genres in various media, especially the visual.<sup>3</sup> The diversity of approaches gathered in this collection, and the ways that claims to discrete historiographic territories may act to foreclose rather than open up discussion, makes such an approach unattractive to us. In the same way we do not aim to provide here a sociology of a space - an empirical reckoning of the networks, influences, and conversations that the seminar generated as an institution of knowledge - as much as such endeavour might be productive.<sup>4</sup>

Instead, *Out of History* engages in an exercise of intellectual archaeology by and through the space of the seminar. In other words, the book does not aim to reconstruct a continuous historiography, but analyses singular moments of emergence of new historiographical paths. The ten chapters included in this volume were identified as some of the most significant epistemological interventions among the many excellent papers presented at the seminar in the past 22 years. The paramount criterion for significance was the ability of the paper to spark discussion and its contemporary relevance. The chapters in this book interrogate the constitution of history as a discipline; bring together different and often competing authorial voices; analyse biographies, images, and narratives as objects in motion and in perpetual construction and reconstruction; expose the limits of multilingualism; and challenge the practices and methodologies of social and oral history. Each chapter thus represents a crucial intervention that has significantly challenged established conventions or opened up new fields of inquiry. The chapters argue for very different visions, ideas, and projects. Their common trait is neither that they come from a UWC historical school - some do come from outside UWC - nor that they chart a common path. Rather, it is the desire to push the boundaries of historical inquiry in new and unexpected directions. This

*epistemological restlessness* is the unifying thread of the book, and, we suggest, the driving undercurrent of the seminar space at UWC.<sup>5</sup>

To reflect this dialogical drive in the writing itself the trajectory we want to pursue here is that of a scripted conversation amongst ourselves as editors of this volume.<sup>6</sup> Dialogue has indeed the unique potential of highlighting restlessness and the connection of discrete points over stability and continuity. The choice of the dialogic form is also a way to deal creatively with our own positioning *vis à vis* our object of restoration. We do come indeed from different disciplinary histories. Two of us, Jung Ran Forte and Paolo Israel, joined the space of the seminar in 2007 and 2008 respectively through becoming Mellon postdoctoral fellows at the CHR in the Programme for the Study of the Humanities in Africa (PSHA) - a conceptual platform which sought “to contribute to an ongoing search for new paradigms through which Humanities research might illuminate the dynamics of social change in Africa”<sup>7</sup> - coming from a disciplinary background in anthropology as students of the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris, and geographic spaces of research in West and East Africa. Leslie Witz, on the other hand, can be characterised as an historian of South Africa who has been steeped in the struggles and fluctuations of the discipline since 1977, although at various moments he has expressed unease and challenged its modalities and narratives.<sup>8</sup> By engaging in a dialogue about the seminar at UWC and its trajectory from these differing starting points our objective is to open up further conversations, to take the seminar out of its temporal and spatial location of the Tuesday afternoons at the Centre for Humanities Research, and to invite our readers as well into this imaginary exchange.

## **I. Trajectories**

JUNG RAN: I would like to start - where else? - from the beginning. Beginnings are clearly at the heart of the historian’s trade and are always arbitrary; or, as you yourself Leslie might want to say, always subject to contestations and negotiations.<sup>9</sup> Personally, I don’t have a clear memory of the first seminar I attended, yet I remember that I was encouraged to present my work in that forum soon after my arrival by Ciraj Rassool, who was the interim co-director of the CHR, together with you, Leslie. I remember I was quite anxious about my presentation and that you acted as discussant. I also recall how in one of the first sessions that I attended a student tried to impress me by saying that this was a very serious seminar, by far the toughest he had ever encountered. “I would never present a paper here”, he whispered to me in awe. And I guess this is how I began to learn and internalise the seminar ethic made of robust and frank discussions. Leslie, what are your beginnings?

LESLIE: So you want to start at a beginning? Well, what was the beginning of the *South African Contemporary History Seminar*? Formally it was created was created in March 1993 by Colin Bundy and myself, under the auspices of the Institute for Historical Research (IHR) and the History Department at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The IHR was a small, marginal research institute that focused primarily on Cape history, published a journal devoted to this regional focus, and involved itself in the local politics of indigeneity. As the sign of origins of the seminar there is paper number 1 delivered on 30 March 1993 by Diana Wylie of Yale and entitled, “Starving on a full stomach: Food in black South African history 1880-1980”. But that beginning unsurprisingly is heavily contested. “How can you call that the first seminar?” some members of the History Department have asked. “We had seminars in the Department before that? Are they not going to be recognised or count for anything?” I tried to explain that with Colin Bundy moving from the History Department to become director of the Institute for Historical Research he was attempting to try and create a research culture at UWC and build institutional bridges. He had secured funding from the Rockefeller Foundation for an African visiting scholars programme, and wanted to establish strong bonds between the History Department and the Institute which were somewhat frail at the time. I don’t know whether this explanation was convincing but the Wylie seminar has remained as seminar number 1, in spite of pressure to alter it.

In the naming of that first seminar presenter as Diana Wylie from Yale is a clue to the format of the seminar and perhaps what might be its origins. Colin Bundy had just spent some time at Yale and attended the Agrarian Studies seminar which had been initiated by James Scott. From some cursory research on the “Program in Agrarian studies” web-site I see that it was started in 1990 and that it poses the question that has been fundamental to the UWC seminar since its inception: “Can I attend a colloquium session if I haven’t read the week’s paper?” The answer given is: “Yes, but you will get much more out of the session if you do, because the paper is discussed - not read - at the colloquium.”<sup>10</sup> So, we have insisted on the pre-circulated paper and although some presenters have broken the rules and gone over the time limit for presentation, this is frowned upon and not acceptable. I remember at that first seminar Colin was actually very worried that people might not have read the paper and we would have no questions or comments from the floor, so he actually selected a few individuals to prepare some questions in advance so as to ensure there would be discussion. He needn’t have worried though for in that seminar and many that followed there was rigorous, ongoing discussion. We have never actually been able to ascertain how many people have actually read the paper in advance but certainly there have been more than sufficient to sustain the discussion for 90 minutes and sometimes beyond (although that extra time also causes consternation).<sup>11</sup>

In these beginnings, the trajectory of the seminar intersected with one of a more established space that combined vibrant discussions with political action: the Marxist Theory Seminar that had been operating at the University of the Western Cape since 1988. In the midst of the urgency, intensity and heady times of political transition in South Africa, these seminars, in which activists and leading local and international Marxist theoreticians offered talks, were almost like mass meetings. Andrew Nash estimates that sometimes up to 400–500 people attended these seminars, but in those overflowing lecture theatres it felt like even more.<sup>12</sup> The Marxist Theory Seminar came to an end in 1995, and for a brief period the South African Contemporary History Seminar overlapped with it. With different types of formats and agenda - indeed a great deal of the work presented at the South African Contemporary History Seminar challenged aspects of Marxist theory and history - there was, apart from the individuals involved, little direct association between the two.

If I was to follow a sequential trajectory from the moment of inception one might want to think about how the venue of the seminar changed from the History Department, to the library and the student centre; the changes in seminar chairpersons; the prominence of scholars from other parts of the continent several who had arrived via the African scholars programme; the moments in which senior, well-established academics found that they were subjected to intense critique. A cumulative trajectory, on the other hand, might emphasize that the key element was that the seminar was kept going through its support base in a History Department where programmes in visual history, public history and museum and heritage studies had established themselves and a postgraduate cohort of students was being built.<sup>13</sup>

But at the same time there were constant attempts to draw in other disciplines, particularly at UWC, into what had been initially started as a history seminar:

We are pleased to announce an exciting programme covering such themes as reparations debates on the Herero genocide in Namibia, colonial melancholy in Northern Namibia, theme parks in Norway, literary nationalism in South Africa, Afrikaans protest music and the making of the biography of Thabo Mbeki. We would like to invite members of the Arts faculty to consider the seminar as a serious intellectual space to present research, test ideas and to participate in the lively debates that have become a regular feature of the life of the history department and the Arts Faculty at UWC.

The invitation was proffered on the basis that the seminar offered “an interdisciplinary environment for critical scholarly exchange” and was “a vibrant and productive space for debate and critical thought.”<sup>14</sup>

In the middle of 2005, when the university decided to form a Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) using and transforming the resources at the IHR, it was logical that the seminar be used to provide a foundation for the emerging Centre and it was renamed:

The CHR will run a weekly seminar series. It will cooperate with History Department's South African & Contemporary History Seminar, a highly successful seminar series that has been in operation since 1993, and which has always drawn upon a range of humanities fields... The seminar will become known as the South African and Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar.<sup>15</sup>

I think the first seminar paper presented in the “new” refurbished room at the CHR was by Antjie Krog, “The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: African Reconciliation and forgiveness as part of wholeness.” Premesh Lalu from the History Department was chairing the seminar and Ciraj Rassool and I were acting co-directors of the IHR becoming the CHR. Then in 2008 Premesh Lalu was appointed as Director of the CHR and he came with a much more defined intellectual project which he had originally articulated in the Programme for the Study of the Humanities in Africa.

PAOLO: That was also the moment in which the beginnings of this book should be located: when you, Leslie, approached us over a cup of coffee and discussed your desire, which you had had “for a very long time”, to publish a selection of papers from the seminar. It immediately seemed a good idea, if only for the intellectual excitement that we were experiencing as newcomers in that space; even though we had no sense at the time of the broad range of the papers and of the arduousness of even beginning to think about a selection. But before we go into that, let me ask: Leslie, can you retrospectively analyse that desire of yours?

LESLIE: From very early on I had the idea that it would really be a wonderful idea to publish sets of papers from the seminar. In the library of the CHR are the boxes—one for each year—of the papers that were presented, the posters, and few scattered messages and emails that were exchanged between organisers, chairs, presenters, discussants, administrative staff on programmes, venues, dates, postponements, cancellations and a number of copies sent in print. By allocating a numbering system to the papers we were not only implying a beginning but a continuation and coherence around a set of engagements in a forum at UWC. Publication seemed to be almost inevitable, yet it didn't happen and several papers were being published elsewhere. Also as the years went on we heard that publishers were no longer interested in collections of seminar papers but were rather looking for single, coherent monographs. I was rather unhappy about this, because as a student it was precisely those collected seminar papers which had such a profound influence on the shaping of

my ideas. I suspect like many who were schooled in South African history it was the circulated, badly photocopied version of Martin Legassick's 1970 presentation to the "Societies of Southern Africa" seminar at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, at the University of London, and republished ten years later in the collection by Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore, *Economy and Society in Pre-industrial South Africa* that completely altered the approach I was taking and actually was what made history exciting. Legassick was advocating that one should not see the making of race as an archaic remnant of the Southern African frontier and invited those reading his essay to look elsewhere: "If the stereotype of African as enemy cannot be traced to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when and why did it in fact come into existence?"<sup>16</sup> That might seem to be almost taken for granted now but when I read it and we discussed this in post-graduate classes it was absolutely mind-shattering. This was a way in which history could be changed. The major response to the question that Legassick posed, and that came to be the foundation of much of the historiography that followed was that it was very much formed through the processes of industrialisation and modernisation of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It seemed to me in the 1990s, and it still seems to me now, that new ideas were being placed on the table in that cramped small seminar room at UWC and they were not being given wider circulation. What was happening almost mirrored a description of South African Marxist historiography from the 1970s: although the "work to date has been primarily on specific and limited topics ... and has been issued usually in periodicals or in unpublished but fairly widely circulated papers", it was undercutting and shaking loose "a number of established, even stereotypical generalisations of older schools of thought."<sup>17</sup>

It is quite astonishing that the epistemological debates that emerged within the seminar room at UWC in the 1990s and carried on in the new millennium seem to have passed unnoticed by many scholars. There were all too easy formulations that history in South Africa was dying in this period. The common refrain was that nothing had happened since what has been being depicted as the "golden days" of South African historiography in the 1980s, when scholarship and debate flourished, student numbers were high, many monographs were published and struggles against apartheid gave history an urgency and use value.<sup>18</sup> In contrast the 1990s and the early 2000s were depicted as the nadir of South African historical scholarship.

This is most evident in *History Making and Present Day Politics*, a volume of essays, selected from a workshop held at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Copenhagen in August 2002, under the auspices of the Nordic Africa Institute.<sup>19</sup> Central to this collection is that there was a crisis in South African history in the 1990s, the numbers of students enrolling for history at school and university declined and, despite the dramatic political changes and expectations to the contrary, there were few new historians and little fresh historical writing emerging. The major aim of the

pieces in *History Making* is to give reasons for this decline: history had lost its political edge, there were little immediate economic opportunities from being an historian and something called postmodernism had taken root leading to ahistorical thinking and writing. With the exception of one or two pieces, much of the new history, which challenged the conventions of the scholarship of 1980s, is missing from *History Making and Present Day Politics* where pessimism is the order of the day.

Contrary to these depictions, the UWC seminar (as it came to be known) became the forum where new questions were tabled, and ideas experimented with. What I desired was a book to show that there was a thriving scholarship which emerged in the 1990s and this was no more apparent than in the rigorous debates which were a common feature of the UWC seminar.

The main challenge would be then how to select the papers. According to which criterion? To reconstitute which kind of image of a space that was never stable?

JUNG RAN: Indeed, choosing the papers initially appeared as a daunting task. At that moment, towards the end of 2010, it seemed almost natural to organise a one-day workshop at the Centre for Humanities Research. We titled the workshop *Out of History* not knowing that that very same title would stick with us. We wanted to bring the book project back to the seminar room, prompting the collective that constitutes it to think back to the intellectual space that they had been producing since 1993 and on the kind of histories that had been discussed within it. Scanning the titles of the 314 papers presented up until then, Colin Bundy, who was invited to take part to the workshop as co-founder of the seminar, commented on the variety of themes and approaches of participants and contributions. For instance, he highlighted how only 168 papers had specifically dealt with South African history. He noted:

There appears to have been only one paper on precolonial history; 27 papers on the colonial period (from 1652 to 1910); and 39 on the period from 1910 to 1990. There are about half a dozen papers that can most accurately be styled “contemporary history.” Strikingly, no fewer than 55 papers can be attributed to aspects of historical enquiry than have been championed by the UWC History Department: (broadly) public history and heritage, visual history, historical memory and the politics and sociology of “the production of history.”<sup>20</sup> Some 35 papers are specifically on historiography or theory. In geographical terms, the seminar has focussed predominantly on South Africa; however, there were 61 papers on other African societies, mainly but not exclusively historical in disciplinary terms; and 22 on societies beyond Africa. There were 55 papers explicitly in disciplines other than



history: literary and cultural studies, gender studies and education were the most numerous of these.<sup>21</sup>

To proceed with the selection of papers, we settled on a simple method: asking all five chairs of the seminar from 1993 to 2010—namely, Colin Bundy, Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool, Andrew Bank, Premesh Lalu and you, Leslie—to choose the most significant papers presented, especially the ones that pushed more radically disciplinary and epistemological conventions, providing a motivation for their significance. Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie was chosen to discuss the selection and the motivations of “these six formidable men”, as she put it. The discussant mused around her failed attempt to think through the list of papers and to neatly classify them in conceptual boxes: the ramifications were too many and authors often straddled the boundaries. Playing the devil’s advocate—which is the discussant’s role—Dhupelia-Mesthrie wondered whether it would possible to ever agree on the meaning of a paper’s significance; and whether if others had been tasked with the selection a more inclusive list, especially in terms of gender and geographical areas, would have been reached. She however found that this diversity and the realms of possibility that it opened were firmly anchored in an ethos inherent in the seminar itself:

it was the seminar space itself (and not necessarily the paper) where there was sustained discussion that actually forced an engagement with the discipline. Often the weakest and most conventional paper provoked fabulous discussions and which contributed to our understandings of each other and our academic pursuits.<sup>22</sup>

Along similar lines, Colin Bundy noted that “it is difficult to imagine that any publication emerging from the Workshop will not grapple in some way with some of the ways in which the conventions, assumptions and practices of academic history have been called into question during the years the seminar has taken place.”<sup>23</sup>

The ten chapters of this volume largely emerged from those that were identified in that workshop as the most significant amongst those presented in the past twenty years.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, the paramount criterion for significance was the ability of the paper to spark discussion and its contemporary relevance. The chapters continually interrogate the disciplinary boundaries: they bring together different and often competing authorial voices; analyse biographies, images, and narratives as objects in motion and in perpetual construction and reconstruction; expose the limits of multilingualism; and challenge the practices and methodologies of social and oral history.

The results of the workshop and more widely of the entire selection process bear the trace of the initial ambivalence that we detected in the seminar’s archive. On the one hand, the selection

mirrored the individual preferences of the various chairs. On the other, they charted a history that goes beyond that of the seminar itself: of attempts to transcend the disciplinary formations that clustered around the resistance to apartheid itself, as it materialised specifically at the University of the Western Cape.

Moving from the workshop to the actual publications, we decided that the chapters themselves should be presented as archival pieces. We asked the authors only to make minor alterations, standardise referencing and do grammatical corrections. We also retrieved discussants' notes and comments. Each author was also asked to provide a brief preamble which would offer a retrospective reflection on the debates that the paper generated after it was presented at the seminar and any subsequent reflections. This is intended to give the readers a sense of the larger dialogues that these papers generated in the seminar room and beyond; to invite them to become part of those very same seminar proceedings and to bring to the table their own perspectives, questions, disagreements, suggestions, and new lines of enquiry that move on the very edges of the disciplines.

LESLIE: That brings us back to a point earlier in our trajectory when we referred to the change in name from the South African and Contemporary History Seminar to the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar when the CHR was established. Was the change in title indicative of a more fundamental shift than merely indicating a broader space of exchange? And to be more leading, was the positioning of the CHR perhaps a move towards a set of engagements with something similar to what Chartier, following de Certeau, described as “the edge of the void”: between “products of discourses and social practices,” between how the world is constructed and what makes those constructions possible?<sup>25</sup>

PAOLO: We can begin to answer this question by referring to the last chapter presented in this volume: Premesh Lalu's reflections about the trajectory of the Centre of Humanities Research at UWC.<sup>26</sup> Taking as a model a famous article by Stuart Hall, the chapter renders the intellectual struggle of establishing a humanities centre in an institutional site marked by the legacy of apartheid, steeped in a colonial discourse of mastery, and threatened by the entanglement of neo-liberalism and the politics of death (thanatopolitics). This rendering describes the central task of the CHR's intellectual project as a critique of historicism, which is especially important to achieve an understanding of the current “crisis of the humanities” in Africa not merely as an effect of neo-liberalism. Lalu argues that all attempts to ground university discourse in history as a solid foundation are bound to hit the hard wall of race and to repeat colonial interpellations into racial subjectivities; even anti-colonial thought and the concept of bio-politics, explored as possible avenues to come out of this impasse, are found to ultimately falter on the shoals of historicism.

From within this double-bind, Lalu draws the outline of a project of subversive genealogies, which investigates the founding connections between knowledge and power, reason and race, education and discipline. This is a project kept alive by a desire “for a humanities inquiry that would name a future beyond apartheid.”

What the humanities have to offer is therefore an epistemological inflection: the critique of categories, without which history is bound to repeat or rely on the very same racial categorisations set in place by apartheid and colonialism. Such critique is obviously entangled with history. The rebuttal of a stagist narrative in which neo-liberalism and nationalism might be understood as mere episodes of a history of capital is indeed posited on a meticulous historical reconstruction of the relationships between liberalism and apartheid; economism countered with an analysis in terms of bio-politics, itself a deeply historical construct. Instead of considering this ambivalent relation to history as a vicious circle of argumentation, one should read it as a productive friction between different modes of thought, of enquiry, of writing. This “brushing up” of history and theory might be the most salient contribution that resulted from the opening up of the seminar to the humanities, and an opening toward the desire that Lalu names.

JUNG RAN: If one considers this collection from a chronological point of view, only two the chapters included were presented as papers after the seminar was broadened to include the humanities. Yet, the brushing up of history and critical theory can be traced in all the contributions, almost as a foreshadowing. This is also indicative of the ways in which the humanities were conceived in the seminar and in the new centre that came to host it: not as a closed disciplinary field to be located side by side - or worse, in opposition to - existing ones; not as a mere pluralistic multiplication of topics and themes; but rather as a critique of disciplinary reason itself.<sup>27</sup> Some of the early chapters of this collection carry the seeds of precisely that project.

## **II. The Critique of Social History**

PAOLO: In spite of their different themes and approaches, a single strong thematic thread unites the chapters: a drive to overcome the epistemological limitations inherent in the Marxist approaches that dominated the discipline of history in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, and especially of the disciplinary formation that would come to be known as “social history.” The origins of social history are canonically located in the French *Annales* school, specifically in the work of Lucien Febvre, even though its antecedents can be traced further back, in 19<sup>th</sup>-century French and German historiography.<sup>28</sup> In the Anglo-American world, it is identified with the Marxist history of

underclass consciousness pioneered by Eric Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson. This is the variety that Bernard Cohn mischievously nicknamed *proctological history*: “the study of the masses, the inarticulate, the deprived, the dispossessed, the exploited, those groups and categories seen by earlier and more elitist historians, not as protagonistic but as passive.”<sup>29</sup> In South Africa, the label “social history” would be used in a similar way, but more parochially as a genre located in a specific stagist narrative of intellectual production. The story is generally told as a succession of historical schools: first came a *liberal* historiography that challenged the racism of earlier nationalist constructs and that itself was a reaction to ideological settler narratives;<sup>30</sup> then a *radical* historiography which, inspired by the Marxist concept of mode of production, challenged the assumptions of its predecessor;<sup>31</sup> and finally *social history*, which critiqued the radicals’ deterministic excesses, especially those associated with the work of Althusser and Poulantzas, wrote the (black) ordinary individual back into the story and endowed her with voice and agency.<sup>32</sup> In this narrative, the incremental critical awareness coincides with the escalation of the struggle against apartheid: from the 1960s to the 1970s to the 1980s; liberal, radical, social.<sup>33</sup> The ending of apartheid seems to have brought a wave of epistemological uncertainty, signalled by the “post-” prefix and the spectre of the linguistic turn on the one hand, and by a nostalgic longing for earlier black-and-white notions of agency on the other.

While social history was far from being dominant in UWC’s academic production in the 1980s - its epicentre was the University of the Witwatersrand’s History Workshop (WHW) - it constituted an important critical target of scholarship produced in and around the South African Contemporary History and Humanities seminar in the initial post-apartheid period.<sup>34</sup> Much of the focus in the Tuesday seminar was on the politics of social history’s production within the South African academy, its claims to recover experiences particularly through oral history methodologies, and assertions of transfer of content to and reception by pre-determined audiences. This is most explicit in Nicky Rousseau’s contribution to this book, “ ‘Unpalatable Truths’ and ‘Popular Hunger’: Reflections on Popular History in the 1980s,” which provides a poignant critique of popular history, one of the avatars of South African social history. Popular history was concerned with making the working class not only its subject but also its audience. It is a current of which you yourself, Leslie, have been a protagonist in a previous intellectual life through a project that encouraged individuals and organisations to *Write Your Own History*, which culminated into a book that is now out of print but still widely read.<sup>35</sup> By sketching the “politics of production” that constellated around the emergence of popular history, Rousseau suggests that we “see popularisation not as given or a natural part of political activity but as a specific response at a particular moment.” Through a close reading of the historiography of popularisation, and showing how popular historians in the 1980s

employed notions of audiences, history-as-profession and history-as-lesson, Rousseau shows how the categories “critical” and “independent” were employed to present a particular type of historical practice that often was an alibi for staking a political position. This chapter thus prompts us to consider how “publics” and “audiences” are not given entities, but are constantly being addressed and reconstructed in the ways histories are conceived of as popular. Rousseau is able to pick up on the tensions in the *Write Your Own History* project between claims to professional authority and assertions of community histories on their own terms, so that in effect to “write your history” meant writing history by the rules and conventions of the academy.

Isabel Hofmeyr’s chapter provides a critique of social history’s main ontological and methodological support, orality. Written in the mid-1990s, Hofmeyr’s contribution draws upon the work of Tony Bennett and Karin Barber, amongst others, and offers a series of reflections on the debates and practices that characterise the production of oral history. The main drive of the piece is to show the limits of the categories of “oral” and “literate” and the ways in which they are deployed in social history as a binary opposition, where the spoken word becomes the sign of authenticity, immediacy, everyday experience, and ultimately Africa. Hofmeyr argues for a more careful and nuanced understanding of the interactions between orality and literacy, the mediation processes which they are involved in, and the modes of translation, creation, narration and transcription that take place. Moreover, by emphasising the need of re-contextualising the interviews within the performances that produce them, and to consider orality itself as a genre, she urges us to look at the politics of production, the circulation and archiving practices that mark both written and oral histories.

These critiques were mind-blowing for many. Rousseau’s paper was indeed the winner of the game of selection we organised at the workshop. Hofmeyr’s paper had an important influence in dislodging the conservative approach to African orality as source to be mined for data and chronologies, championed by Jan Vansina. Yet this sense of novelty and eruption could also be seen as a symptom of the disciplinary insularity of South African historiography. While in France the *Annales* were borne out of an encounter with anthropology and incrementally veered in the direction of cultural history, South African social history invented itself by writing out anthropology - quarantined in the early years of nationalism in most African countries - and by conceiving of oral history as if ethnographic fieldwork had never taken place. Meanwhile anthropology had significantly moved towards the study of historicity, from the time of Evans-Pritchard’s famous address and as a way out of the late 1980s crisis of representation.<sup>36</sup> With this in mind, some of the epistemological breakthroughs trumpeted in the post-social history developments might appear as a rediscovery of the anthropological wheel. When historians affirm the prominence

of value over fact, representation over process, are they not recycling old anthropological tenets?<sup>37</sup> The first challenge to Vansina's historical positivism in African studies came indeed from structural anthropology; it would then be re-ignited by Vansina himself with a public onslaught on a new generation of "postmodernist" historians, which content largely overlapped with the formed debate.<sup>38</sup> The impurity of the oral text was well-known not only in anthropology, but also in folklore studies; in fact, the field itself of popular culture studies emerged in nineteenth-century Europe precisely around a debate on the interfaces between the written and the oral.<sup>39</sup> When historians study speech genres as sites of historical experience, are they not going back to the roots of historical anthropology itself in its *Annales* incarnation?<sup>40</sup>

LESLIE: I suppose I would continue to argue for the importance of the interrogation of social history as it remains the dominant framework of South African history. In many instances it keeps in place the hierarchies of historical practice that are enshrined in a celebration of positivism where the process of gathering and synthesising new and more knowledge is presented as a sign of progress in the profession. Moreover, what has also occurred is that oral histories have been turned into the practice of heritage where it is a set of skills that are necessary for a process seen as retrieval that are emphasised.<sup>41</sup>

As Hofmeyr states in her brief introduction of the 1995 paper, orality has continued to occupy a prominent role across many disciplines in South Africa. It has been crucial for the developments of performance studies, scholarship on testimony, memory, and violence in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and linguistics. These very same debates were decisive to the formulation of the fields of public and visual history, heritage and memory studies at UWC in the coming years. For instance, in much the same vein as Hofmeyr in this book, Rassool and Minkley critiqued the ways in which individual life-stories that convey experience appear to be placed within already constituted categories of class. They insisted upon the different modalities, performances and transmission of oral narratives, the porous and shifting boundaries of the oral and literate, and the need to understand different notions of orality.<sup>42</sup> Bickford-Smith, Field and Glaser, in a rejoinder, pointed to the value of oral history in recovering marginal, complex, and multiple voices which are subject to the same sorts of scrutiny as any other historical source.<sup>43</sup> In their view Rassool and Minkley were attacking the very practice of oral history and its ability to provide an archive that would assist in constituting different histories. For Bickford-Smith et al. oral history is to be considered as a source and methodology for a more inclusive historical practice, whereas for Rassool and Minkley it is history in itself that needs to be interrogated for its modes of production and representations of power and authority. Methods and concerns of knowledge production and

appropriation are what matter for the latter rather than accumulation for, and inclusion in, an archive of experience.

JUNG RAN: There are other areas as well which we need to look at that further the critique of social history's ontological and methodological basis. This is done in this book through the chapters of Hayes, Rassool, Mokoena and Dhupelia-Mesthrie who dissect the concept of biography and the idea of the stable individuality which supports it. After all it was biography that was lay at the heart of social histories and its renditions of lives.

Patricia Hayes brings together a series of biographic moments of C.H.L. Hahn - the Native Commissioner of Ovamboland in the South-West Africa between 1921 and 1946 - out of an extensive and thorough analysis of his visual archive, which had been the subject of the exhibition *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (1994). These images at once both subvert and enhance written archival records, and challenge "the orthodoxy of history as *change over time*."<sup>44</sup> Hayes shows how through specifically crafted representations of space and nature, notions of time were altered in such a way to portray locations of indirect rule as the sites of the pre-modern. Capitalist economy, migrant labour, and Christianisation were left out of the picture to allow the pushing of the "native subjects back to an anachronistic temporal zone." Hahn documented wild game, landscapes, expeditions and hunting and produced ethnographic materials, at once materialising/visualising the administrative policy, a certain colonial philosophy and ethos, images of "Old Africa Untamed," and an intense, physical, white masculinity at the edge of the wild frontier. But Hahn himself is not the stereotypical subject of a singular biographic past of racialised male domination. On the contrary, Hayes suggests that visual archives allow us to render a much more complex and layered portrayal of the individual and by extension of the colonial apparatus. The photographs offered fantasies, an escape from the mundane and the modern, an adventure into the wild. But at the same, dreaming of a primordial Africa came with a cost: the displacement of the "modernity of the colonisers" and perhaps the emergence of a divided self.

In his chapter Ciraj Rassool discusses the process that could be referred to as "biographisation": the work that a biography does in the translation of life into narrative. By exploring and questioning the conditions and relations through which biographic narratives came to be produced, Rassool prompts us to rethink biographic representation beyond a certain modernist approach put forward by social history, and to explore instead new paths that encompass both the ways in which lives are made into a coherent narrative, and the biographic interventions that surround them.<sup>45</sup> Rassool's contribution suggests a consideration of those moments in which the "biographic narration became part of the process of living itself."<sup>46</sup> He contends that South African political biography has largely

reproduced a “biographical illusion” by approaching political lives as marked by an ordered sequence of acts, events and works, with individuals characterised by stability, autonomy, self-determination and rational choice. The concerns of this approach have been to construct national histories in which leaders have been made to speak as national subjects through resistance history. The work of documentary narration on I.B. Tabata (in this book) presented accounts of resistance through notions of leadership and biography that privileged the national political formation and the chronological lives of national political leaders. What occurred in this research was a “double” or “compound modernism,” involving an encounter between historical methods and the modernist imaginaries of political institutions and national or local leaders. The chapter shows how it may be possible to approach political biography and resistance history in new ways, through a focus on biographical production, biographical relations, the cultural politics of lives and institutions, and the idea of biographic contestation.

Hlonipha Mokoena offers an additional perspective on biography. In her chapter, based on her book *Magema Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* (2011) she questions the meanings and possibilities of biographical writings. Her chapter analyses processes of translation, circulation and readership formation that constantly remake the meanings of “the intellectual,” “intellectual culture,” and history.<sup>47</sup> Mokoena does not want to identify Fuze within a specific formation such as the Christian convert. Instead her work argues for writing as a space that “transcends and transforms the intractable issues of acculturation, conversion, Westernisation and cultural imperialism.” Mokoena’s chapter shows how it is precisely through all the different renditions of the *oeuvre* - newspaper articles, book, English translation, various editions that contained series of diverse prefaces or introductions - that the book by Fuze *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (1922) (translated and edited in 1979 as *The Black People and Whence They Came*) acquired its meanings and Fuze negotiated his identity. In fact, each version of the writing was formed by a series of engagements between Fuze as author and his readers, their expectations and disappointments.

Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s chapter deals with the forced removals that took place during apartheid in the area of the “Black River” in today’s Rondebosch neighbourhood in Cape Town. In introducing her chapter, she argues for the recovering of voices and the reconstruction of events and feelings about those events, drawing on and eliciting a plurality of perspectives. In Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s reflective introduction to the paper that was presented in August 1997, she offers a more nuanced reflection on social history, one that is grounded on the thinking of a history that would consider the moments of its own construction. In line with Isabel Hofmeyr’s critique, the crafting of the oral narratives becomes a crucial element that needs to be problematised. We want to read this



as a sort of move towards deconstruction. Dhupelia-Mesthrie adopted a similar approach in her professorial, inaugural lecture at UWC, where she outlined her intellectual project as one wanting to uncover lives as biographies of the social. In her research on immigration archives, she shows how during apartheid, identities of immigrants from India were constantly fabricated and completely altered by administrative procedures. If Dhupelia-Mesthrie pointed to the unknowability of the archive, and its blurring of fact and fiction, she also insisted on the ability of historians to decode it in order to provide understanding. “We need not be paralysed and unwilling to construct histories of the past,” she argued, which does not “exclude being self-reflective of how we make those histories.”<sup>48</sup>

### III. Edges and limits

PAOLO: An anti-foundational path is explicitly advocated or hinted at in many of the interventions in this book. Building on the critical turn of the 1960s, the practice and category of history is seen with suspicion for its claims to totality, objectivity, mastery; it is suspended, dethroned, diminished as just one narrative in a specific genre (academic writing) amongst many competing other narratives and genres.<sup>49</sup> This critical thrust came to inhabit the space of the seminar itself, not only in the scope and themes of the papers presented, but also a mode of critical reading transmitted through the medium of orality. A corrosive epistemological edge is the hallmark of the questions addressed to the papers at the seminar by staff, fellows and students. This meta-inclination defines the seminar for those who partake in it as well as for outsiders.

Such epistemological corrosiveness was never an intellectual luxury, a sign of indecisiveness or narcissism. It responded to a powerful demand of the present: disrupting the foundational connections between the disciplines of history and nationalism, on the one hand; and dissecting the *longue-durée* legacies of colonial violence, on the other. In the aftermath of apartheid and of the struggle against it, in an institution produced by its logics, it testified to a refusal to surrender to triumphalist narratives to the nation and to focus instead on the continuing haunting of the past in the present.<sup>50</sup> History itself, as category and practice, came under scrutiny because of its availability in producing narratives that legitimate power, as well as because of the discipline’s unwillingness to inquire into its own foundational discourses. The forays at the interface between history and the exercise of power that this book documents are moved by this disquiet concerning epistemological complicities: the desire to shake off the identities and subjectivities fabricated by apartheid and somewhat inscribed in the discourse of history itself, and to undercut nationalism’s claim on the discipline of history.<sup>51</sup> Reversing the old formula of engaged Marxist historiography, one could say

that a large part of historical production around the seminar was driven by a desire to produce “unusable pasts”: histories that would not *lend themselves*—the formula recurs—to any form of constituted power, especially the nation-State.<sup>52</sup>

One can however wonder about the danger of stepping past the edge of the epistemological cliff or, as Heidegger put it, of having “people busy sharpening knives when there is nothing left to cut.”<sup>53</sup> Epistemological suspicion might very well work like Plato’s proverbial *pharmakon*: as cure and poison.<sup>54</sup> And when does one turn into the other? Could one take a different path? Instead of dissolving the differences between source and reconstruction, popular and learned, history and historiography, one might keep these gaps open; instead of dwelling on metaphors of edges and limits, suspicion and suspension, prisons and ruptures, one might pursue a quest for balance or proportion.<sup>55</sup>

LESLIE: I wonder though whether a pursuit of balance in itself creates its own problems of eclecticism and watering down the potency of analytical interventions that consistently questioned power and authority in the production of history. Perhaps another way to respond to this danger of going over the edge is instead to re-think how one articulates historiography. Instead of thinking of history as a series of schools of thought or type - such as a movement of change from liberal to radical to social history- one might re-conceptualise the writing of history as a series of what Munslow and Jenkins call historical-literary genres, the different ways that “compulsions of empirical data *and* language” are brought together in the constitution of a history: “reconstructionism,” a realist mode of discovery where a truth can emerge from the sources; “constructionism,” which deploys conceptual categories to approach reality; “deconstructionism,” that wants to know how we know; and “endisms,” questioning whether there is any value in history as referent to connected events, or whether there can or should be history after the “cutting.”<sup>56</sup>

The last category, “endism”, is not a replication of the political idea of “the end of history” but rather a fundamental rejection of history’s categories, narratives and forms of representation. Instead of going into the void the project is to formulate new and distinct ways to express the time and space of pastness. Although this collection has several papers that problematise the category of history and its modes of narration, there are not many that are “out of history” or “endisms” in the sense that Munslow and Jenkins present it. Most are concerned with tracking processes of production, of history making, deconstructing representations rather than taking facts and events as given.

Perhaps the closest to “endisms” are the chapters by Gary Minkley and myself, as well as that of Sue Newton-King. Gary and I play around with temporality, events and the characterisation of

individuals to present an account that sets the time of the past in the present of a commemoration and an anticipated racially exclusive national future. The title of our paper “Sir Harry Smith and His *Imbongi*: Local and National Identities in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, 1952,” situates Smith neither in 1852 when he was governor of the Cape Colony nor earlier in the nineteenth century when he commanded British forces in the area, but in the years immediately after the formal introduction of apartheid and the pageantry and performances of the 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Festival. We show how Smith as a figure of colonial frontier history and claims to pacifying the politics in the eastern Cape (as exemplified in stories of him having an indigenous praise-poet or *imbongi*), was at odds with attempts to create a unified white settler history that were set in place during the early years after the formal implementation of apartheid through school text-books and historical pageantry. Smith was removed from the stage of history in 1952 during the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival and instead a local history of the eastern Cape region of South Africa was set in place that would accord with new national pasts. The land of the colonial frontier was turned into the land of settlers, and history shifted from confrontation across boundaries of race and the frontier into a litany that linked temporal and spatial progress from arrival through to discovery, settlement, and advancement.

Susan Newton-King, somewhat surprisingly, goes even further than Minkley and I to enter into a dialogue with a fictitious co-author (who is also not so fictitious). This imaginary dialogue centred around the story of a family murder which took place on the farm Brakkefontein, situated on the plains of Camdeboo on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony in 1788, questions the ways in which narrative, history and evidences are constituted. In all her other work Newton-King asserts a strong affection and affiliation to the archive as the font of historical knowledge. But here, as she argues throughout the chapter, she felt challenged by the fragmentary evidences that could not be pieced together. Although, perhaps she still remains tied to history as a mode of recovery, veering between reconstruction and an “endism,” Newton-King, following her desire for closure, brings her archival findings out of history, embracing fiction writing, giving voice to hidden motives and emotion.<sup>57</sup>

JUNG RAN: Along the same lines one should pose the question around culture. Concepts recurring in the seminar are heritage and memory; subjectivity and the archive; the gaze and visibility; identity and representation; power/knowledge. But everything happens in a cultural vacuum. At best, culture is a tradition to deconstruct, the invention of wicked colonial epistemes. Here, the history is peculiarly - almost parochially - South African. The interest in memory and representation within the discipline of history has been described worldwide, and yet not in South Africa, as a cultural turn. The question of African philosophy has been approached by thinkers such as V. Y. Mudimbe,

A. K. Appiah, K. Wiredu, I. Karp and D. A. Masolo in dialogue with “cultural enquiry;” however, in South Africa, the co-opting of anthropology within the Apartheid apparatus turned “culture” into an academic swearword.<sup>58</sup> Although early South African anthropologists dealt extensively with “cultural facts” in their comprehensive monographs, British social anthropology and successively Marxist anthropology never indulged in theorisations around culture, privileging on the contrary the study of kinship, economic production, forms of exchange, political formations.<sup>59</sup> We would have to wait until the late 1980s and early 1990s to see “culture” resurface in the South African landscape through the works of Jean and John Comaroff.<sup>60</sup> It is more or less in the same years that culture became a key component of social history. As the introduction to a collection of papers from the 1984 Wits History Workshop conference, *Class, Community and Conflict*, edited by Belinda Bozzoli, states, social history sought to “reincorporate racial, cultural and other determinants back into our social thought.” Worlds of music, criminality, sport, religion, and the manufacture, supply and consumption of alcohol became a focus for understanding cultural struggle and meanings. They became inscribed into a “view from below” as “non-class factors” to understand “South African common consciousness.”<sup>61</sup> But this “cultural turn” of the 1980s was, as Keith Breckenridge suggested, of a “particular sort”, implying somehow a stronger attachment of historians to a Marxist analysis that ultimately reduces culture at best to a terrain of struggle, at worse to false consciousness.<sup>62</sup> So we are faced with a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, within academic worlds, culture is often dismissed as an epiphenomenon of political struggle or a false consciousness invented by the powerful to deceive and dominate. On the other hand, in the outside the academia, culture has become an omnipresent language referring to structures of thought, identity, and race. All this is very evident when in our teaching students claim their culture and even their “tribal” belongings.

As Marshall Sahlins observed *à propos* the European Renaissance, a cultural invention if any:

What else can one say about it, except that some people have all the historical luck? When Europeans invent their traditions—with the Turks at the gates—it is a genuine cultural rebirth, the beginnings of a progressive future. When other peoples do it, it is a sign of cultural decadence, a factitious recuperation, which can only bring forth the simulacra of a dead past.<sup>63</sup>

I would like to ask: are not visibility, memory, heritage, the archive, etc. all cultural categories? Has an unspeakable cultural turn taken place? If that is the case, by not acknowledging this turn, doesn't one forego the epistemological tools to understand culture outside the operation of deconstruction and demystification, especially language?

PAOLO: One way to answer this question would be that in South Africa culture was produced in relation to the exercise of power to such an extent, intensifying a pattern that occurred in much looser forms elsewhere in the continent, as to render its recuperation meaningless. Indeed, the scrapping of culture from the academic vocabulary was the object of a heated discussion at the seminar around a paper presented by Qadri Ismail, which ended with the jesting intimation that culture and its master discipline be “burned and its ashes scattered over Robben Island.”<sup>64</sup> If culture in South Africa cannot be recuperated historically - for instance, by demonstrating the mutual construction of cultural categories or the concept’s world-historical relevance - it is perhaps more productive to shift the focus to a less charged object: language.<sup>65</sup>

This is the terrain in which ventures Fernando Rosa Ribeiro’s chapter, which brings to the table a topic scarcely approached throughout the history of the seminar. The chapter is a critical interrogation of policies of multilingualism from the vantage points of UWC; it asks how should one conceive of the linguistic space of UWC side by side with Stellenbosch and UCT. Ribeiro argues that the concept of multilingualism promoted through the South African government and various educational institutions is in effect conceived as a plurality of monolingualism, which effectively reproduce the boundaries that they are supposed to dissolve. These linguistic policies are reflected in practices of interpretation reducing vernacular texts to broad historical coordinates, such as colonialism and nationalism, thus failing to address the vernacular on its own aesthetic terms.<sup>66</sup> The hill in the Eastern Cape to which poet and historian S. E. K. Mqhayi retired is figured as the emblem of this elusive interpretive dimension.

When Ribeiro presented the paper at the seminar he introduced it with an autobiographical tale, that of his attempts to learn isiXhosa. With his usual verve, Ribeiro ridiculed the distancing and objectifying effect put in place not only by colonial grammars but also by the contemporary jargon of scientific linguistics. This sarcastic account served to demonstrate how relations of servility are reinforced through language learning methods, grammars, dictionaries and linguistic concepts.<sup>67</sup> While languages are malleable, efforts are constantly made to regularise and codify expressions that sustain relations of dominance, particularly in racially stratified societies. Grammar, and the discipline of linguistics that produces it, are first and foremost tools of power.<sup>68</sup>

This double attitude towards language - attention to the specificities of vernacular text taken in their fluidity and openness, as well as suspicion towards instituted grammars and linguistics - might be epistemologically productive in relation to the conundrum of culture at large.

LESLIE: I feel that Ribeiro’s chapter is also very important in another crucial respect. Through thinking about languages and their movements, he provides a crucial intervention in one of the

major debates in South African history over the limits and possibilities of employing the colonial archive. This debate has taken on various forms and content, surfacing in Julian Cobbing's polemic in the 1990s about what he asserted was the "myth of the *mfecane*," and then over a decade later within a very different paradigm around Premesh Lalu's book *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts*.<sup>69</sup> In the latter Lalu relates the search in the 1990s by Nicholas Gcaleka for the skull that resulted from the possible decapitation by British colonial forces in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century of his ancestor, Hintsa, to notions of exclusion in constituting history as a discipline. Instead of laughing at Nicholas Gcaleka, or representing him as some sort of indigenous voice, or contextualising his actions as emblematic of a post-apartheid present, Lalu claims that his actions rupture narratives of progress and destabilises the category of history. In response to his critics Lalu has reiterated that his concern was not to find or locate history as lost but rather to understand what he constantly calls "the cut of history," to reconsider "the very concept of event in the discourse of history" as a manoeuvre of "thinking ahead" towards a post-apartheid history.<sup>70</sup>

At issue is whether, in the words of Hlonipha Mokoena, such a project of reading the colonial archive and its imbrications with the politics of knowledge production, "kills the possibility of resuscitation".<sup>71</sup> Ribeiro advances an argument against the "overdetermination," that denies any recuperation, of the colonial archive. Instead he compels us to look at the possibility of "other readings of failure." What he claims is that while the Eastern Cape has been central to much of the scholarship presented in the seminar and in this volume - from Witz & Minkley's *imbongi*, to Rassool's *Tabata*, to Lalu's *Hintsa* - language is the absentee. Ribeiro suggests that the dismissal of isiXhosa vernacular texts as overdetermined by the colonial archive and relegated to a field of "isiXhosa cultural studies" might have been too hasty. Questions of language, their modes of translation, genres of text and forms of appropriation are, as Richa Negar reminds us, key to "discussion on knowledge production" and the formation of "discursive divides".<sup>72</sup> Language might be the subaltern of the seminar space at large.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

PAOLO: To conclude we should reflect on the relevance of the material we are presenting to contemporary historiographical debates. I would like to frame the question as a contradiction. On the one hand, the move towards the edge of history that many of the papers pursue is also a move away from the discipline's core ideology: the belief in progress. When history is diffracted, multiplied, delocalised, so are its claims to objectively represent linear progressive sequences; when contestations over the past are foregrounded over objective historical process, the horizon shifts -

perhaps shrinks - from the future to the present.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, the epistemological restlessness that animates this collection could also be read as a figure of the modernist impulse to “make it new”. The “horizon of expectation” is not closed: it shifts from the plan of action to that of thought. Presentism and modernism contradict and complement each other. It is, I think, from within this tension that we should address the significance of the collection in relation to South African historiography.

LESLIE: One of the initial points on the trajectory that we have outlined was that we situated the publication of the seminar papers in relation to pessimism about the discipline of history in South Africa in the 1990s. Yet by the time *Out of History* is going to press such gloom seems to have dissipated. Instead there has emerged the ultimate celebration of South African historiography in the signature of the two-volume *Cambridge History of South Africa* published in 2009 and 2011.<sup>74</sup> Across the two volumes there are a variety of historiographical approaches in the essays by different authors, although if one was to return to the formulations of Munslow and Jenkins they could largely be characterised as operating in a constructivist historical literary genre.

In the respective introductions to the two volumes though there are distinctly different historiographical grounds set in place. Volume 1, subtitled *From Early Times to 1885* seeks to situate the chapters on the precolonial and early colonial past in a discussion around David William Cohen’s ideas of the production of history, looking at the ways that the discipline and the archive are constituted and reconstituted.<sup>75</sup> The aim is not to claim a new historiography for the period it is covering – the first line of the introduction asserts that this is not yet in place – but to employ these formulations to open up a set of questions, “new horizons of research concerning the production of knowledge” around different forms and practices of history-making.<sup>76</sup> Such an approach resonates with more provocative claims being made at UWC for a new historiography around “making history” that we referred to earlier. If the introduction to Volume 1 anticipates a new set of questions, Volume 2, dealing with 1885 to 1994, is explicitly located by its editors in writings from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where it is asserted “the history of South Africa became a vibrant and innovative field of international historical scholarship.” The editors represent the volume as a “culmination of several decades of scholarship on the history of South Africa in the twentieth century, above all, that produced by so-called radical or revisionist historians and their successors since about 1970.” One of the major claims that the editors of volume 2 make to strength of practice though is not that of theoretical articulation but of “increasing the basic empiricism of the historiography.”<sup>77</sup>



While the editors of volume 1 of the *Cambridge History* attempt to be more tentative and “humble” in their historiographical claims,<sup>78</sup> and the introduction to volume 2 disavows a “master narrative”,<sup>79</sup> reviewers have tended to emphasise the monumentality of the volumes. “This is a big book. It is magisterial; it is sophisticated; it has gravitas,” writes Gordon Pirie of volume 1. Helena Pohlandt-McCormick describes the *Cambridge History* as “substantial and dense,” “authoritative, coherent and comprehensive,” “a grand gesture of authority for the discipline.”<sup>80</sup> Sparks sees the volumes as bringing together the intensive and sophisticated revisionist scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s. He welcomes them as containing and synthesising the work of “giants” of historical scholarship in South Africa.<sup>81</sup> As both celebration and critique it is grandeur, synthesis and authority that characterise these readings of the *Cambridge History*.

But beyond the introductions and the appearance of the monumental, trying to situate the *Cambridge History* historiographically, as Breckenridge points out, is difficult. He maintains that the project, especially volume 2, appears to be “a history of the making of the most unequal society”, written around the emergence of poverty and resistance. All the reader is offered, he asserts, are “repetitive, overlapping and book-length chapters documenting the machine of exploitation, mostly hinged to simplified accounts of the history of the mining industry and the making of the segregationist and Apartheid states.”<sup>82</sup> Pohlandt-McCormick is more concerned to identify historiographical lacunae where the decision to use 1994 as an historiographical cut-off point effectively by-passes challenges to the discipline of history over the meanings and implications of postapartheid theory and practice. She is unable to identify substantive theoretical engagement with postcolonial theory and all that seems to tie the chapters together are an assertion of chronological temporality.<sup>83</sup> Even Sparks who is generally complimentary of *the Cambridge History* bemoans a “general lack of explicit engagement in larger theoretical debates.”<sup>84</sup> If a core can be identified in any way it is around an engagement by most of contributions in Volume 2 with radical history scholarship of the 1980s.<sup>85</sup>

*Out of History* differs from the *Cambridge History* in several respects. Most notably much of the historiography it draws upon is post-1994. Secondly it does not provide an overview of an historical period but works around entanglements of times. Finally and most importantly the essays are deliberately selected because they were new, challenging and were nearly always heavily disputed. Much like the tone of the seminar itself our volume seeks out the contestations in the scholarship and presents the chapters as a series of provocations. What the claims to newness in the seminar and this book speak to rather is an insularity and a retreat into disciplinary modalities.



JUNG RAN: By reflecting upon how the seminar space at the University of the Western Cape shaped new ways of doing history, this collection of papers surprisingly anticipates many of the contemporary debates and fields of enquiry that are emerging in the humanities: visual history, public history, heritage disciplines, linguistics and postcolonial studies. Through offering a critique of nationalist narratives, the chapters explore the limits of historical representations, providing new paths to rethink memory, the archive, and creative writing. In focusing on heritage, the visual, the remembering of the past and the politics of translation, the authors offer a powerful rethinking of disciplinary methodologies and the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Finally, the deepest desire underlying these rich contributions is not only to give readers a sense of the larger dialogues that these papers have generated in the seminar room and beyond. We would like to invite readers to become part of the very same seminar proceedings, to bring to the table their own perspectives, questions, disagreements, suggestions and new lines of enquiry that constantly moves us *Out of History*.

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<sup>1</sup> Latour, Bruno “Concluding Remarks: How to Inherit the Past at Best,” in (eds) (2010) Pasquale Gagliardi, Bruno Latour & Pedro Memelsdorf *Coping with the Past: Creative Perspectives on Conservation and Restoration* Florence: Olschki, Leo, S: 182–185.

<sup>2</sup> There are several examples we could cite but the most obvious are the collections that emanated from the University of the Witwatersrand’s History Workshop conference. See Bozzoli, Belinda (ed) (1979) *Labour, Townships and Protest* Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Bozzoli, Belinda (ed) (1984); *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Bozzoli, Belinda (ed) (1987) *Class, Community and Conflict* Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Bonner, Phil, Hofmeyr, Isabel, James, Deborah & Lodge, Tom (eds), *Holding Their Ground Class, Locality and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century South Africa* Johannesburg: Wits University Press & Ravan Press.

<sup>3</sup> See Witz, Leslie, Rassool, Ciraj & Minkley, Gary “Who Speaks for South African Pasts,” paper presented at the South African Historical Society Conference, “Secrets, Lies and History,” University of the Western Cape, July 1999; Witz, Leslie & Rassool, Ciraj (2008) Making Histories, *Kronos*, **34**.

<sup>4</sup> The sociology of knowledge of contemporary African institutions in the humanities is still very much a burgeoning field. See amongst others Fernandes, Carlos (2013) History Writing and State Legitimation in Postcolonial Mozambique: The Case of the History Workshop, Centre for African Studies, 1980–1986, in *Kronos*, **39** (1); Mkandawire, Thankdika (1997) “The Social Sciences in Africa: Breaking Local Barriers and Negotiating International Presence,” *African Studies Review*, **40** (2): 15–36; Morakinyo, Olusegun (2012) “A Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), 1997–2009,” PhD, UWC, See also, Lalu, Premesh & Murray, Noëleen “Introduction” to Premesh Lalu and Noëleen Murray (eds) (2012) *Becoming UWC* Bellville: UWC: 13–21, for a discussion on how one might approach such an analysis of the university and its disciplines more broadly. The potentialities of a Latourian approach to the production of knowledge to this field have still to be explored.

<sup>5</sup> For a poignant application to historiography of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s idea of overlapping threads that keep together a rope - a “polythetic series” - see Ginzburg, Carol (2012) *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive* Berkeley, University of California Press: 316. For a critical discussion, see the following review by Anderson, P (2012) “The Force of the Anomaly,” *London Review of Books*, **34** (8): 3–13.

<sup>6</sup> It should not be necessary to defend the use of dialogue in the humanities, despite the prevalence of the monologic essay form in the past few centuries. Bakhtin’s dialogism presents the major shortcoming of a disconnection between theory and practice, see Bakhtin, Mikhail (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination* Austin: Texas University Press. The most convincing recent argument in favour of dialogue which also embraces dialogue as writing practice is Tedlock, D & Mannheim, B (1995) *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* University of Illinois Press. A particularly accomplished experiment with the dialogic form in scholarly writing is Grignon, C & Passeron, J-C (1995) *Le Savant and Le Populaire: Miserabilisme and Populisme en Sociologie et Littérature*. Paris: Le Seuil. For a creative and at the same time rigorous use in African Studies, see the imaginary dialogue between Kama and Gama in Alexis Kagame’s dissertation (1956) *La philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l’être* Bruxelles: Académie Royale des Sciences d’Outre-Mer. Closer to home see Brown, Duncan & Krog, Antjie (2011) “Creative Non-fiction: A Conversation,” *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, **23** (1): 57–70, which was originally presented at the UWC seminar on 1 March 2011, see <http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2011/02/25/antjie-krog-jonny-steinberg-and-duncan-brown-in-conversation-on-creative-non-fiction/>, accessed 16 November 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Centre for Humanities Research Report 2006, compiled by Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Witz & Rassool, “Making Histories;” Witz, Leslie “Museums, Histories and the Dilemmas of Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, University of Michigan, Working Papers in Museum Studies, 3, [http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/77459/1/3\\_witz\\_2010.pdf](http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/77459/1/3_witz_2010.pdf); Witz, Leslie, “From *Write Your Own History* to Heritage Formation in South Africa after Apartheid: Producing Oral Histories as Intangible,” Association of Critical Heritage Studies Conference, Canberra, 2–4 December 2014.

<sup>9</sup> See Witz, Leslie “Contested Histories at the End/s of Apartheid,” in Zewde, B (ed) (2008) *Society, State and Identity in African History* Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.

<sup>10</sup> Programme in Agrarian Studies, “Frequently Asked Questions,” <http://www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/real/faq.html>, accessed 30 August 2012.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that there is some dispute as to where the format of the seminar emerged from. At the Out of History Workshop (see further), Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie indicated that it was borrowed from the Southern African Research Programme seminar, also at Yale; while Andrew Bank traced a link between the seminar format and the methodology of lecture-debates that were introduced into the History 1 courses at UWC in 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Nash, Andrew (1999) “Dilemmas of the Left Academy: A Report on the 1998 Socialist Scholars Conference,” *African Sociological Review* **3** (1): 168–69.

<sup>13</sup> This distinction between different types of trajectories draws on Bennett, Tony (2007) *Critical Trajectories: Culture, Society, Intellectuals* Oxford: Blackwell.

- <sup>14</sup> An invitation from the History Department's South African and Contemporary History Seminar, 21 February 2005.
- <sup>15</sup> Witz, Leslie & Rassool, Ciraj "Proposal for the establishment of a Centre for Humanities Research at UWC," 1 March 2006.
- <sup>16</sup> Legassick, Martin "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography," in Marks, Shula & Atmore, Antony (1981) *Economy and Society in Pre-industrial South Africa* London: Longman: 79.
- <sup>17</sup> Wright, Harrison (1977) *The Burden of the Present* Cape Town: David Philip: 13 & 62.
- <sup>18</sup> Etherington, Norman (1996) "Post-Mo and SA History," *Southern African Review of Books*, **44**:10
- <sup>19</sup> Stolten, Hans Erik (ed) (2007) *History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. For two critical reviews see Witz, Leslie (December 2008) "Review of Hans Erik Stolten (ed) *History Making*," *African Studies Review*, **51** (3): 186–88; du Toit, Andre (2010) "The Owl of Minerva and the Ironic Fate of the Progressive Praxis of Radical Historiography in Post-apartheid South Africa," *Kronos*, **36**, November: 252–65.
- <sup>20</sup> Bundy in his presentation cited Rassool, C (2010) "Power, Knowledge and the Politics of Public Pasts," *African Studies*, **69** (1): 79–101, 80 as a "recent, eloquent statement of the work of UWC historians."
- <sup>21</sup> Bundy, Colin "Out of History: A View from the UWC Diaspora," presentation at the Out of History Workshop, UWC, 17 September 2010. For a report on the workshop see Weintroub, Jill "Doing History Differently?," *Mail and Guardian*, 5 November 2010, <http://mg.co.za/article/2010-11-05-doing-history-differently>, accessed on 19 June 2014.
- <sup>22</sup> Mesthrie, Uma "Out of History Colloquium", presentation at the Out of History Workshop, UWC, 17 September 2010.
- <sup>23</sup> Bundy "Out of History".
- <sup>24</sup> Some papers were later excluded because of their length or replaced with alternates by the same authors. See Lalu, Premesh (2005) "Campus: A Discourse on the Grounds of an Apartheid University"; Hayes, Patricia (2006) "Omar Badsha's Photographic Narratives: Politics and the Everyday in South Africa, 1970s–80s"; Legassick, Martin (1998) *The Peopling of Riemvasmaak and the Marengo Rebellion*.
- <sup>25</sup> See Charrier, Roger (1997) *On the Edge of the Cliff* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 1.
- <sup>26</sup> This chapter was presented at the seminar.
- <sup>27</sup> Lalu, Premesh (2008) "When was South African History ever Postcolonial?" in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, **34**: 267–81.
- <sup>28</sup> See amongst others Dewald, J (2006) *Lost Worlds: The Emergence of French Social History, 1815–1970* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press & Dosse, F (1987) *L'Histoire en miettes: Des Annales à la nouvelle histoire* Paris: La Découverte.
- <sup>29</sup> Cohn, B (1990) "History and Anthropology: The State of Play," in Cohn, Bernard (1990) *An Anthropologist Amongst the Historians and Other Essays* Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks: 39.
- <sup>30</sup> Bank, A (1997) "The Great Debate and the Origins of South African Historiography," *Journal of African History*, **38** (2): 261–81.
- <sup>31</sup> See Bozzoli, Belinda & Delius, Peter "Radical History and South African History," in Brown, Josh *et al* (eds) (1991) *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices* Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 3–25, for an account of this emergence from the vantage point of social history. See also the debates around issues of structure and agency and the nature of agrarian transformation in South Africa. Morris, M (1987) "Social History and the Transition to Capitalism in the South African Countryside," *Africa Perspective*, **1**: 5–6; Keegan, T (1989) "Mike Morris and the Social Historians: A Response and a Critique," *Africa Perspective*, **1**: 7/8; Bradford, Helen "Highways, Byways, and Culs-de-Sac: The Transition to Agrarian Capitalism in Revisionist South African History," in Brown *et al* (eds) *History from South Africa*: 39–58.
- <sup>32</sup> For one of the most explicit critiques of determinism see Bozzoli, Belinda (1983) "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, **9**(2): 139–71.
- <sup>33</sup> For a straightforward rendering of this stagist narrative, see Cobley, A (2001) "Does Social History have a Future? The Ending of Apartheid and Recent Trends in South African Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, **27** (3): 613–625.
- <sup>34</sup> Within Marxist historiography in the 1980s there were constant debates around the form, content and methodologies of social history, with accusations and rebuttals around the abandonment of theoretical approaches. See for example Colin Bundy, Keynote address, "Marxism in South Africa—Past, Present, & Future" conference, CVET video production on a seminar at the University of the Western Cape on the past, present, and future of Marxism in South Africa, <http://www.cvet.org.za/displayvideo.php?vid=2D-F5-31>, accessed 1 July 2014. We are grateful to Ciraj Rassool for this reference. Debates such as this were not a major feature of the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar at UWC.
- <sup>35</sup> Witz, Leslie (1988) *Write your Own History* Johannesburg: Sached/Ravan. This book tried to take this further by asserting working class and other communities as potential producers of history.
- <sup>36</sup> For summaries of anthropology's rapprochements to history see Sahlins, Marshall (1993) "Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History," *The Journal of Modern History*, **65** (1): 6.

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<sup>37</sup> The most accomplished demonstration of the pre-eminence of meaning over fact is the final chapter of Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1966) *The Savage Mind* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>38</sup> For the two debates see respectively Newbury, D (2007) "Contradictions at the Heart of the Canon: Jan Vansina and the Debate over Oral Historiography in Africa, 1960–1985," *History in Africa*, 34: 213–254; & Hamilton, Carolyn "Living by Fluidity": Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving," in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Michèle Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh & Jane Taylor (eds) (2002) *Refiguring the Archive* Cape Town: David Philip: 209–228.

<sup>39</sup> See Carlo Ginzburg's introduction to *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller* (first published in 1976) & Cirese, AM (1973) *Cultura Egemonicae Culture Subalterne* Palermo: Palumbe.

<sup>40</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that while Luise White's ground-breaking *Speaking with Vampires Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* makes no reference to Marc Bloch's *The Royal Touch* (1924), in the light of Carlo Ginzburg's remark that "[n]aturally, after Marc Bloch (*Les rois thaumaturges*) & Georges Lefebvre (*La grande peur de 1789*), no one will think it useless to study false legends, false events, or false documents, but it is indispensable to take a preliminary stand, on each occasion, about their falsity or authenticity," *Threads and Traces*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> See Denis, Phillippe & Radikobo, Ntsimane (eds) (2008) *Oral History in a Wounded Country* Durban: UKZN Press.

<sup>42</sup> Minkley, Gary & Rassool, Ciraj "Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa," in Nuttall, S & Coetzee C (eds) (1988) *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

<sup>43</sup> Bickford-Smith, Vivian, Field, Sean & Glaser, Clive (2001) "The Western Cape Oral History Project: The 1990s," *African Studies*, 60 (1): 5–23.

<sup>44</sup> Hayes, Patricia & Bank, Andrew (2001) "Introduction" to *Kronos Special Issue: Visual History*, 27 (7). Emphasis is in the original.

<sup>45</sup> Rassool, Ciraj (2004) "The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa," PhD thesis, UWC: 248 & 254.

<sup>46</sup> Rassool, Ciraj (2010) "Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography," *South African Review of Sociology*, 41 (1): 28–55. Rassool's assertions in this article led to an animated debate with Jonathan Hyslop over the nature and form of biographic productions. Following a similar trajectory to the debate over oral history, Hyslop asserts biography as an important tool that enables the showing of the intricacies of lives and contexts, while Rassool's concern is how lives are made into coherent narratives through codified biographic interventions. See Hyslop, Jonathan "On Biography: A Response to Ciraj Rassool," *South African Review of Sociology*, 41 (2): 104–115; Rassool, Ciraj (2010) "The Challenges of Rethinking South African Political Biography: A Reply to Jonathan Hyslop," *South African Review of Sociology*, 41 (2): 116–120.

<sup>47</sup> Mokoena, Hlonipha (2011) *Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* Durban: UKZN Press.

<sup>48</sup> Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Uma (2009) "Producing Biographical Knowledge about Indians in the Cape: The State, the Archives and the Historian," Inaugural Lecture, University of the Western Cape, 10 September 2009: 20.

<sup>49</sup> The most substantial conceptual intervention which opened up a space to rethink history as writing and narrative were Hayden White's tropology and Michel de Certeau's *The Writing of History*. Most influential on historiography at UWC were David William Cohen's ideas on history as production and Tony Bennet's conceptualisation of the museum as a disciplinary institution.

<sup>50</sup> This is most clearly articulated in Lalu & Murray, "Introduction,": 13–21; & Grunebaum, Heidi (2011) *Memorializing the Past: Everyday Life in South Africa after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Boston: Transaction.

<sup>51</sup> The Subaltern Studies Collective was animated by the very same disquiet. See Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2002) "A Short History of Subaltern Studies," in Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2002) *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

<sup>52</sup> On "usable pasts" see Bogumil Jewsiewicki's monumental review article (1989) "African Historical Studies Academic Knowledge as "Usable Past" and Radical Scholarship," *African Studies Review*, 32 (3): 1–76. Dhupelia-Mesthrie's chapter evades this rule by excess, as it were, insofar as it lent itself to usability against the State, by the people of Black River. See her reflexive note in this collection.

<sup>53</sup> Agamben, Giorgio "What is a Paradigm?" Lecture at European Graduate School, August 2002, <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/giorgio-agamben/articles/what-is-a-paradigm/>, accessed 19 June 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Derrida, Jacques (1981) *Dissemination* London: The Athlone Press: 95–116.

<sup>55</sup> It is topologically revealing that theoretical claims against agency builds on the trope of the prison break—if anything the master metaphor of free will from Plato onwards, and one particularly resonant with South African historical experience. The centrality of the prison conceptual metaphor in structuralism has been identified by Jameson, F (1995) in *The Prison-House of Language* Princeton: Princeton University Press.



- <sup>56</sup> Jenkins, Keith & Munslow, Alan (2004) "Introduction" to Keith Jenkins & Alan Munslow (eds) *The Nature of History Reader* London, Routledge: 4–17. We are grateful to Gary Minkley for pointing us to this reference.
- <sup>57</sup> In so doing she addresses, perhaps unwittingly, the challenge of free direct discourse launched by Stendhal at historians, see Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces*: 150.
- <sup>58</sup> Kuper, Adam (1999) *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* Harvard University Press.
- <sup>59</sup> Bank, Andrew (2013) *Inside African Anthropology. Monica Wilson and her Interpreters* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Kuper, Adam (1996) (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School* London: Routledge.
- <sup>60</sup> Comaroff, Jean (1985) *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* Chicago: University of Chicago Press Comaroff, John L & Comaroff, Jean (1992) *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* Westview Press, Boulder Colorado.
- <sup>61</sup> Bozzoli, Belinda "Class, Community and Ideology in the Evolution of South African Society," in Bozzoli (ed), *Class, Community and Conflict*, 1–2.
- <sup>62</sup> Breckenridge, K (2004) "Promiscuous Method: The Historiographical Effects of the Search for the Rural Origins of the Urban Working Class in South Africa," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, **65** (Spring): 28, cited in Sparks, Stephen (2013) "New Turks and Old Turks: The Historiographical Legacies of South African Social History," Review Article, *Historia*, **58** (1): 219.
- <sup>63</sup> Sahlins, M (1993) "Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History," *The Journal of Modern History*, **65** (1).
- <sup>64</sup> Qadri, Ismail, "Reading the Itinerary of Culture in the Modern Anglo–US Episteme," presented at the South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar, 2 August 2011.
- <sup>65</sup> For two outstanding examples of scholarship engaged in this recuperation, see Sartori, Andrew (2008) *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* Chicago and London: Chicago University Press & Glassman, Jonathon (2011) *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- <sup>66</sup> Ribeiro's argument here echoes Karin Barber's seminal intervention, Barber, K (1995) "African-Language Literature and Postcolonial Criticism," *Research in African Literatures*, **26** (4): 3–30.
- <sup>67</sup> This is a theme Ribeiro has explored in greater depth elsewhere, see Ribeiro, Fernando Rosa (2013) "The Demonstrative Copulative or Can that Lady Cook: African Languages, Authoritarianism and Servility," *Social Dynamics*, 39, 3 1–14.
- <sup>68</sup> See Auroux, Sylvain (1994) *La révolution technologique de la grammatisation* Paris: Mardaga. Auroux's concept of grammatisation has recently been borrowed and expanded by Bernard Stiegler.
- <sup>69</sup> Cobbing, Julian (1988) "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolombo," *Journal of African History*, 29 (3): 487–519. Hamilton, C (ed) (1995) *The Mfecane Aftermath* Johannesburg, Wits University Press; Lalu, Premesh (2009) *The Deaths of Hints: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Past* Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- <sup>70</sup> Lalu, Premesh (2011) "Thinking Ahead!" *South African Historical Journal*, 63 (4): 581–593. See also Rutledge, Brian (2011) "Premesh Lalu's Post-colonial Push: Is it Time to Dismantle the Discipline?" *South African Historical Journal*, **63** (1): 148–167; Sitze, Adam (2012) "Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hints: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Past*," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, **13** (2): 171–180.
- <sup>71</sup> Mokoena, Hlonipha (February 2011) "Frontier Remix," *History and Theory*, 50: 118.
- <sup>72</sup> Nagar, Richa (2006) "Postscript: NGOs, Global Feminisms, and Collaborative Border Crossings," in Sangtin Writers & Richa Nagar, *Playing with Fire* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 152.
- <sup>73</sup> See Hartog, François (2015) *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* New York: Columbia University Press, which builds on Reinhart Koselleck's ideas of temporality as composed by a "horizon of expectation" and a "space of experience."
- <sup>74</sup> Hamilton, Carolyn, Mbenga Bernard K & Ross, Robert (eds) (2009) *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume I: From Early Times to 1885* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ross, R, Mager, A & Nason, B (eds) (2011) *Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume 2, 1885–1994* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Pohlandt-McCormick, Helena (2012) "The Cambridge History of South Africa: We Live in Tragic Times," *African Studies Review*, **55**( 3): 179.
- <sup>75</sup> Cohen, David (1994) *The Combining of History* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>76</sup> Hamilton, Carolyn, Mbenga, Bernard & Ross, Robert "The Production of Preindustrial South African History," in Hamilton et al. (eds) *Cambridge History Volume I*: 1–3.
- <sup>77</sup> Ross, R, Kelk Mager, A & Nason, B "Introduction," in Ross et al. (eds) *Cambridge History, Volume 2*: 1, 12.
- <sup>78</sup> Wylie, Diana (2011) "Review of Carolyn Hamilton, Bernard K. Mbenga & Robert Ross, "The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 1: 'From Early Times to 1885'" , *Africa*, 81: 678–679.
- <sup>79</sup> Ross et al., "Introduction", 2.
- <sup>80</sup> Pohlandt-McCormick, "We Live in Tragic Times": 179.
- <sup>81</sup> Sparks, "New Turks and Old Turks": 238.

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<sup>82</sup> Breckenridge, Keith “Review: *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume 2: 1885 to 1994* (eds) (2014) Ross, R, Kelk Mager, A & Nasson, B,” *South African Historical Journal* **66 (4)**: 722.

<sup>83</sup> Pohlandt-McCormick, “We Live in Tragic Times”: 179–184.

<sup>84</sup> Sparks, “New Turks”: 236.

<sup>85</sup> Sparks, “New Turks”: 238; Gordon, David (2012) “Review: *The Cambridge History of South Africa: Volume 2, 1885–1994* (eds) Ross, R, Mager, A & Nasson, B *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 45 **(3)**: 463.