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‘Timelessness and Timeliness’:

Despotic Leadership, the (In)ability to Govern and Changing Perspectives in African Literature Today¹

‘Africa’

Africa tell me Africa
Is this you this back that is bent
This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation
This trembling back trembling with red scars
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun
But a grave voice answers me
Impetuous son, that tree young and strong
That tree there
In splendid loneliness amidst white and faded flowers
That is Africa your Africa that grows patiently obstinately
And its fruit gradually acquire
The bitter taste of liberty.

David Diop, 1950

‘There will be a better time’

if we be the most of us
and the most of us is the will
the will to say no!
when the most of us will create a better time
there will be a better time
when time runs out for liars
those who take and take and take from others, take
forever!
...
there will be a better time made by us

Mongane Wally Serote, 1982

Anthills of the Savannah

So the arrogant fool who sits astride a story as though it is a bowl of foo-foo set before him by his wife understands little about the world. The story will roll him into a ball, dip him in the soup and swallow him first. I tell you he is like the puppy who swings himself around and farts into a blazing fire with the aim to put it out. Can he? No, the story is everlasting ... Like fire, when it is not blazing it is smouldering under its own ashes or sleeping and resting inside its flint-house.

Chinua Achebe, 1987

¹ In Memory of Papa and Mma Raditlhalo

The

I

The idea of the collegiate that evolves as the university is as old as the very oldest universities from the 12th century onwards. The establishment of Cambridge University on the banks of the Cam River around 1209 by Masters such as Master John Blund, Master John Grim and Bishop Ely, who founded Peterhouse, the first College, in 1284. This knowledge brings about an interesting reading of institutional longevity, ethical, visionary leadership and the idea of why some institutions and organizations endure. Indeed, in her essay on Cambridge in general, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Alison Richard comments rather quaintly that:

The University does not see into the future. It flourishes by holding fast to certain values, while helping shape and adapting to the world around it. Such is my view of the *simultaneous timelessness and timeliness of University life* (2008, 329; e.a.).

The scholars who started the institution surely were guided by principles of probity, honesty, integrity and moral authority garnered over years of unflinching service to humanity. It is such values that, perhaps naively, we have assumed are the necessary in anyone who serves a university, but with such a remove of time, perhaps the hope of rectitude in those that serve an institution is misplaced. For now we have service to the university as a career option, not a calling it was for Masters John Blund and Grim and certainly not Bishop Ely. The contention of this lecture is that ethical leadership is the basis on which a university may be led, and if we trust in the goodness of ethical leadership then we hopefully shall see the longevity of the South African universities.

The question of *ethical leadership* is that has been investigated by scholars who have contrasted this with *despotic leadership* (Hoogh & Hartog, 2008; Kanungo, 2001). There is, as common sense has it, a direct causal link between ethical leadership and organisational effectiveness, just as there will be a link between despotic leadership and organizational ineffectiveness. Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005, 5) define ethical leadership as 'the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making.' Brown et al. (2005) describe ethical leaders as honest, trustworthy, and caring. Such leaders make principled and fair choices and structure work environments justly. Hoogh and Hartog (2008, 298) distinguish morality and fairness, ethical role clarification and power sharing as components of ethical leadership at work. These scholars begin to unpack the leader's social responsibility as being a key component of how they respond to the

challenges of their position. Social responsibility is here defined as a leader's moral-legal standard of conduct, internal obligation, concern for others, concern about the consequences, and self-judgement (Hoogh & Hartog 2008, 299; see Fig 1). Despotic leaders, on the other hand, go to the extreme of the above. Hoogh and Hartog (2008, 299 and 301) note that:

... [D]espotic leaders are described as having little regard for others and not concerned with behaving in socially constructive ways. Thus, they are not expected to feel a stronger inner obligation to do the right thing and will likely score low on moral standards. Further, they are likely to be more insensitive to follower needs, and thus will likely score low on concern for others. In addition, they are exploitative and self-absorbing, which implies that they are likely to be low on self-judgement and to have relatively little concern about the consequences of their behaviour.

Further:

... [D]espotic leadership is not expected to harm followers' optimism regarding the future. These followers are more likely to be fearful of their position in the organization. They may perceive that they themselves or those around them are being treated unfairly or exploited by their leader and experience the organization as a more hostile environment, resulting in the desire to leave and a less positive and optimistic feeling about their organization and the work environment it provides.

An added twist to the phenomenon of the despotic leader is termed the 'toxic triangle' in which the despot has a conducive environment in which they operate as freely as possible and with followers who become mini-leaders in copying the traits of the leader. If leaders, in combination with followers and contexts, harm constituents or damage organizations, then destructive leadership has occurred (Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser 2007, 178). For Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, destructive leadership may also be defined

[W]ith reference to its principal direction or target: toward oneself (personal destructiveness) or toward the organization and its internal members and stakeholders. Personal destructiveness can be seen as the undesirable things that leaders bring upon themselves – reprimands, criminal records, or tarnished reputations. Personal destructiveness involves harmful consequences experienced by the self; the most common form might be derailment – being fired, demoted, or otherwise failing to progress in one's career (Bentz, 1985; Leslie and Van Velsor, 1996; McCall and Lombardo, 1983). Organizational destructiveness occurs when leaders bring misfortune to their followers, including internal and external stakeholders, and social institutions (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005; Kaiser and Hogan, 2007). This could be a demoralised work force, environmental disasters, *countries driven to poverty*.

Further, Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser (2007, 179) identify five traits of destructive leadership which describe what destructive leadership is and that the toxic triangle identifies the leader, follower and environmental factors that make it possible (see Table 1).² The toxic triangle that they

² Table 1

postulate comes through with five critical factors: charisma, personalized use of power, narcissism, negative life themes, and an ideology of hate (see Figure 1):

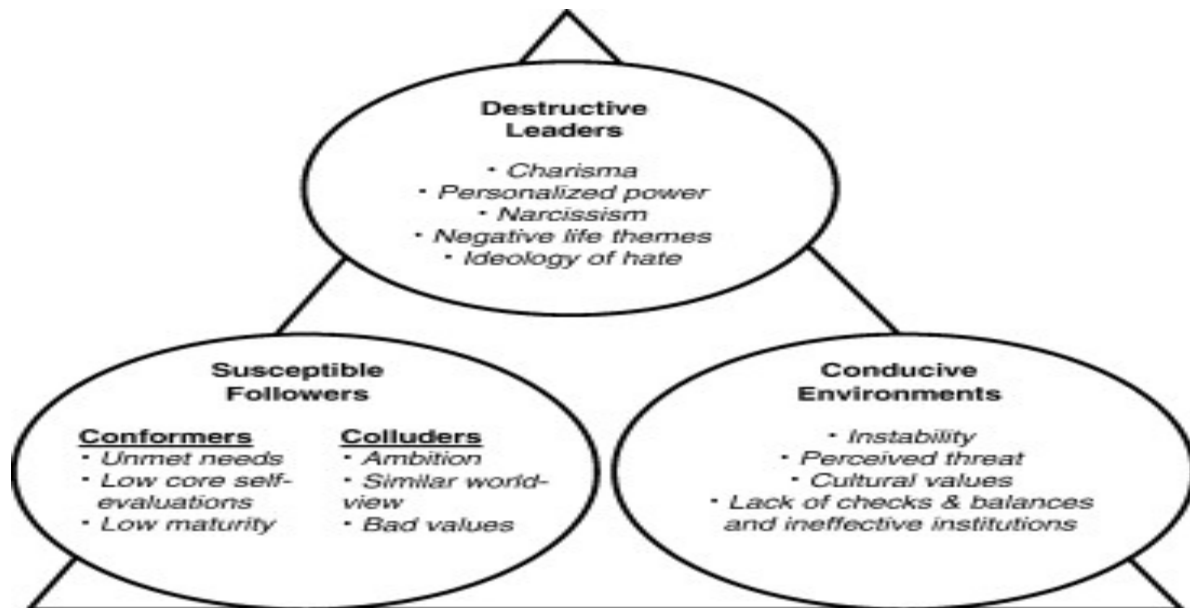


Fig. 1. The toxic triangle in three domains related to destructive leadership.

What the figure shows are the three domains that make the toxic triangle possible: leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. In a destructive/despotic leader, charisma, narcissism, a personal approach to dispensing of power and the ideology of hate generally are seen as *sine qua non*. The followers are usually categorized as conformers and colluders, while the environment that lacks proper checks and balances and is characterized by instability provides fertile grounds for the destructive leader to thrive. But by far, it is the ideology of hate that motivates the destructive/despotic leader to wreck havoc on those identified as ‘the enemy’. Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser (2007, 182) note that:

A comparison of destructive and constructive leaders suggests that the rhetoric, vision and worldview of destructive leaders contain images of hate – vanquishing rivals and destroying despised enemies. The anti-semitic fomentations of Hitler and Foday Sankoh’s hatred of the urban elite of Sierra Leone contrast sharply with Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream of racial equality and Gandhi’s model of passive resistance...Whatever the source of the anger and resentment, hate is a key component of the worldview of destructive leadership and it legitimizes the use of violence and retribution (Strange and Mumford, 2002).

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1. Destructive leadership is seldom absolutely or entirely destructive: there are both good and bad results in most leadership situations.
 2. The process of destructive leadership involves dominance, coercion, and manipulation rather than influence, persuasion, and commitment.
 3. The process of destructive leadership has a selfish orientation; it is focused more on the leader's needs than the needs of the larger social group.
 4. The effects of destructive leadership are outcomes that compromise the quality of life for constituents and detract from the organization's main purposes.
 5. Destructive organizational outcomes are not exclusively the result of destructive leaders, but are also products of susceptible followers and conducive environments.
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This mode of theorising is of course similar to that advanced by Richard Hofstadter (1964) in his famous essay published in *Harper's Magazine*, 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics' in which he notes that: '[T]he paranoid style has a greater affinity for bad than good.' (77). In a paranoid, destructive leader, the enemy looms large and

...is clearly defined: he is a perfect model of malice, a kind of amoral superman – sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury loving. Unlike the rest of us, the enemy is not caught in the toils of the vast mechanism of history, himself a victim of his past, his desires, his limitations...He makes crises, starts runs on banks, causes depressions, manufactures disasters, and then enjoys and profits from the misery he has produced. The paranoid's interpretation of history is distinctly personal: decisive events of history are not taken as part of the stream of history, but as the consequences of someone's will. Very often the enemy is held to possess some especially effective source of power: he controls the press; he has unlimited funds; he has a new secret for influencing the mind (brainwashing); he has a special technique for seduction (the Catholic confessional) (1964, 85).

A disturbing and overlapping aspect of destructive/despotic leadership that has now acquired medical overtones is known as the 'hubris syndrome', which is analysed at length by David Owen and Jonathan Davidson as 'an acquired personality disorder' (2009). Two key questions they pose in their article is: 'How can we usefully think about a leader who hubristically abuses power, damaging the lives of others?' and 'Can neuroscientists go further and discover through brain imaging and other techniques more about the presentations of abnormal personality?' (2009, 1396). Owen and Davidson point out that:

The key concept is that hubris syndrome is a disorder of the possession of power, particularly power which has been associated with overwhelming success, held for a period of years and with minimal constraint on the leader ... the full blown hubris, associated with holding considerable power in high office, may or may not be transient ((2009, 1397).

Owen and Davidson go further to point out that:

Hubris syndrome was formulated as a pattern of behaviour in a person who: (i) sees the world as a place for self-gratification through the use of power; (ii) has a tendency to take action primarily to enhance personal image; (iii) shows disproportionate concern for image and presentation; (iv) exhibits messianic zeal and exaltation in speech; (v) conflates self with nation or organization; (vi) uses the royal 'we' in conversation; (vii) manifestly has contempt for others; (viii) shows excessive self-confidence; (ix) shows accountability only to a higher court (history or God); (x) displays unshakeable belief that they will be vindicated in that court; (xi) loses contact with reality; (xii) resorts to restlessness, recklessness, and impulsive actions; (xiii) allows moral rectitude to obviate consideration of practicality, cost or outcome; and, (xiv) displays incompetence with disregard for nuts and bolts of policy making (2009, 1938).

These are actions and behaviours that Owen and Davidson use to determine which of the United Kingdom and the United States of America leaders had the hubris syndrome, ranging from John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, George W. Bush, Lloyd George, Neville Chamberlain, Margaret

Thatcher and so forth. It is a rather sobering study, particularly when these actions are seen against the use of prescription drugs and alcohol. They do add a caveat that there is always the risk of unprovable speculation, and that psychiatry is on firmer ground if it remains focused on observable facts from reputable sources (2009, 1405).

II

‘..a democratic dictatorship of mediocrity...’

(AHS, 160)

It may be that the above discussion has really nothing to do with literature, *per se*, but what is the worth of literary studies if we do not take theory and interpret texts that we read with fresh eyes? Literary scholars, like writers, provide headaches but given that they are also analysts, they ought to be able to project possible solutions. The work of the literary scholar is to make the literary text acquire cultural capital, to go through the crucible of theory without necessarily feeling apologetic about it.

From the inception of modern African Literature, questions of leadership in societies depicted therein have been an almost obsessive preoccupation of writers. The fabled African mode of democracy, with extensive method of consultation and collective decision-making, could not survive the onslaught of a modernising continent, however much one is consistently reminded of this myth.

The first known novel in the English language by an African is of course *Mhudi* (1932?) by Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje. It is a novel of unparalleled beauty and intellectual depth, and among other themes *Mhudi* examines the idea of leadership within the pre-colonial polities of Southern Africa, both democratic and despotic. It is a fine study in how an African writer can domesticate history to *make it mean*, make it become one with the soil from which they spring.

In *Mhudi* the Barolong are overwhelmed by the warlord, Mzilikazi ka Matshobane, who then makes them subjects to his despotic rule. Prior to the arrival of Ka Matshobane, the Barolong were believed to live in a benevolent state covering Central Transvaal to the borders of the Kgalagadi, with their capital known as Khunwana. Plaatje presents a state where there was no real poverty, where there were no real known orphans since the community, and indeed the chief, could intercede when need arose. Mzilikazi's arrival scatters communities to the four winds and in occupying most of their lands makes vassals of them. But his comeuppance is at the hands of his very vassals and the Boers, said to have arrived in the area about 1834. But (and this important to

this paper) when the Boers flee Mzilikazi's army and settle with the Bechuana at Thaba Nchu, they find a people at peace under Chief Moroka, a people with human compassion enough to share their lands, livestock and daily cultural activities with them. It is the Boers who propose an alliance with Moroka's people to unseat the despotic leadership of Mzilikazi and free the land for 'all'³.

We need, at least here, to take cognisance of one factor: Mzilikazi's prophecy that, having been liberated from his yoke, the Bechuana would suffer a worse fate than under his rule, anticipating the despotic tyranny of the Native Lands' Act of 1913 whose effects still bedevil South Africa:

The Bechuana do not know the story of Zungu of old. Remember him, my people: he caught a lion's whelp and thought that, if he fed it milk with the milk of cows, he would in due course possess a useful mastiff to help him in hunting valuable specimens of wild beasts. The cub grew up, apparently tame and meek, just like an ordinary puppy; but one day Zungu came home and found what? It had eaten his children, chweed up his wives, and in destroying it, he himself narrowly escaped being mauled. So, if Tawana and his gang of bringands imagine that they shall have rain and plenty under the protection of these marauding wizards of the sea, they will gather some sense before long 91983[1930]: 174-175).

In Mphahlele's inimitable words on prophecy (1975), this is the voice that embodies African Literature.

In yet another prescient novel, *Ambiguous Adventure (L'aventure ambiguë 1962[1963])*, the Senegalese writer, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, anticipates the era in which rule by consent, probity and justice shall no longer matter. Kane depicts the adventures of Samba Diallo of the aristocratic family, the Diallobes, who have been ruling their country before colonialism arrived. The community had been practising strict Islamic religion, but are aware that the incursion from Europe poses future problems for the society at large, predicated on the need to harness modern education, in particular. This transitional period fills the community with dread, and countless meetings fail to resolve the matter conclusively since the most revered of the spiritual leaders, Thierno, fails to provide guidance and on which the Diallobes depend to chart the future. It is Sambo Diallo's aunt, The Most Royal Lady, who breaks the impasse by making one of the most startling statements ever made in a modern African novel. In a gathering of a mystified community, she sees colonial conquest in a strictly military fashion, and recalling her ancestors' defeat, says:

³ I do not consider Shaka's mode of leadership as it is the subject of Professor Mbongeni Malaba's inaugural of October 2013 at Howard College, UKZN.

Our grandfather, and the élite of the country with him, were defeated. Why? How? Only the newcomers know. We must ask them: *we must go to learn from them the art of conquering without being in the right* (1963, 37; emphasis added).

We might wish to linger awhile over this observation.

For in it lie the very grounds of despotism that has plagued this Continent. Es'kia Mphahlele, in his magisterial essay, 'The Disinherited Imagination' (1993) observes that Sambo Diallo is being encouraged '...that he go to the white man's school to learn how to govern without being right (Es'kia, 2002:17). The sacrifice of all that is good in African ways is thus strongly advocated to the detriment of those who shall be ruled. Hence a society can have firmly grounded institutions such as the National Prosecutions Authority or the Public Protector and other Chapter Nine institutions but still lurch from one anxious moment to the next. Those who have gone to school have learnt to use the power of the courts of law to obfuscate, delay, and defend the indefensible. The elevation of Mr. Hlaudi Motsoeneng as permanent Chief Operations Officer at the South African Broadcasting Cooperation is a particular case in point, signifying an imagination cut from its myths, poetry, dreams, springs, and reveries (after Mphahlele, 17). It is this seeming rewarding of what Njabulo S. Ndebele, in his essay, 'Acts of Transgression', correctly characterises as 'public displays of stupidity' (2007, 225) that has the polity stupefied at how the country's leadership arrives at some of its puzzling decisions.

Who governs South Africa, exactly?

For it increasingly looks like a despotic, narcissistic leadership seeks to outmanoeuvre the very institutions it so lauded at the time of the arrival of freedom. There is no sense at all of establishing firm foundations or values, so that institutions may, realistically, be here 2000 years from today. Indeed, coupled with the anachronistic institution of *bogosi*, it can be devastation.

In his mock-tragic novel, *His Worshipful Majesty* (1973), for instance, T.M. Aluko depicts the meddling strategies of the Alaiye - Oba Olayiwola Adegoke - the renowned ruler of Aiye being one of the kingdoms in the country of Moba. Along with other modernising laws that the newly independent country orchestrates is the Local Government Law which seeks to provide rapid services such as roads, hospitals and water to all constituencies in the polity. The narrative is shown through the eyes of Mr Robert Kale, the secretary to the Alaiye, who has, in line with the times, changed his names around to Kale Roberts, for: 'We styled ourselves the Big Three for the P's - peace, progress and prosperity' (1973, 23), institutionalised in the Aiyeland Improvement League. So Aiye, for all intents and purposes, is progressive and forward-looking.

Under the chairperson of an expatriate, Barrister Morrison, the Improvement League begins to operate first by asking for taxes so the fiscus may grow while meticulous records on expenditure are kept. The Alaiye, however, continuously raids the stores of the community for building materials without, as the Number One citizen, setting a good example of probity and accountability. Only the Works Supervisor is mandated to release such materials provided he received a proper requisition order. It turns out that the Alaiye is not for repairs at his palace, Afin, but for an obviously unbudgeted house in town, and a new courthouse (1973, 41). With an expanded council in order to be more representative of His Worshipful Majesty, the Alaiye hardly bothers to be accountable to the council. Here is where the dilemma begins, for as Morrison observes to Roberts:

You see, I have been re-reading certain sections of the Law. Certain responsibilities are specifically vested in me as Chairman, and in the other Councillors. Your Alaiye really has little to do with the actual running of the Council. He should sit back and busy himself with the performance of the traditional duties of his office. But when he steps out of what is permissible within the Law two issues arise...Firstly, do we discipline him according to the provisions of the Law? But the second issue is this: If by an act of commission or omission on the part of the Councillors, Council funds are lost, then I as Chairman and my Councillors are severally and jointly liable and we would be surcharged by the auditors (1973, 51).

What may be observable here is how the dilemma is created by the Alaiye's carelessness, and the implications thereof. Rural development is compromised in favour of his comfort, his extended family and numerous hangers-on⁴. His autocratic ways continue, he chops and changes the council as he sees fit – shades of many of our current institutional heads, such as the NPA – as well as continues to demand even more and more building material from the store for work not connected with the Council (1973, 91). In such a situation, things end up badly for one side of the contest. His narcissism simply drives the community of Aiye to further poverty till it refuses to pay taxes and he is overthrown.

I wish to drive this point farther.

In an era when Africa experienced persistent coups as a result of a disgruntled citizenry of various countries, the Senegalese novelist Sembene Ousmane penned *The Last of the Empire* (*Le dernier de L'Empire* 1983[1982]) in which, among other themes, he depicts the stupidity of staying for too long in public office, the various faction fights engendered by such longevity in the cabinet, and a restive society desperately poor, unemployed in contrast with the sheer wastage that Leon Mignane as President allows to happen on his watch. Here leadership is seen as the cult of personality which

⁴ The *Sunday Times* of July 13, 2014 reported that the Kings of the traditional areas in South Africa now demand to earn the same salary as the President of the Republic.

ultimately imprisons the president. Sembene satirises the rise of the so-called national bourgeoisie (what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls the *mnyampala/comprador* class) in how the country is mortgaged for two generations so that 'progress' can be manifest in stupendous buildings and the concomitant lack of foreign investment, and the rapaciousness of the cabinet ministers in cutting side-deals. Realising he cannot raise any more foreign capital, Mognane simply disappears, with disastrous results such as a coup by the military in order (as they almost always put) 'to restore public order.'

The coups in Africa have been the subject of novels such as Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). In the latter novel the coup had already happened when the narrative begins, but is here that the theme of the inability to govern is best represented. His Excellency Head of State, Sam, has seized power and is now toying with the idea that the people, perhaps in (eternal?) gratitude, should 'appoint' him President-for-Life. At the beginning of the novel, however, a visibly angry Sam, in a Cabinet meeting, remonstrates with his Commissioner of Information, Mr. Chris Oriko, for reminding him of his earlier commitment to visit the province of Abazon which has been devastated by drought (1). This is because, earlier when the emissaries had gone to Abazon to persuade the community to elect him life president, which the community had refused to endorse. Hence Sam's refusal, and the fact that he ordered the withdrawal of boreholes; the boreholes are withdrawn so that they may know 'what it means to offend the sun' (127). More prosaically, he begins to suspect Chris and Ikem Osodi - current editor of the nation's newspaper, *the National Gazette* - both former friends, of plotting against him with the Abazonian community.

The community of Abazon sends a delegation to the Palace to meet with the president over their need for basic services, and this sets into motion far-reaching effects. Ikem does not help matters when he gives a highly critical lecture to the University of Bassa's restive community. When asked if it is wise for a leader to have his head on the currency, replies:

My position is quite straightforward especially now that I don't have to worry about being Editor of the *Gazette*. My view is that any serving President foolish enough to lay his head on a coin should know that he is inciting people to take it off; the head I mean (*AHS*, 162).

For making such a statement, Ikem is immediately placed under arrest, Chris becomes a fugitive to raise awareness of Ikem's arrest and death and he himself is shot and killed while en route to Abazon to seek refuge from the security forces. (*AHS*, 215).

Snippets from this enduring literature such as those I have attempted to use above, from the 1960s to the present, show that leadership without values, traditions and senses of integrity are bound to bring more harm than good to countless African communities. And the view from those unfamiliar

with Literary Studies may be that this is an ordained fate of Africans. In Mphahlele's unforgettable words, it is

Almost as if, because black people have become so accustomed to hardships for centuries, we have collectively lost our sense of proportion, our ability to distinguish the norm and the dysfunctional – just as a ghetto family gets used to living with a door banging about on one hinge, until it ceases to be a source of irritation (2002, 16).

The vocal voices of our writers ought to alert us to the changes around us. In Mandla Langa's *The Lost Colours of the Chameleon* (2008) and *The Texture of Shadows* (2014), and in Vusi Pikoli's *My Second Initiation* (2013), the creeping senses of change are discernible.

III

'Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet?'

Juvenal

I wish to end with a brief appraisal of *My Second Initiation*.

Mr. Pikoli, perhaps unwisely, accepted President Mbeki's invitation to take up the post vacated by his predecessor, Mr. Bulelani Ngcuka. He sincerely comes across as believable when he notes that, even against the advice of his mother, he was sure he would be allowed the independence guaranteed in the rule of law, the values of the Constitution, the strict separation powers, and the stated independence of the NPA (2013, 125).

Brought up in the African National Congress's tradition of service, he wished to carry on where he had left as the Director-General of the Justice Department. Suffice it to say he was wrong, and his suspension from the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Ginwala Commission that was set up to investigate if indeed he was a fit and proper person for the post, the outcome and termination of service, have demonstrated to the polity that honest people who do their work with integrity, dignity of office and ingrained values do exist amongst us. And unfortunately it is such individuals who resort to what former Constitutional Court Justice Kate O'Regan called the 'jurisprudence of exasperation' (*M&G*, 2014: 27) because they resort to the courts to protect their rights under law since the institutions they serve are either too inept, or too faction-ridden to provide protection from unjust prosecution, and at the best of times even the justice due to those victimized by despotic leaders and followers. The recent suspension of the very NPA's Head of Integrity Management Unit, Prince Mokotedi, is a case in point.

I do not regard Vusi Pikoli as a hero. That would be wrong.

But I do regard him as an *honnête homme* (an honest man), a man who would have been after Es'kia Mphahlele's heart were he still with us. Twice he has been denied gainful employment, and my empathy with him does not obviate the fact of his honesty.

Consider what the secretary of the Ginwala inquiry, Lawson Naidoo (*sotto voce*) says are the reasons the chairperson ruled in Pikoli's favour on major points:

The thing that struck me, and I know it struck other members of the inquiry team, was *the absolute integrity of the man*. His integrity could not be doubted and I think the character of the man came through, that he was someone that may make mistakes, but he makes honest mistakes and certainly his integrity came through (2013, 310; emphasis added).

I weigh in with another Ndebele observation to buttress the view above. Ndebele sees leadership as

[W]hat all of us do when we express sincerely our deepest feelings and thoughts; when we do our work, whatever it is, with passion and integrity; when we recall that all that mattered when you were doing your work was not the promise of some reward but *the overwhelming sense of appropriateness that it had to be done*. The awareness of consequence always follows after the act, and then the decision to proceed (2007, 234; emphasis added)

Set against what we have seen regarding despotic leadership both as theorised and as explained by African Literature over many years before theory caught up with reality and what our writers from Sol Plaatje to present have observed, it is clear that our key institutions should take serious steps to insulate the public against despotism and, latterly, its relative, prebendalism.

Institutions of higher learning should be beacons of hope and not of despair; they should lead, and nurture talent and not discourage its flowering⁵. Importantly, they need to check what kind of people they appoint into any managerial position. This is not difficult, if studies such as the Australian Council for Educational Research's Report titled *Learning Leaders in times of change: Academic Leadership Capabilities for Australian Higher Education* (May, 2008) are anything to go by. Such a report should really be required reading for managers in institutions of higher education.

Universities are incubators of thought, of thinkers and leaders of tomorrow, seeking to free that generation from a disinherited imagination. The sacred duty of being a university employee should be informed by this maxim. And I use the word sacred advisedly, reminding myself of the founders of European universities who were almost always the clergy. While we may admire institutions such as Oxford, Yale, Cambridge and Harvard, it should be our stated intentions to work

⁵ See in this instance the essay 'Talent, the Staying Power of Racism, and Transformation: Trans-Atlantic Observations'. *Social Dynamics* 33(1): 2007: 3-30.

towards the same for our country so that when we are no more, those who come after us seamlessly drive the anvil of the values, traditions and integrities that we fashion today.

That would be our contribution to nation building.

I am thrilled that I serve an institution that allows ethics to be a living tissue of its everyday interactions.

For, like the Greek philosopher, Diogenes, we do not only have to speak ethics, but have to walk ethics at all times.

I, like many before me, have from time to time been amazed by the immensity of literature to capture the human condition in all its complexities, follies and capacity for immense integrity.

It is why I am humbled by the College of Human Sciences and UNISA to consider me a suitable candidate to join its Professoriate.

Thank you.

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LEBOKO LA BAKWENA BA MARE A PHOGOLE

Ke Phogole Phogole duma

Pheleu e boko bothata

Ke lefukumeetse ngwana phata bolele

Ke motho a' bo Mantate lekonatla

Ke lefukumeetse la mafulo a Phogole

Ke motho a' bo Kgerepu ke mogorogoro

Ke motlhanka dikgomo farasela

Ke tsamaile le motse ka ntlhengwe

Ke tshaba Tshukudu ya Mosadi le ya Monna

Baloi ba ba tlhogodithata

Rona re Bakwena bana ba phateakobo bolele

Ke motho a'bo Lefitswana le Makgapa

Ke motho a'bo Nthathane

Ke motho a'bo Phafana kgaetsedi a Mokgotswana

Ke motho a'bo tshega e ngate seatla ke lapile

Ke motho a'bo Mmakgotlakgotlane

O kgotlile Pela e ituletse legageng

Ba re Pela ga e lome banna ba molote

Ke letlapa le le kobo monyedinyedi

Le bona ka motse go falla

Ke kgarapa (Kwena) nkadime dinala

Ke a sasanka ke kamo gara meetse.

Ke tshaba badiiti!