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A HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

This book is the first critical study of its subject, from colonial and pre-colonial times to the present. Christopher Heywood discusses selected poems, plays, and prose works in five literary traditions: Khoisan, Nguni–Sotho, Afrikaans, English, and Indian. The discussion includes over 100 authors and selected works, including poets from Mqhayi, Marais, and Campbell to Butler, Serote, and Krog, theatre writers from Boniface and Black to Fugard and Mda, and fiction writers from Schreiner and Plaatje to Bessie Head and the Nobel prizewinners Gordimer and Coetzee. The literature is explored in the setting of crises leading to the formation of modern South Africa, notably the rise and fall of Emperor Shaka's Zulu kingdom, the Colenso crisis, industrialisation, the colonial and post-colonial wars of 1899, 1914, and 1939, and the dissolution of apartheid society. In Heywood's magisterial study, South African literature emerges as among the great literatures of the modern world.

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Preface

This book reflects the cosmopolitan and international character of my native land. South Africa has one of the world's most extensively creolised* societies: apartheid was a last attempt to fly in the face of that reality. Each of South Africa's four interwoven communities – Khoisan,* Nguni–Sotho,* Anglo-Afrikaner,* and Indian* – has an oral and literary tradition of its own, and each tradition is a strand in a web of literary forms around the world. The subject of this book is their merging through bodily and literary creolisation, from pre-colonial to present times.

While recognising that community tensions survive in South Africa, and offering explanations, this book emphasises the African origin of our species, our civilisation, and our oral and written literature from ancient to modern times. The past three-and-a-half centuries have been a series of rites of passage* (*rites de passage*), marked by violence in each phase, from armed dominance by whites to the achievement of equal esteem and voting power for all South Africans. A prodigious literature reflects that process. Its outlines, and the peculiarities of its texts, have been obscured in the past by segregation into English, Afrikaans,* Coloured,* and black.* In approaching them as a single subject, this book overflies the colonial past. On the further horizon, the exchange between coloniser and colonised has been reciprocal: the violent colonising process has transformed Europe and its literature. Comparable to the nineteenth-century tension between the Slavist versus Europeanist elements in Russian literature, South African literature reflects the tension between Africanist and Europeanist readings of its past.

Part I introduces literary responses to struggles that culminated in the massacre at Sharpeville (1960). Part II outlines literature during the ensuing thirty years' armed struggle and the present settlement. The glossary and map address localities and words.

Words and phrases in the glossary are marked* at their first appearance.

Acknowledgements

For having made this work possible I thank my fellow students and teachers at Stellenbosch and at Oxford. My explorations have been assisted during my years of teaching and research at the University of Birmingham and at the University of Sheffield. My reading of African literature expanded during my two years of work at the University of Ife, Nigeria. While working in Japan at Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, International Christian University, Tokyo, Okayama University, and Seto College of Kobe Women's University, I have been helped by discussions, study leave, and funding for research.

For innumerable contributions to my understanding of South African literature I warmly thank the students, associates, visiting speakers, and teachers who contributed to the African Literature programme at the University of Sheffield over several years, and who are too numerous to thank individually. For discussions within and beyond the programme, I thank especially Chandramohan Balasubramanyam, Guy Butler, Ronald Dathorne, Annie Gagiano, Colin Gardner, Geoffrey Haresnape, Annemarie Heywood, Brookes and Jeanne Heywood, David Lewis-Williams, Bernth Lindfors, Valerie Marks, Mbulelo Mzamane, Jonathan Paton, 'Bode Sowande, and John Widdowson. For discussions of Afrikaans literature I thank Johan Degenaar, Johan Esterhuizen, Temple Hauptfleisch, Santa Hofmeyr-Joubert, and Gideon Joubert. Latterly I have found generous assistance towards reading ancient Egyptian literature in translation from Professor Leonard Lesko, of Brown University, Professor John Baines, of Oxford University, and Jenny Carrington, of London.

Among libraries too numerous to list in full I thank especially the staff of the following: Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Navorsings-Museum, Bloemfontein (NALN); the South African National Library at Cape Town; University of Cape Town libraries; the National English Language Museum, Grahamstown (NELM); the British Library and the Newspaper Library at

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Colindale, London; the Killie Campbell Library, Durban; the KwaZulu-Natal Archive at Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal; the Bodleian Library and its outlying libraries at Rhodes House and the Taylorian Institution, Oxford; the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University; Sheffield University libraries, and the National Centre for Culture and Tradition at the University of Sheffield (NCCT, formerly CECTAL, the Centre for Cultural Tradition and Language); the Humanities Research Center (HRC), University of Texas at Austin; Witwatersrand University libraries; and Yale University libraries. I gratefully thank the British Academy, the Chairman's Fund, and the Sheffield University Research and Travel Fund for grants enabling me to consult the Bleek collection in the University of Cape Town libraries.

Material and arguments in this book have appeared in papers given at conferences held by the following: the African Literature Association of America (ALA); the Association for the Study of Commonwealth Languages and Literatures (ACLALS); the Association for University English Teachers of South Africa (AEUTSA); the Japan African Studies Association; the Ife Conference on African Literature; the symposium on the Anglo-Boer war at Luton University; the Bessie Head Conference at Singapore University; the Olive Schreiner Conference at the University of Verona; and the Conference on South African Literature at the University of York. Papers given there have appeared as contributions to the following books and periodicals: *D. H. Lawrence Review*; *Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences*; *Kobe Women's University Journal of Sciences and Humanities*; *Social Dynamics* (Cape Town); *Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World*, edited by Hena Maes-Jelinek; *Olive Schreiner and After*, edited by Malvern van Wyk Smith and Don Maclennan; *Flawed Diamond*, edited by Itala Vivan; *Perspectives on African Literature*, *Aspects of South African Literature*, and *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë, the last three edited by myself. The organisers and editors are warmly thanked for first considering my contributions, and for permission to reuse material first published by them.

Lastly, I warmly thank Cambridge University Press and its successive literary editors for inviting this work, and for enduring vicissitudes and revisions over several years. It should be needless to add that all the opinions, and any errors and omissions in this book, are my own.

Chronology

<i>date</i>	<i>event</i>
10,000 BCE–500 CE	settlement by hunter-gatherer/pastoralist communities (Khoisan)
500–1500 CE	settlement of iron-using pastoral and agricultural societies (Sotho,* Nguni*)
1652–1806	settlement of VOC (Dutch East India Company) post at Cape Town; British Colony founded 1795–1892; renewed 1806; enlarged 1820 by settlement of British emigrants in Zuurveld (Albany), between Fish and Kei Rivers (Eastern Cape)
1828	death of King Shaka
1835–8	emigration of Afrikaner* farmers from Cape Colony (Great Trek) into Natal and land beyond Orange and Vaal Rivers; battle of Ncome River ('Blood River'), 16 Dec. 1838: first military defeat of Zulu nation
1841/2	Masters and Servants Ordinance
1843	annexation of Natal by British and formation of Diocese of Natal
1848–55	annexation of Orange Free State following Battle of Boomplaats, followed by independence for OFS (1852) and South African Republic (Transvaal) (1854)
1856	Xhosa cattle-killing
1863–9	international crisis over <i>The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined</i> (1862), by Bishop Colenso of Natal

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- 1866–70 diamonds found in Griqualand near Orange River; diamond rush of 1870s leading to formation of mining towns and personal fortunes
- 1875–1923 formation of Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Association of True Afrikaners); first Taalbeweging (first (Afrikaans) language movement); second Taalbeweging; adoption of Afrikaans as second official language instead of Dutch in 1923
- 1879 defeat of British army by Zulu forces at Isandlwana
- 1879–80 first Anglo-Boer war: British army defeated at Majuba (1880)
- 1883 gold discovered on Witwatersrand; rise of modern cities and seaports; emerging of industrial economy based on migrant labour and pass system
- 1899–1902 second Anglo-Boer war: treaty of Vereeniging, 1902
- 1910 South Africa Act: formation of Union of South Africa; independence for white minority and servile status for black majority
- 1912 formation of African National Congress
- 1913 Land Act
- 1914–18 South African participation in World War I; 1914 Rebellion
- 1922 miners' strike, Johannesburg
- 1923 military aircraft attack civilians at Bulhoek, eastern Cape
- 1929 Hertzog's victory in *swart gevaar* (black peril) election; Statute of Westminster (1930) and Dominion Status for SA; United Party formed out of South African Party and National Party; election victory 1933
- 1938 centenary celebrations of Trek and battle of Ncome River
- 1939–45 South African participation in World War II
- 1948 white electors return apartheid government by narrow majority; race classification; Immorality Act (1949); Suppression of Communism Act

Chronology

- (1950); 'homelands' defined (1951); Defiance Campaign (1952); Bantu Education Act (1953)
- 1955 forced removal of Sophiatown residents; Kliptown convention: adoption of Freedom Charter
- 1956–61 Treason Trial: acquittal of last accused, 1961; Extension of Universities Act (1957)
- 1960 Sharpeville massacre, 21 March
- 1961 South Africa leaves Commonwealth
- 1962 banning of Brutus, La Guma, Mandela, and others
- 1963 Rivonia arrests and imprisonment on Robben Island for ANC leaders
- 1974 University of Cape Town poetry conference
- 1976 student rising in Soweto (South-West Township, Johannesburg)
- 1983 abortive constitution, with representation for white, Coloured and Indian voters, excluding Nguni–Sotho majority; continuous state of emergency
- 1989–94 abolition of apartheid; unbanning of Ds/Revd Beyers Naudé; release of Nelson Mandela; first democratic election (1994); return to Commonwealth; censorship removed

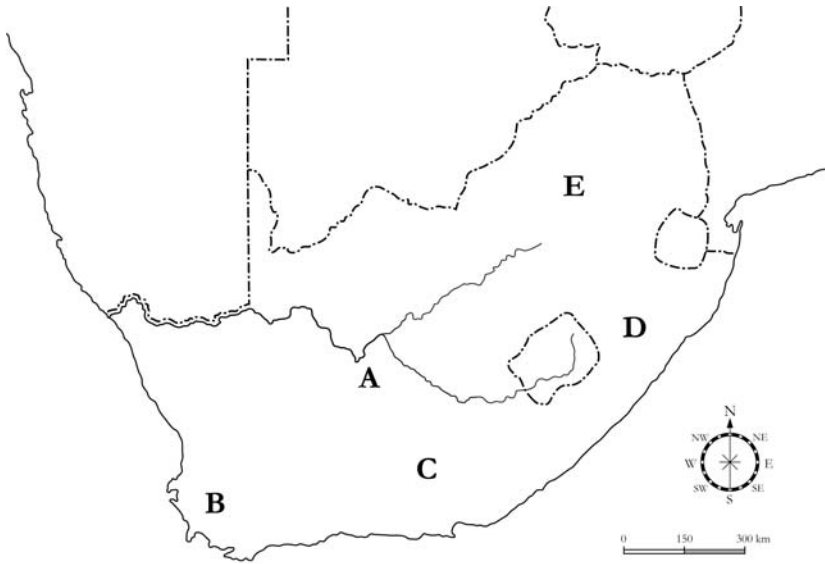
Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
<i>Archaeology</i>	Thurstan Shaw and others, eds., <i>The Archaeology of Africa. Food, Metals and Towns</i> . London and New York: Routledge, 1993
Bleek	W. H. I. Bleek and Lucy Lloyd, <i>Specimens of Bushman Folklore</i> . London: W. H. Allen, 1911
Breasted	J. H. Breasted, <i>The Dawn of Conscience</i> . London and New York: Scribner, 1933
<i>Century</i>	Michael Chapman, ed., <i>A Century of South African Poetry</i> . Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1987
Davenport	Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, <i>South Africa. A Modern History</i> . London: Macmillan, 2000
<i>Drum</i>	Michael Chapman, ed., <i>The Drum Decade. Stories from the 1950s</i> . Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989
Fuze	Magema M. Fuze, <i>The Black People and Whence they Came</i> . Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, and Durban: Killie Campbell Library, 1979
Gérard	Albert S. Gérard, <i>Four African Literatures. Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic</i> . Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971
Greenberg	Joseph H. Greenberg, <i>The Languages of Africa</i> . Indiana: Indiana University Center for the Language Sciences, 1966
Jordan	A. C. Jordan, <i>Towards an African Literature. The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973
Kannemeyer	John Kannemeyer, <i>Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse letterkunde</i> . Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1983

List of abbreviations

- Lichtheim Miriam Lichtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973–80
- Mandela Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom. The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Johannesburg: Macdonald Purnell, 1994
- Matthews Z. K. Matthews, *Freedom for my People*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1986
- New Century* Michael Chapman, ed., *The New Century of South African Poetry*. Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 2002
- Translations* A. P. Grové and C. J. D. Harvey, eds., *Afrikaans Poems with English Translations*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962
- TRC *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*. Cape Town: Juta, 1998
- Verseboek* D. J. Opperman, ed., *Groot Verseboek*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1990

Literary map of South Africa



MAIN REGIONS, WRITERS, LITERARY JOURNALS

- A** *Northern Cape, Great Karoo, Western Free State/Botswana:* Jacobson, Head, Kabbo, van der Post
- B** *South-western Cape, Cape Town:* Breytenbach, Brutus, Clouts, Coetzee, Delius, Krige, La Guma, Leipoldt, Louw, Matthee, Matthews, Rive, Small, Uys, Wicomb; *Contrast, Quartet*
- C** *Eastern Cape, Little Karoo:* Butler, Fugard, Mqhayi, Pringle, Schreiner, Slater, Smith; *New Coin*
- D** *KwaZulu-Natal:* Campbell, Govender, Herbert Dhlomo, Dan Kunene, Mazisi Kunene, Ngcobo, Padayachee, Plomer, Vilakazi; *Voorslag*
- E** *Johannesburg, Witwatersrand:* Lionel Abrahams, Peter Abrahams, Bosman, Brink, Rolfe Dhlomo, Essop, Gordimer, Marais, Mda, Mphahlele, Mtshali, Nkosi, Paton, Sepamla, Serote, Simon; *Classic, Drum, Purple Renoster, Staffrider, S'ketsb*