

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-59218-5 - *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*

Edited by Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly

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Writing South Africa

During the final years of the apartheid era and the subsequent transition to democracy, South African literary writing caught the world's attention as never before. Writers responded to the changing political situation and its daily impact on the country's inhabitants with works that recorded or satirized state-enforced racism, explored the possibilities of resistance and rebuilding, and creatively addressed the vexed question of literature's relation to politics and ethics.

Writing South Africa offers a window on the literary activity of this extraordinary period that conveys its range (going well beyond a handful of world-renowned names) and its significance for anyone interested in the impact of decolonization and democratization on the cultural sphere. Essays by leading commentators based in South Africa, Britain, and North America are brought together for the first time with discussions by some of the most distinguished South African novelists, poets, and dramatists of our time: André Brink, Miriam Tlali, Mongane Wally Serote, Elleke Boehmer, Lewis Nkosi, Zoë Wicomb, Peter Horn, Zakes Mda, and Maishe Maponya.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521592185

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First published 1998

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Writing South Africa: literature, apartheid, and democracy, 1970-1995

/ edited by Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 59218 6 hardback. - ISBN 0 521 59768 4 paperback.

1. South African literature - 20th century - History and criticism.
2. Politics and literature - South Africa - History - 20th century.
3. Literature and society - South Africa - History - 20th century.
4. Apartheid in literature. 5. Race relations in literature.
6. South Africa - Politics and government. I. Attridge, Derek, 1945- . II. Jolly, Rosemary, 1963- .

PL8014.S6W75 1998

809'.8968—dc21 97—17217 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-59218-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-59768-5 Paperback

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DEREK ATTRIDGE, Professor of English at Rutgers University, is moving to the University of York, England, to take up a Leverhulme Research Professorship. He was born in Dundee, South Africa, and studied at the Universities of Natal and Cambridge. Among his books are *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (Cornell University Press and Methuen, 1988) and *Acts of Literature* (Routledge, 1992), a collection of Derrida's essays. He is completing a book on J. M. Coetzee and the ethics of reading.

DAVID ATTWELL is Professor of English at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. He is the editor of J. M. Coetzee's *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (Harvard University Press, 1992), and the author of *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (University of California Press, 1993). More recently, he has been working on the cultural history of early black South African literature.

RITA BARNARD is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Born in Pretoria and trained at Stellenbosch and Duke, she has also taught at the University of the Western Cape. Her first book, *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 1995, and a second book, *Apartheid, Literature, and the Politics of Place* is under contract with Oxford University Press.

ELLEKE BOEHMER was born in Durban, South Africa. She is the author of *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1995), and of two novels, *Screens against the Sky* (Bloomsbury, 1990) and *An Immaculate Figure* (Bloomsbury, 1993), and co-edited *Altered State? Writing and South Africa* (Dangaroo, 1994). *An Empire Anthology* is forthcoming. She lectures in English at the University of Leeds, England.

ANDRÉ BRINK is Professor of English at the University of Cape Town. He writes in both English and Afrikaans, and has published fifteen novels since the early 1960s, most of which have been translated into several languages. His criticism spans a number of different literary traditions. His latest novel is *Imaginations of Sand* (Secker & Warburg, 1996), and his recent non-fiction includes *Destabilising Shakespeare* (Shakespeare Society of South Africa, 1996) and *Reinventing a Continent* (Secker & Warburg, 1996). A study of narrative language, *The Novel: Language and Narrative from Cervantes to Calvino*, is due in 1997.

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JEANNE COLLERAN, born in the United States, is Chair of the English Department at John Carroll University. She has lectured at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa, and served as a dramaturg for numerous North American productions of Athol Fugard's plays. In addition to writing about South African theatre and fiction, she is the editor, with Jenny Spencer, of *Staging Resistance: Political Theatre and Social Change* (University of Michigan Press, 1997).

MICHEL HEYNS is Professor and Chair in the Department of English at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He was educated at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cambridge, and has written mainly on the nineteenth-century English novel (notably *Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, Oxford University Press, 1994) and contemporary South African fiction.

PETER HORN is Professor and Head of Department of German at the University of Cape Town. He has published several volumes of poetry, including the prize-winning *Poems 1964–89* (Ravan, 1991), a volume of essays, *Writing My Reading* (Rodopi, 1994), and an anthology of South African poetry in German translation, *Kap der Guten Hoffnung* (Athenäum, 1980). A volume of short stories, *The Kaffir Who Reads Books*, is forthcoming. He has also published widely on German literature.

ROSEMARY JOLLY is Associate Professor of English at Queen's University, Ontario, and Associate Director of the Canadian Research Consortium on Southern Africa. Born in Sasolburg, South Africa, in 1963, she studied at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Toronto. She is the author of articles on South African literature and postcolonial theory, and of *Narration, Violence and Colonization in White South African Writing* (Ohio University Press, 1996). She is currently co-authoring a book with Miriam Tlali on the women of Soweto and working on a study of literature and the culture of resistance in South Africa.

BRIAN MACASKILL was born in Bethlehem, South Africa, and educated at Rhodes University and the University of Washington, Seattle. He is the author of several publications on literary theory and on South African literatures, and is completing a book on J. M. Coetzee. He teaches in the English Department of John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio, and has held a visiting position at the University of Cape Town.

MAISHE MAPONYA has taught drama at the University of the Witwatersrand and is currently involved in transforming arts administration in the Gauteng province, working for the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council. He started writing plays and poetry in 1975/6, a key period for the development of critical political consciousness in South Africa. Recent publications include an anthology of five plays entitled *Doing Plays for a Change* (Witwatersrand University Press, 1995).

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ZAKES MDA was born in South Africa and has taught in the drama departments of the University of Vermont and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He is currently Dramaturg at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, and works full-time as a novelist, playwright, painter, and film producer. His recent publications include *When People Play People: Development Communication through Theatre* (Witwatersrand University Press and Zed Books, 1993) and a novel, *Ways of Dying* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

LEWIS NKOSI is Professor of English at the University of Wyoming at Laramie. Born in Natal, he began his career as a journalist, writing for *Ilanga lase Natal* and then for *Drum* magazine. During the 1960s he was banned. He studied at the Universities of London and Sussex, and his many academic positions have included Professor of Literature at the Universities of Zambia and Warsaw and Regents Professor of African Literature at the University of California at Irvine. His publications include *Home and Exile and Other Selections* (Longman, 1965) and the novel *Mating Birds* (Ravan and Constable, 1986).

BENITA PARRY was born in South Africa, and has written extensively on colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory. She is the author of *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination* (Allen Lane, 1972) and *Conrad and Imperialism* (Macmillan, 1984). An Associate Research Fellow in the English Department of Warwick University, she is working on a book on the literature of imperialism.

GRAHAM PECHEY was born and educated in South Africa, to which he frequently returns. Having held posts at the Universities of Natal and Zambia, he now lectures in English at the University of Hertfordshire. He has written a number of articles on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and in the fields of Romantic writing, literary and cultural theory, and the postcolonial.

ALBIE SACHS studied and practised law in Cape Town, until he was forced into exile in 1966. He lectured at the Universities of Southampton, Columbia, and Maputo, where he was the victim of a car-bomb explosion in 1988. As a leading member of the ANC, he played a key role in the transition to democratic government in South Africa. He is now a Judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. His publications include the autobiographical works *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs* (Harvill, 1969) and *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter* (Grafton, 1990).

MONGANE WALLY SEROTE was born in the township of Alexandra. In 1969 he was detained, and went into exile in the early seventies. After his return to South Africa, he headed the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture prior to the party's election to government in 1994. He is currently a

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Member of Parliament for the North East Rand Area. He is the author of numerous publications, both fiction and poetry. His most recent work, a long poem entitled *Dinouts*, is due in 1997.

MIRIAM TLALI lives both in Hlotse, Lesotho and in Soweto. She is the first black woman to have published a novel in South Africa – *Between Two Worlds*, formerly known as *Muriel at Metropolitan* – and established the first black women’s press in South Africa, Skotaville. She is the author of numerous fictional and biographical works, including the formerly banned *Amandla!* and *Footprints in the Quag: Stories and Dialogues from Soweto*. She is currently co-authoring a book on the women of Soweto with Rosemary Jolly.

DENNIS WALDER is Head of Literature at the Open University (UK). He is a Capetonian, and was educated at the Universities of Cape Town and Edinburgh. He has published widely on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. Author of the first book-length study of Athol Fugard (Macmillan, 1984), he has also edited Fugard’s *Township Plays* (Oxford University Press, 1993), and is currently completing a book on *Post-Colonial Literatures: Theory and Practice*, for Basil Blackwell.

ZOË WICOMB was born in South Africa, and now teaches in the Department of English Studies at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. She is the author of *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* (Virago, 1988), and stories in such anthologies as *Colours of a New Day* (Ravan, 1990), *The Penguin Book of Contemporary South African Short Stories* (1993), and *The Heinemann Book of South African Short Stories* (1994). She has also published a number of articles on South African culture.

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement is gratefully made to the Canadian High Commission for South Africa and Ms Lorenci Klopper for permission to reprint two maps of South Africa; to the Hon. Mongane Wally Serote, Malcolm Hacksley and the National English Literary Museum, and Rolf Solberg for permission to reprint the interview with Mongane Wally Serote; to Miriam Tlali for permission to publish Rosemary Jolly's interview with her; and to Justice Albie Sachs for permission to reprint his paper, 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom'.

The editors wish to thank Laura Moss for research assistance and editorial work and Vanessa Farr for research assistance; and for help with some detailed factual matters, David R. Adler, editor of *Response*, and Alan Jeeves. At Cambridge University Press, Josie Dixon's encouragement and skill have been invaluable. Our greatest indebtedness is to Chris McMullen and Suzanne Hall, who were willing to go the extra mile several times over.

Note on references

Full references to South African literary works in English of the period 1970–1995 are given in the select bibliography at the end of the volume. Full references to other literary works cited, and to critical works cited, are given at the end of each chapter. Wherever possible, references within chapters are given by author's name and an abbreviated title.

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South Africa 1970–1996: A chronology

- 1970 Nelson Mandela and other African National Congress (ANC) leaders have been in prison since 1963. B. J. Vorster has been Prime Minister of South Africa since the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd in 1966. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) is gaining strength. Several neighbouring states have been granted independence.
- 1971 Formation of the Black People's Convention (BPC).
- 1973 Widespread strikes by black workers; formation of independent trade unions begins.
- 1975 Mangosuthu Buthelezi refounds the Zulu cultural organization known as Inkatha, later to become the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Inkatha, some of whose activities are covertly funded by the South African government, is to clash with the ANC throughout the final years of apartheid. Independence of the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique.
- 1976–7 On 16 June, 1976 Soweto children initiate a mass protest, primarily in reaction to the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in their schools. At least 575 people die as a result of police action in townships.
- 1976–81 South Africa, following its policy of separate development, 'grants independence' to the scattered territories of the Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda, and the Ciskei, terming them 'homelands' and stripping their 'citizens' of South African citizenship. The international community refuses to recognize these territories as independent.
- 1977 In September Steve Biko, BCM leader, dies in detention. He is the forty-sixth person known to have died in detention that year, and his death is later proved to be the consequence of torture. The United Nations Security Council imposes an embargo on arms supply to South Africa. Banning of BCM organizations.
- 1978–84 P. W. Botha is Prime Minister, after Vorster's resignation due to financial scandal. Proclaims 'total onslaught' against the enemies of the apartheid state, including cross-border raids and invasion of Namibia.
- 1978 The Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) is formed.
- 1979 The Federation of South African Trade Unions is formed. Black

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- trade unions are permitted to register, and gain the right to strike.
Wave of strikes, community protests, and student upheavals across the country.
- 1980 After a decade of warfare Rhodesia becomes independent and is renamed Zimbabwe.
- 1982 The Black Local Authorities Act establishes puppet municipal governments, contributing to the conditions of township violence during the decade. White right-wing Conservative Party set up under Andries Treurnicht.
- 1983 Resistance organizations drawn from a wide spectrum combine their efforts in a movement known as the United Democratic Front (UDF).
- 1984 A new constitution establishes a tricameral parliament of separate houses for whites, Asians, and Coloureds. Asians and Coloureds have limited participation in government; Africans still have no participation. Botha gains the new title of State President. Township insurrections provoke increased state brutality; South African Defence Force troops sent to occupy townships. Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu wins the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1985 A State of Emergency is declared, instituting emergency powers such as detention without charge and curbs on press reporting. Thousands of detentions are made under emergency laws, which remain in effect until 1990. Foundation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. COSATU becomes an important organization for resistance among workers involved in heavy industries, such as mining. The government begins to make secret contact with resistance leaders in exile and in prison.
- 1986 The United States Congress imposes federal economic sanctions against South Africa. Commonwealth Eminent Persons group recommends sanctions. Their visit to South Africa is halted as South African Defence Force launches cross-border raids. The pass and influx control laws and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act are repealed.
- 1986–95 Violent conflict occurs between ANC supporters and IFP members in KwaZulu-Natal and the Johannesburg area (over 10,000 deaths in this period).
- 1987 250,000 mine-workers initiate a three week strike. Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) established.
- 1988 South Africa withdraws from the war against Angola and agrees with the UN to initiate the independence process for Namibia (formerly South West Africa). Intense resistance in KwaNdebele to 'independent homeland' status. Meeting between ANC and a group of Afrikaans writers.

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- 1989 F. W. de Klerk becomes president after Botha suffers a stroke; the ANC presents terms for negotiation to the government (the Harare Declaration).
- 1990 De Klerk unbans the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), and the South African Communist Party (SACP), and releases political prisoners, including Mandela. Namibia becomes independent.
- 1990–91 A series of apartheid laws are repealed, including the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, and the Separate Amenities Act. The State of Emergency is revoked and the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), involving all major political parties, is convened. Widespread violence continues; in October, the Goldstone Commission is established to investigate claims that government organizations are covertly fomenting conflict between the ANC and rival resistance groups.
- 1992 Whites vote in favour of the negotiation process in a referendum. The Boipatong and Bisho massacres occur. The ANC breaks off negotiations as Inkatha participates in increasing violence.
- 1993 Negotiations resume; an interim constitution is endorsed. In April, Chris Hanu, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, is assassinated by an agent of the SA Conservative Party; Mandela and de Klerk are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1994 On 27–30 April the ANC wins the first nonracial election in South Africa; Nelson Mandela becomes President on 10 May and forms the Government of National Unity; international sanctions are lifted; collapse of the 'homelands'; South Africa rejoins the Commonwealth. The elimination of remaining apartheid structures and institutions begins.
- 1995 The Constitutional Court is inaugurated in February and abolishes capital punishment; the Commission for the Restitution of Land Rights and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are inaugurated; widespread disturbances occur in the universities, related to questions of access and curriculum. Violence in KwaZulu-Natal increases before local government elections.
- 1996 South Africa continues to deal with the aftermath of apartheid: economic difficulties, widespread poverty and unemployment, and a high crime rate. Evidence before Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in court cases reveals high-level involvement of apartheid governments in criminal activities.

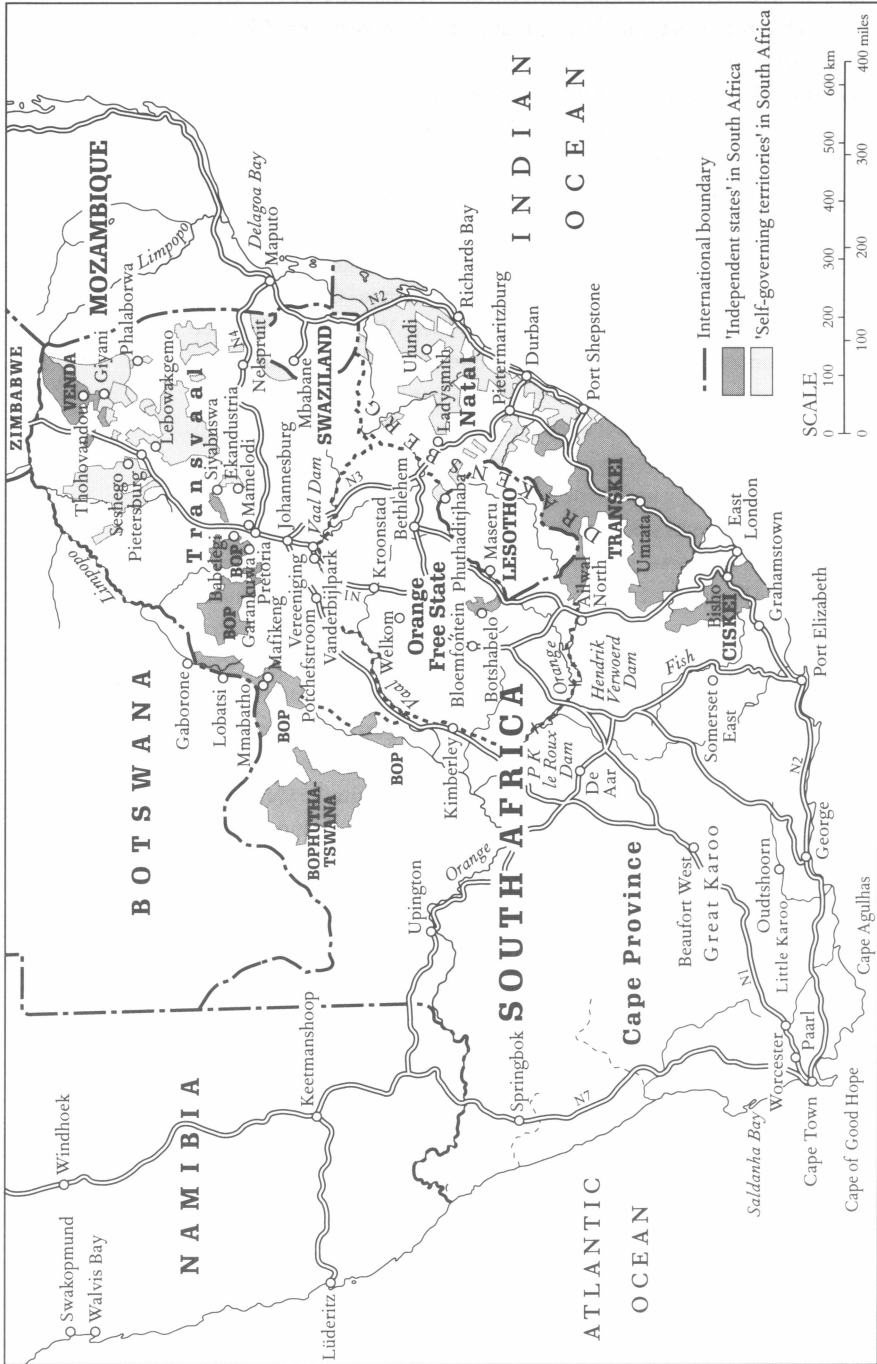
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1. South Africa immediately prior to 1994, showing the apartheid 'homelands'

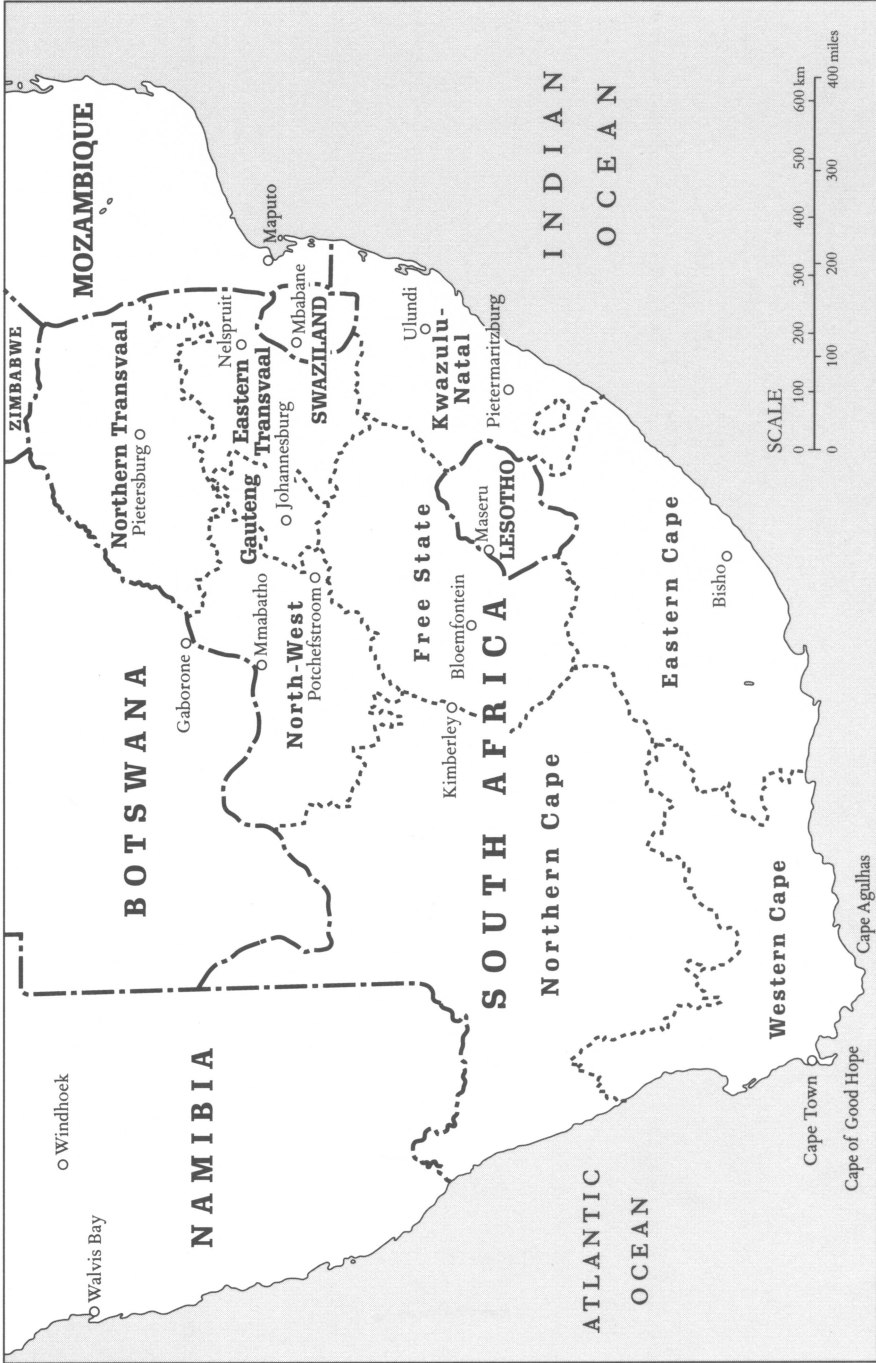
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2. South Africa after 1994, showing provinces and provincial capitals