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CHAPTER 1

K.E. Masinga, Zulu radio and the Politics of 'Migrant' Aurality

This chapter explores ways of understanding the kinds of transformations and 'migrations' that occur when a language moves to a new medium, in this case radio.¹ I set out what particular tensions and plays of power operate when this occurs in an era where colonial, imperial and, later, state power structures set languages in hierarchies of value. Through a close study of particular key moments in the history of the medium in South Africa, I discuss how radio in Zulu was able to adapt social knowledge and forms of performative power, creating, perhaps a new 'vernacular' in a situation of unequal relations where silence and dancing to 'his master's voice' might have seemed an easy option. And through the case of a particular key radio 'migrant', King Edward Masinga I ask if 'dancing to his master's voice' across languages and translations of culture can sometimes also be seen as a dance of power?

The Sounds of War – 1879 and After

One of the points made, often in the more obscure accounts of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879-80 (reference needed) is the 'noise' made by the Zulu usually before battles. Sometimes the mention is of the sound of song coming across the darkness or the moonlit spaces that separated the two armies. These sounds are described as unsettling, strange, eerie, forlorn even. Such songs or chants, which were most likely the *amahubo empi* (war anthems) would have been used along with the praise poems (*izibongo*) of former kings as inspirational for the men about to go into battle against an imperial power whose leaders had forced war upon them. Thus what was

understood as 'eerie and unsettling' by one side, was the source of deep inspiration and wisdom to the other. For its makers and performers it was also a mark of how one was in the world. The texts, because one can think of a song or chanted poetry as a 'text' (Barber 2007) travelled aurally and were an important part of anchoring the individual. But they were seen by imperial and colonial officials as part of the native exotic within which sat the particular Zulu exotic. The spectacular nature of Zulu military garb, caught perhaps most memorably in the accounts of Rider Haggard in *King Solomon's Mines* [ref and ref to Chrisman], and the shock of the Zulu victory at the Battle of Isandlwana in 1879 gave a certain cachet to the image of Zuluness. So much so that paintings and sketches of scenes from the Anglo-Zulu war can still, over one hundred and thirty years after the event, be auctioned at Sotheby's in London and hope to fetch as much as 760,000 sterling [ref. Sunday Times, p. 6 July 8 2012: 'Vital Zulu-war art up for auction in UK' byline: Ian Evans, London]. Yet the *sounds* that were a part of that event were far harder to access. Their meanings were elusive even if a general acceptance of blood-curdling Zulu battle cries seeped into the colonial imagination. Certainly, the wisdom of the aural texts was seen as existing beyond and outside imperial discursive networks and part of the wider native exotic. Thus a binary was set up.

After the colonization of Zululand and the breaking up of the Zulu kingdom in 1880 there was increasing migration to towns as men went in search of employment to pay for the punitive taxes imposed by the imperial power. Nevertheless, the forms that anchored people's understandings of who they were, such as praise poetry, continued to operate. As a way of shaping and stating one's identity they were vehicles for the construction of a social reality in which one had a place and an understanding of *who* one was. Praise poems (*izibongo*), which were made for ordinary men and women as well as for Zulu royalty, constructed the personal and

were composed by oneself and one's age mates. At times praise poems encapsulated this fleeting sight of a dramatically altering social reality. They were thus part of the process of identity-making within fluid and even conflicted social systems. Thus the life of a foreign black soldier in World War 1 could be drawn in a few telling poetic utterances. For instance, those from the Hlabisa chiefly house in northern Zululand capture such moments: the praises hold through their brief but dense and allusive images the huge disparities in how the owner of the *izibongo* is treated at home, and when he is a non-weapon-carrying combatant for the Allied Forces in the 1914-18 World War:

The great ones of the Zulu set out and headed for England

When they arrived in England they became little 'nuisances'. (Zofa son of Somfula Hlabisa, Gunner and Gwala 1991: 125/6; imbongi: Sunduzabanye Halabisa)

At approximately the same time, when Native Commissioners were established in districts of Zululand to dispense authority and the new power of the South African State, the strong awareness of these indigenous texts that validated social reality was turned by some Native Affairs officials into carefully documented accounts of the world of the sonic in which they found themselves. This was a world that co-existed with the forms of paper bureaucracy which Native Commissioners had to administer and which their Zulu subjects had to negotiate and make part of a new vernacular. E.W. Grant was one such Native Commissioner who did record on an early phonograph machine two elderly Zulu praise poets (*izimbongi*) and published his account with the texts and historical background in the journal, *Bantu Studies*. Calling his article, simply, 'The *Izibongo* of the Zulu Chiefs' (Grant: 1929: 203-244) Grant put on record the links of poetic form and rhetoric with political authority and so gave a glimpse of the social

value placed on the utterances and their place as one of the many 'travelling texts' which populated the bleak and far flung hills of the district in northern Zululand over which he presided. Clearly Grant battled how best to understand this and published it in a journal that was itself ambiguous in its attempts to engage with, comprehend and publicise African social forms together with language, art, poetry, narrative all of which dealt with a different symbolic order. The journal, published by the University of the Witwatersrand from 1921, established a niche for some speculative and path-breaking studies within a wider context in South Africa where hierarchies of race and knowledge were beginning to set in as normative.

The Grant article, like others in the early issues of *Bantu Studies*, unsettled rather than confirmed the view of a solid imperial world of knowledge and racial superiority. It did so somewhat obliquely through the ways in which it pointed to the presence of the sonic, of travelling sound as text and its operation as organizer of social knowledge and memory as well as maker of the everyday. The power of the form – its stately poetic quality, its commentary on history and character – was present, and the echoes it contained of the epic and minstrel traditions in western verbal art was recognizable. It was thus presented by Grant as an item of arcane dignity but ambiguous in terms of value. Were the long stately poems collectors' items reminiscent of a lost pre-colonial order? Or were they something else? Were they perhaps a gesture at an alternative knowledge structure, and sound system? One that in the days of late empire knocked against bureaucratic missives of the Native Affairs Department, yet for much of the time had its own existence where it was part of a technology of networks circulating along other lines?ⁱⁱ

The same ambiguity in understanding and placing items from the older sonic and social orders was present in the modernizing African communities of the second half of the nineteenth

century that were often attached to mission centres such as the American Zulu Mission at Inanda close to the town of Durban (Hughes: 2011). The praise poems – *izibongo* – and other forms of oratory, such as clan anthems (*amahubo*), dance chants (*izingoma*), folk narratives (*izingangwane*), to name but a few, were frequently discursive mediums and fluid genres which allowed a grappling with modernity but did not jettison understandings built over generations. What in the latter decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was often referred to as the *kholwa* community – the mission-educated African men and women – personified by men such as John Langalibalele Dube, – also had to negotiate a way of taking on the value of older technologies of the sonic. John Dube, who was to become the first president of the African National Congress in 1912 was also deeply influenced by his interactions with African American intellectuals such as Booker T. Washington. Partly through his pride in the African race imbibed during his stay in North America from figures such as the Washington-based African American intellectual and distinguished journalist, John Edward Bruce (Hughes: 72-3), Dube was able to confront the increasingly sharp racism of white Natal settler leaders on his return home. He could also fold into this race pride, a place for the discursive forms I refer to above which were often bundled together as 'folklore', a term which in official parlance safely distanced them from the modern. Such forms in the cultural archive depended in the first instance on aurality and orature and can be understood as social networks of sound and a social construct of technology. Dube thus endorsed, even if with some ambivalence, the value of the forms of *sound* while working towards the founding of a modern nation (Hughes: 261). Sound texts, one could say were, in Dube's practice both within and without the normative understanding of 'the modern'. As a social commodity of uncertain but definite value they were perhaps something of a wild card.

They can perhaps, also be seen as migrant texts capable of re-emplacement, adaptations and new vernacularizations.

A New Medium – Radio, a New Migrant

Radio and its soundwaves, in the South African context, found their way quite slowly into this unsettled world of the early decades of the twentieth century. In the new medium of radio the travelling texts of aurality were to find a place but the journey was not a simple or an easy one. The routes by which radio found its niche in South Africa were linked to the circuits of empire. In its early manifestations in South Africa and its broadcasts from makeshift technical rooms, first of all in Cape Town and Durban in the 1920s, it sent out shards of political knowledge and popular culture from the British heart of Empire to English-speaking settlers and to migrants from Europe for whom South African English became the new lingua franca (Rosenthal: 1974). Afrikaans, beginning to shape itself as a modern (creole) language tied to the new 'volk' was largely silent on these early airwaves, as were the African languages of the region. For a brief period in the mid-1920s an African variety programme featuring the 'Zulu Versatile Company' had a slot in the Durban radio airtime and Eric Rosenthal notes that it was also popular with many English-speaking listeners (97). However the first programmes aimed 'officially' at Zulu-speaking listeners did not come on the air until December of 1941. They seem only to have happened at all because of the ruptures of war and possible anxieties about a restive 'native' population at a time of crisis. Yet, in the way the narrative has been handed down, almost as itself an item of urban folk legend, it was the initiative of a single individual *performing* his way into the portals of the SABC Durban studios in Aliwal Street that began the Zulu airwaves sound. King Edward Masinga, a young black journalist desperate for the war news to be broadcast to Zulu listeners in their own language, walked into the Durban SABC Studios and

asked to be employed for this purpose as the first Zulu announcer. He met with a refusal but instead of walking sadly/angrily out he performed his exit. Drawing on a set of gestures and an array of semiotics recognized as part of the powerful native exotic he walked out backwards from the presence of the man who had said 'No!' (as one would when leaving the presence of Zulu royalty). As he did so he exclaimed, as one would for Zulu royalty, '*Bayede Wena weNdlovu!*' (Hail, You of the Royal House! [literally 'of the Elephant'] *Bayede!*' At which point – so the narrative goes, the official figure of authority (probably the journalist and ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey), changed his mind, and a deal was struck.

With this version of how Zulu found a spot in the airwaves, the trope of the ambiguous, potentially powerful outsider, balanced by that of the trickster figure both came into play. Each remained operative ways of the articulating, directing and imagining of African-language Radio – or 'Radio Bantu' as it became officially known in 1960. Like a character in an epic or folk narrative, through flattery, and by performatively recalling a set of gestures by then in one sense quite anachronistic but nevertheless still full of symbolic valence and affect, and linked to memories of old power and modern nationalism (LaHausse 2000), Masinga found an entry for himself and his 'people' into the magical but dangerous kingdom of radio. Each trope – that of the powerful outsider and that of the trickster figure - can be seen as variously illuminating different aspects of how 'the native' took to the air in ways not entirely dictated by the 'master'. The breaching of the portals of the Durban SABC marked, in a way, the moment at which the aural texts migrated into a new medium and signalled the beginning of what we could call a new Zulu social vernacular of the air. To put it another way, it was a kind of migration.

Masinga – the Trickster and Migrant Aurality

The personality who dominated the new venture was K. E. Masinga himself. His first broadcast in December 1941 was a three minute news clip on the progress of the war. These short news items in Zulu became a regular feature of the service from Durban and gradually increased in frequency, with other items added. Masinga, clearly, had ambitions for a Zulu radio service that extended far beyond such items of information, no matter how important these were in the context of South Africa's fortunes in the uncertain arena of World War 2. The question, for our interests in the migrations of culture and the setting up of African-language radio, is how he tried to bring about a new space for Zulu in a new global medium. Moreover as Zulu on radio it was also to become an increasingly important national medium of communication and identity formation when the odds seemed stacked against him. How did Masinga manage it? His first real move into carving out a space for texts that were in one way 'folk' yet were also embedded in the new medium was in about 1943 (the precise date cannot be confirmed) when, with Hugh Tracey he produced the musical script of a folk-tale, *Chief Above and Chief Below*, with 'original songs by the author in traditional idiom' (Coplan 1985: 160; Gunner 2000: 234; Tracey and Masinga: 1945). The re-casting of an oral story in the new medium was hugely popular particularly with migrant hostel dwellers in Durban who listened not through wireless sets but by means of rediffusion which transmitted the broadcast items via cable to a central distribution point. This, then, must have constituted a kind of public-private listening space where groups of hostel dwellers would listen together, respond to the radio items and discuss them both individually and collectively. Masinga, eager for 'a fully blown Zulu broadcasting service for the black community' (Masonto Buthelezi Interview with author and Wiseman Masango 1999) did not impose his ideas on listeners, but rather, with his soon-acquired colleagues Guybon Mpanza and Hubert Sishi, sought the views of those at whom the broadcasts were aimed. This meant

moving around in workers' hostels and in factories, gathering listeners' views and needs (Couzens: 1985) and turning their finds back into use in the snippets of Zulu language airtime allowed them.

The migration of the aural form to a new medium was clearly intrinsic to Masinga's vision for a classical modern Zulu culture which was part of modern technology and was because of its aural base particularly well suited to radio. In the course of his long career as a multi-skilled broadcaster working with the Zulu language Masinga seems to have carried out many careful balancing acts. This was imperative, as he found himself for the whole of his thirty-years or more career constantly working with powerful superiors in a racial hierarchy of radio where 'voice' was always black but the controllers, both technical and in terms of authority, were always white.ⁱⁱⁱ Masinga's guile and determination to pass through forms of control to create the free space of imagination that a musical such as 'Chief Above and Chief Below' and other subsequent items brought on air was impressive in its own right. Yet it seems even more so when set alongside the crude official attempts to use the airwaves, with language regarded as a simple and singular sledge-hammer medium for information communication alone, and to be directed at a subject population. In this vein the earliest archived recording of an instance where Zulu featured alongside English, Afrikaans, Sotho and Xhosa is in the Johannesburg Sound Archives of the SABC in Auckland Park, dated September 1942 (SABC: 'First Broadcast to Natives 1/63 (42)'). The strange and strained register of the announcements, introduced and concluded by 'African' sounds: a clip of men's voices in antiphonal song with rhythmic hand-claps, a flute melody, a lion's roar, was perhaps an attempt at African-sounding rhetoric to convey a war-time message conveying the extension of radio broadcasts to 'the Abantu (people)

of our land'. Extracts from the English announcement (which followed that in Afrikaans) were as follows:

There will be broadcasts for Natives from today. Hear this word which makes known in the land that by the kind-heartedness of our country's wireless system a boon is being granted to the Natives of our land, namely the Abantu of the Union of South Africa...We begin this morning with an explanatory statement by the Department of Native Affairs...Because of the generosity of the SABC from today 30 minutes on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday will be broadcast at 9.30 in the morning by the SABC for the Abantu. (SABC: 1/63 (42))

It must have been clear to the astute black listener that only some kind of perceived national crisis had occasioned this largesse. Harcourt Collett, the announcer for the English segment, with his high-pitched, throttled BBC-like voice, continued to inform 'the Natives':

Yes indeed there are still loudspeakers in the big cities in our country. They will go on, set there by the Native Affairs Department [NAD], but the different programmes on the air will start today. There will be nothing on holidays or on Sundays or only if considered to be necessary for the country as a whole as an emergency. (SABC: 1/63 (42))^{iv}

In a sense, this was shutting (or perhaps opening) the stable door after the horse had bolted. Masinga and his new colleagues were already busy with war news and other items for Zulu listeners of the SABC, working from the Durban Studios, and the elaborate Masinga-Tracey radio recasting of the story 'Chief Above and Chief Below' would soon be on the air. The deeper unease about controlling a subject people in a time of crisis was indeed behind not only the September 1942 announcement but the December 1941 Masinga break-through as well. It appears that Hugh Tracey, picking up on an early example of 'radio trottoir' where the politics of the street filtered through to higher places, (Ellis: 1989), had persuaded his superiors at the

Durban SABC that air time in Zulu was essential as a means of ensuring that the rumours in the black community of an imminent Nazi victory which began to surface in South Africa during the Russian campaign were quashed (Coplan 1985; Couzens 1985; Buthelezi Interview 1999).

Wireless Sets as Commodity, Sound as Commodity

Although in the early 1940s for most black listeners, rediffusion – radio by cable to a central point – was most common and '*amawayilense*' (wirelesses) were unknown outside the small African elite, all this was soon to change. The writer and journalist Herbert Dhlomo reported in the Zulu-language weekly, *Ilanga laseNatal* (the Natal Sun), in 1948 that 'thousands of Africans have receiving sets' (Couzens: 237). The heavy items of furniture that constituted wireless sets in those days would most likely not have been in many black homes. It was sound itself rather than the sets which was the important commodity. The sound, which I argue had in some way migrated from texts of aurality to radio texts, was itself a heady commodity comprising not only transformed oral narratives, histories of the Zulu past as drama (here both Masinga and Sishi excelled, see Sishi 2003) and varieties of song and poetry but entirely new sound objects too. Masinga and his early radio colleagues were migrants rather than antiquarians. There was also the issue of translation, and cultural translation. There is virtually no archival trace (as far as I am aware) of the nine Shakespeare plays that Masinga translated and which were put out in the Zulu programme air time. Presumably the Shakespeare plays went out between 1942 and the early 1950s, as in 1953 Masinga was elected to the International Mark Twain Society and that year his translations of *King Lear* and *The Tempest* were serialized over the SABC (Coplan 1985: 161). All that remains is a spoken four minute extract, in English and Zulu, of Mark Anthony's famous 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen' funeral oration from *Julius Caesar*. Masinga recited the Zulu with great dramatic vigour:

Zihlobo, bakwethu, maRomani... [Friends, Romans, countrymen...],

the actor Ian Calder, recited the English far more calmly. The snippet was archived in both the English and Zulu service and aired – perhaps on both programmes - on 18 March 1955 (SABC E86/86; Z/94). Was this too a moment of a kind of cultural translation, where the political weight of something approaching Zulu praise poetry could be felt as held in the revolutionary speech of a Roman politician itself a 'translation', of a kind, by a sixteenth century English dramatist?

If we can think of sound, in the particular instance of radio, at a particular time and within a certain frame, as a commodity, we can perhaps also understand it as a contested commodity. Saul Dubow has noted how the ideas of racial segregation which marked the Smuts (United Party) years of government in South Africa (which ended with the 1948 election) were marked by 'ambiguity and ideological flexibility'. This differed markedly, Dubow argues, from the Nationalist Party ideology of apartheid with its 'unremitting zeal and logic' (Dubow 1989: 178). Contrary to this position, Deborah Posel has argued that there was no 'grand plan' of apartheid. That widely held idea is a myth. Posel suggests that a close look at the workings of the state reveals a series of struggles, with revisions and adaptations. There were uncertainties, conflicts, factions and deviations. She notes that in the early 1950s the threat of African mass resistance was still present, with serious gaps exposed 'in the state's control over the urban proletariat' (Posel 1991: 5 and 6). Radio played a role in this.

Expansion, Control and 'Straight Lines'

'The problem is that the moment we give the Native a radio and encourage him to listen, we place in his hands a weapon which may harm the Native himself.' Dr J. B.M. Herzog Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, South African House of Assembly, 3 June 1959, Hansard p.7221

By the time the Hon. Minister Herzog made this remark in Parliament in June 1959 the truth on the ground was – as Opposition Members of Parliament repeatedly pointed out – that many thousands of African listeners already had licences for radios. 'Natives' - were using the English and Afrikaans services of the SABC and Springbok Radio, the commercial station available, and many were also listening to the Zulu and other African language programmes available in the time allotted. In addition there was a vibrant and very popular rediffusion service which was being used in Orlando and Jabavu townships on the West Rand where lines went straight to people's homes. It was run by the Orlando Rediffusion Service Ltd with the agreement of the SABC (State Archives/NAD/Box 2793; 16.3.1959) and provided listeners with a wide range of programmes as well as some from outside the SABC. There was popular pressure for the service to be expanded to neighbouring townships and the Orlando Rediffusion Service was keen to oblige.

The appetite for radio and the commodity of sound was huge. A company called Titan Enterprises and Exploration, based in Boksburg on the East Rand was keen to sell radios 'in Bantu Areas' and in early 1960 applied to the NAD for permission to do this. The response to this request was astonishing. Not only was there a refusal, but a letter was sent to 'Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioners' in Bloemfontein, Pietersburg, Pietermaritzburg, Potchefstroom, Umtata, King Williamstown' informing them of the situation. In other words, as if a severe epidemic was about to hit the land, the controllers of 'Native Affairs' in far flung corners of the country, the centre, north, south and east, were prepared, warned and informed of the decision that this was NOT to be allowed. Radio sets were *not* to be sold to 'the Bantu' who lived in areas – urban or rural – which were designated as being under the control of Native Commissioners. Titan Enterprises was, politely, informed of the decision and no reason was given.

The smooth and unctuous words of the Minister in Parliament in 1959 which I quoted at the start of this section contained an assumption of the truth of rigid racial hierarchies and the ease of control. Yet the statement hid, perhaps not very well, a profound sense of panic about radio. The Nationalist government had laid out spatial control of segregation through post-1948 legislation as far as it could, but radio seemed to need control of the atmosphere, the air itself. How was this to be done? Radio moreover was a medium that defied even spatial boundaries through the freedom of imagination, conversation, ideas, knowledge which it enabled, something which I write about in more detail later in this book (Chapter 5). The National Party plan was to obtain an amendment of the 1936 Broadcasting Act (inspired by Lord Reith of the BBC) and to institute a Bantu Programme Control Board (BPCB) which would be separate from the rest of the SABC. This would control programmes for the 'Bantu'. In this way the Nationalists, and principally the new Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd hoped to control the sound, 'voice' and everything that went over the air to the 'Bantu'. New transmitters were to be built which would allow FM transistor radios to be used – transmitters which would send out signals in 'straight lines' at very high frequency so that the reception was excellent. These signals would reach listeners in even the remote rural areas. The new FM transistor radios would receive the radio waves that came in 'straight lines' (a phrase the Minister used about the new system) but would not pick up other radio signals. It was a wonderful and devious plan to control. In a way, though, it was as futile as it was vicious. The plan could work in rural areas and give excellent reception for a limited range, but in urban areas it was absolutely unworkable because of the proliferation of signals which listeners could pick up.

The Amendment to the Broadcasting Act was passed in the face of intense and passionate opposition in Parliament which was also very well informed. The attempt to control the

commodity of sound, and to optimise already far-reaching levels of surveillance went into national operation. In June 1960 a new radio station named Radio Bantu came into being which would broadcast in Zulu and other of the main African languages, in the first instance, Sotho and Xhosa. Radio was to become indeed a 'weapon' but to be used by the Government.

Again the metaphor of the bolting horse and the too-late closed stable door comes to mind. Was all the above an elaborate plan with its longing for 'straight lines' not crooked air waves, too late, as the powerful radio stations of independent Africa – Ghana, Radio Cairo and others beamed their signals across the borders? Was it also too late as by this time, the Zulu service which had begun in the early 1940s (with other African language services following) had established its own 'voice' and body of informed listeners? These were already working with new radio genres, translating at a number of levels, mixing and remixing cultural forms for a new community of the air. Was it a case of too much too late?

The answer has to be 'Yes' and 'No'. Surveillance, long in operation, continued and was intensified as the positions of white controllers became more formalised and the Board for Radio Bantu was set in place. Programmes were monitored, and so were the black staff. And yet, in some ways perhaps it was too late. A migration had taken place. New voices of cultural authority were on the air. The ambiguous domain of 'folk' art had remade and remixed alongside new forms, and the trickster figure of King Edward Masinga, the earliest 'migrant', had survived. Surveillance had stalked him too. In 1957, when the United States government invited him to be a participant in the Foreign Leaders Programme of the International Educational Exchange Service, he was given a passport but only after police clearance. Moreover he had to put down a deposit of a considerable sum of money which was only returned once he was back and had

handed back his passport, so he became once more merely a 'Bantu' subject, and not, officially a South African citizen.

While in America he lectured at a number of universities: 'Hertford University, Howard, Boston and some universities also in Washington and Indiana', he explained to his English service SABC interviewer on his return in January 1958 (SABC E86/97 Malcolm Fleming and K.E.M. Masinga 24.1.1958) Masinga, never one who favoured modesty, explained in reply to the carefully phrased, and loaded question, 'Did you have time to travel?'

I think I got all I wanted...I had all the travel facilities laid on for me. I travelled from coast to coast of the United States. Most of those journeys...were to TV studios, broadcasting and mostly universities. I had no time for sound broadcasting I was rather interested in television itself...at first all those lights were really a little bit dazzling but I soon got used to them. (SABC 86/97)

Masinga informed his interviewer that he had lectured on African folk songs and music and African social anthropology 'that was of high interest in America' and also conducted research in the Southern states, 'Alabama, Virginia, Arizona [sic] where the Negro lives in the rural areas.' He complained about accent and, obliquely, touched on deeper questions of race, identity and belonging in America:

One handicap was that the Negroes have got a certain growling and nasalizing dialect...a drawl which I do not understand readily...[and] the Northern Americans I am afraid find it very difficult also to understand one another. (SABC 86/97)

Although not able to control his travel in North America, the South African government, as I mention earlier made sure Masinga returned his passport when back in the country. But with the visit, Masinga became yet another of the many South Africans – including John Dube - who in

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had made the transatlantic journey and shared knowledge of social and cultural forms across the gaps of history and the attempts at domination. Unlike his contemporaries, Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi, neither of whom were allowed a passport, he seemed to be able to move beyond the closed borders of the country with a kind of untouchable bravado. Again, it was perhaps a dance, a tricky performance, but also a courageous one.

Modisane and Nkosi, whose own radio lives were made outside the country and who are the subjects of Chapters 3 and 4, were faced with different challenges connected with race, power and culture. These they handled with their own combinations of ingenuity and panache.

Language, Power and 'the King'

On 31 May 1961 South Africa became a republic and thus threw off the last formal vestiges of the British Empire. Radio Bantu and the African language stations, including the soon-to be formed Radio Zulu, continued. Masinga stayed in place, subordinate but in some way always 'kingly'. To the end he saw the space between languages and cultures as one for negotiation, power play. When in 1970 he was awarded a 'prize' by the 'Nguni Services' he masterfully turned the tables on his white 'masters' as he 'thanked' them for his prize. He did so by using the poetic language of praise poetry (*izibongo*) – to name each of his superiors, and he thus captured them in the image of the 'other' seemingly subaltern language. In his acceptance speech, given almost thirty years since his first bold entrance into the portals of the SABC in Durban, he moved between English and Zulu. As he switched between languages, a colleague translated for him – but he was the master. The harshest praise name of all was kept for a Mr Louw, the station manager of Radio Bantu, under which Radio Zulu fell, at the time. This was presumably *not* Eric Louw, Chairman of the BPCB (Bantu Programme Control Board) when it was first set up, and well known as a dedicated member of the secret Afrikaner political society known as 'Die

Broederbond' (Band of Brothers) (Nixon: 1994). Nevertheless, the praise-name of Umthakathi – (Dangerous) Wizard for Mr Louw, the station manager, is left untranslated in the English at the event; Masinga's comment in Zulu is harsh and yet opaque. It gives little ground:

I thank you uMthakathi. Ngikuyabonga uMthakathi sonke siphikisana ukuvumelana. [We all have intense disagreements but in the end we manage to get along].

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ⁱ An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Conference on 'Commodities and Migration: Things Out of Place' at the Department of English, New York University, 8-10 December 2011. My thanks for the many useful comments from participants on that occasion. My particular thanks to Jo Valentino of NYU for his insightful comments, not all of which are as yet integrated into this version of Chapter 1. A second presentation was to the WUJWRG group in May 2012. The at times stern, firm yet affirming comments by my women colleagues on that occasion have yet to be added into this version of the chapter.

ⁱⁱ See also *The James Stuart Archives of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples* Vols 1-5 Eds. and Translators Vols 1-3 C. Webb and J.B. Wright; Vols 4 and 5 J.B. Wright, Durban: Killie Campbell Africana Library Reprint Series. Also: James Stuart's own compilations for schools use, of material gained from his many years of interviewing knowledgeable oral historians and izimbongi, published as follows (in the orthography current at the time based on the decisions of the Zulu Orthography Conference, 1905-1907): *uTulasizwe*, London: Longmans, 1923; *uBaxoxele*, London: Longmans, 1924; *uHlangakula*, London: Longmans, 1924; *uKulumetule*, London: Longmans, 1925.

ⁱⁱⁱ Personal communication, Louis van Rensburg, SABC Auckland Park Johannesburg, Managed Radio Production Services. 28.11.2011. My thanks too to Mr van Rensburg for explaining to me the basics of radio soundwaves and the FM system of radio waves where soundwaves move 'in a straight line'.

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