

Making the man, keeping the boy

Van de Ruit's Spud phenomenon in context

No one else seems to have thought of telling the story of a boy's life, with so great desire to show what a boy's life is, and so little purpose of teaching what it should be.¹

When Alex, a grade eleven learner at a private co-educational school in Gauteng, wrote his holiday book review, he claimed that 'Spud has typical parents who embarrass him all the time'. I have met Alex's mother, and a more direct contrast to Spud's alcoholic, overweight and inefficient mother could not be found. Michelle is an attractive, athletic, professional woman – a commercial lawyer during the week and an avid off-road cyclist over weekends. The father I have not met because Alex's parents are divorced. Yet Alex seems to sympathise with Spud's parent-induced agonies. There is a sense of association and recognition throughout his book review. I should, perhaps,

also mention that the three Spud books constitute the only extra-curricular, fictional reading Alex has done in his high school years.

His case is not unique. I have come across many parents who are thrilled with the Spud books simply because their sons actually sat down to read a novel for the first time. I wonder, though, what prompted a certain 70-year old lady (who thinks Rambo is 'a very naughty boy') to read the novels.² Or the middle-aged pastor of a charismatic church in Umhlanga who spent much of his time in the Kruger National Park reading *Spud – Learning to Fly*, in which John Van de Ruit describes his awful experience with the Mermaid at a charismatic church play.

Whatever the reason, the Spud novels have undeniably widespread appeal; an appeal which reflects in the phenomenal sales figures the books have achieved. Apparently no one is as surprised as Van de Ruit that he has now become South Africa's top selling author.³ 'All I wanted was to get published,' he claimed in a 2009 interview. 'I didn't even know if other people would find it funny. The comic mistress is very fickle.'⁴ Yet, the first Spud book, which won the 2006 Booksellers' Choice Award, has been described as 'outrageously funny',⁵ 'hysterical'⁶ and 'irresistible'.⁷ In fact, Spud is 'a success story second to none. Already, the first two books have broken sales records, been published worldwide and even spawned a movie – a huge contrast to most somewhat dark, self-conscious South African literature.'⁸

The novels follow John Milton's 'diabolical stagger through adolescence'⁹ at an unnamed exclusive private school in KwaZulu-Natal. When the first Spud novel was released in 2005, speculation was rife that Van de Ruit was writing about his own schooldays at Michaelhouse, one of the most prestigious secondary education institutions in the country. Although he claims that his own childhood 'would have bored people to tears',¹⁰ Van de Ruit admits that his *alma mater* is indeed his 'visual base' for the books.¹¹ He artfully dislocates himself from the story, however, by claiming that 'a lot of things happened to me while I was at Michaelhouse and I've lost track of what's real and what's not. I have embellished it and included the myths that were around when I was there. I've also used other people's stories. But there is truth at its core.'¹²

'I knew I had a story in me ...'¹³

'After a century's output of captains of industry and sugar farmers [...], Michaelhouse, the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands private high school, has started producing writers and actors. [...] No doubt the school will recover'.¹⁴ This tongue-in-cheek comment was made by a Michaelhouse Old Boy in response to Van de Ruit's first novel, which represents characters from 'well beyond the lunatic fringe'¹⁵ and situations that appear bizarre in the context of a prominent private school with a proud and rich heritage. In short, a novel which probably does not '*fit the image* a school likes to have of itself'.¹⁶ Particularly not a school which aspires to the high ideals summarised by the present Rector of Michaelhouse, Guy N. Pearson, in a speech delivered in 2006: 'At Michaelhouse we strive to produce young men with a man's determination to do right, a man's courage to do good, a man's sympathy for other people's troubles, a man's patience and strength with his own and a man's intolerance for injustice to others.'¹⁷

The image that Michaelhouse has of itself has been more than a century in the making and has its roots in the British public school system, which was extremely influential during the years when Natal was a British colony. According to Peter Randall in *Little England on the Veld: The English Private School System in South Africa*, '[t]here is no doubt that the original committee thought of Michaelhouse in terms of the public schools in England'.¹⁸ Hence, Michaelhouse numbered among the South African private schools which were 'staffed by expatriate British schoolmasters [...] and took on all the trappings of their British models: "houses", prefects,

uniforms, compulsory games, corporal punishment and military cadets for the boys, a classical curriculum and the old school network'.¹⁹

Simultaneous with the implementation of such characteristic elements in elite South African schools was the inculcation of British public school ideals.²⁰ According to Robert Morrell in *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in Colonial Natal*,²¹ these ideals 'took root [...] primarily via the exportation of its old boys to the colonies'. For example, Morrell claims that Michaelhouse

had a strong connection with Rugby. Its predecessor, Bishop's College in Pietermaritzburg, was headed by C.C. Prichard, curate at Rugby and Oxford graduate. Its first headmaster was a public school boy and Glasgow and Cambridge University graduate. He was followed by Canon E.B. Hugh Jones (1903-10) of Marlborough and Jesus College, Oxford. The following three headmasters were all public school products [...] and all were Cambridge graduates.²²

The school was established in 1896, and on Speech Day in 1897, the founder of the institution, James Cameron Todd, described the school's vision in terms clearly imitative of that of its British counterparts: 'Our aim is to make, not accountants, not clerks, not clergymen, but men; men of understanding, thought and culture.'²³ Similarly, A.W.S. Brown, headmaster of Michaelhouse from 1910 to 1916, is said to have subscribed to British boys' public school values that 'unhesitatingly put character before intellect'.²⁴ In the Spud books, however, the historical link with 'the green and pleasant land'²⁵ is only celebrated until it threatens the Under 14A cricket team's hitherto unbeaten season. In

anticipation of a match against St Edmund's from Surrey, The Guv 'rambled on for ages about national pride and destroying the imperial bastards'.²⁶

Nevertheless, to this day, Michaelhouse prides itself on its British public school heritage, a feature which is described as a main characteristic of the architectural layout of the school. One is informed that 'archways and corridors connect each quadrangle, reminiscent of the architectural design of leading British schools'.²⁷ During his first week at the school, Spud notices the layout of the buildings, but the historical significance of the school's architecture seems, at first, to be lost on him. With evident frustration he remarks that 'every room has a code name and every quadrangle is identical, no doubt designed to completely confuse new boys'.²⁸

In fact, Spud finds the size and style of the buildings (which remind him 'of those medieval castles in our old history books at primary school')²⁹ rather intimidating. He describes his arrival on the first day of term:

We pass through and drive along a beautiful avenue of trees called Pilgrim's Walk towards the school's gigantic red brick buildings which are all covered in green moss and ivy. My father is so busy pointing out a pair of mating dogs to my mother that he doesn't spot the speed bump that savages the underbelly of the car. Our station wagon limps up to the school and slides in between a Rolls Royce and a Mercedes-Benz. To announce its grand arrival our rust-infested jalopy vomits up a couple of gallons of oil onto the ancient cobblestone paving. [...] I do my best to blend in but it feels like the Boswell Wilkie Circus has just pulled into town.³⁰

Apart from drawing particular attention to the grandeur of the school, the most significant aspect of this humorous description is the fact that Spud, a scholarship student from a middle-class home, feels sadly out of place at this elite institution. This is not at all surprising when one considers the history of the school's exclusive student intake.

In 'Arnolds of the Bushveld', Honey argues that the implicit elitism of the British public school model was 'functionally appropriate to the existing social and political system of South Africa'.³¹ This was particularly true at the time when the old private schools were established in the Natal colony. Therefore, as Morrell points out, 'the elite schools acted more to exclude than to include',³² and the vast majority of boys (including Africans, Indians and working-class whites) remained 'outside the charmed circle'.³³ In this way, the schools were crucial to the generation of what one might term 'colonial gentry' and the definition of white hegemonic masculinity through its products.³⁴

Although white hegemonic masculinity is clearly predominant in the Spud novels, the representation of the black head of house, Luthuli, as a strong, competent leadership figure in this previously discriminatory context is obviously a reflection of the political and social changes that were taking place in South Africa at the time in which the narrative is set. Luthuli, who is one of only four black pupils in the school, has achieved a position of authority in the school and is responsible for maintaining discipline in the house. This deviation from what Spud perceives as the norm takes him by surprise and he remarks, 'I think this is the first time I've ever taken instructions from a black person'.³⁵

Some readers take exception to such frankness,³⁶ while others cite this candid stream of consciousness as one of Van de Ruit's most effective authorial devices. Another is possibly his ability to infuse humour into otherwise rather sensitive situations. For example, Spud's diary entry for Tuesday, 16 March 1990 reads as follows:

Had an urgent call from Dad who sounded ecstatic. He said that war had broken out between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). He reckons that things are fine as long as the blacks are killing each other and not the whites. He's decided to de-barricade the house and donate his stockpile of tinned food to the Salvation Army.³⁷

The fact that Spud's Dad (who also claims that 'Winnie [Nelson Mandela's ex-wife] is worse than Satan')³⁸ is portrayed as consistently manic and psychologically unstable enables Van de Ruit to highlight the absurdity of this character's thoughts and actions without having to labour the point or apologise for the sentiments raised.

Moreover, Van de Ruit attempts to counterbalance such racist comments by portraying Spud as feeling 'wickedly guilty about being a white person'³⁹ and making him an (admittedly rather passive) member of the AA (African Affairs) society at school. It is here that Spud meets a political activist 'from the Struggle'⁴⁰ and also becomes better acquainted with Luthuli. Spud reflects, 'I wish I had been brave enough to tell [Luthuli] how much he inspired me to be a Freedom Fighter and how much I respected him'.⁴¹

Some of Spud's teachers also voice their socio-political opinions in the books. For example, after one of Spud's luncheons at his English

teacher's house, The Guv compliments Gloria, the cook, on her meal and she replies in Zulu. After a while, The Guv asks Spud in exasperated tones, "How the blinkers do we form a bond with these people if we can't speak their language?" I didn't know the answer so I did my AA [African Affairs] trick where I shrug sadly and then look forlornly out the window.⁴² Incidentally, this perceived predicament is precisely the opposite of the one addressed by the headmaster of Michaelhouse in 1905 when he advocated a 'heavy emphasis on English language teaching' in order to end the 'pernicious and "apparently inevitable companionship (of white boys) at an early age with the kafirs"'.⁴³

This particular headmaster's concerns were, no doubt, bound up in the consideration that the primary goal of the school (along with the other elite educational institutions in Natal) at the time was to define, reaffirm and promote white settler masculinity in the colony. To achieve this end, the majority of masters and parents alike believed that the pupils should be exposed to harsh elements and severe punishments in order to toughen the boys into men.⁴⁴

Corporal punishment was seen as an essential means to this end. Moreover, according to Morrell, most boys 'preferred a beating to other non-physical forms of punishment. There was a macho bravado that accompanied beatings'.⁴⁵ He quotes Stiebel, a Michaelhouse Old Boy who recalls the aftermath of a caning session at the school:

After the beating it was the privilege of one's dormitory mates to inspect the damage. I was disappointed that there was not more enthusiasm. "What, no

blood?" said Crowe minor. "Don't call that much," said Heathfield. "Alfie (the teacher) took pity on you, you weed," jeered Elison, who was measuring my bruises with a ruler. Nevertheless, for the remainder of that day I was a little hero and for ten days after, the discolourations were there for all to inspect in the bath-house.⁴⁶

The interest which the beating, as well as the ritual which follows, holds for the boys is clear in this extract. The customary inspection and comparison of welts seems to be as old as the public school system itself. For instance, in Kipling's loosely autobiographical boys' school story *Stalky & Co.*, one of the boy protagonists suggests (after a particularly harsh beating by the headmaster) that they all "go down to the lavatory and have a look at the damage. One of us can hold the glass and t'others can squirt".⁴⁷

Spud's experience, more than a century later, is very similar – though perhaps a little more public and (to use one of Van de Ruit's pet terms) rather 'dodgy' in its details:

06:20 Julian [a house prefect] lined us up in the showers to examine our backsides. He and Bert took their time going from one bum to another making observations and now and again prodding someone's butt cheek with the back end of Bert's toothbrush. Gecko's entire backside is blue and Julian awarded him first prize. There was a flash of light and before we knew it, Julian had taken a photograph of our naked behinds. (No doubt this photograph will surface in some seedy magazine when I'm rich and famous.)⁴⁸

As is generally the case when Spud describes Julian's behaviour, the account is laced with homophobic overtones and a sense of suppressed hilarity. In effect,

the ‘botty inspection’⁴⁹ in Spud’s house seems to have become an institutionalised (not to mention well documented) procedure.

During the colonial era in particular, the ability to handle the physical pain and humiliation of caning was thought to foster the kind of rugged manliness which was considered desirable and suited to the socio-political climate of the time. Masters, prefects and parents, therefore, often meted out brutal beatings under the justification of trying to make men out of unruly boys. The main object for the victim, then, was to keep a stiff upper lip during the ordeal – which was no mean feat considering the severity with which those in authority exercised their right to chastise alleged miscreants. Hence, the ability to walk ‘casually’⁵⁰ out of the housemaster’s office after a beating like Rambo or, even better, to saunter out, smiling, like Mad Dog would have been highly approved by even the earliest pupils at Michaelhouse. One wonders, however, what the founding pupils would have thought of the embarrassing debacle which follows such heroic behaviour:

Next Boggo sped out, rubbing his [backside]. Much to the delight of the growing crowd he pulled down his pants and cooled his bum on the red brick cloister wall. By this stage, I was all set to run away, or wet myself. Then Gecko flew out of the office, screaming, and vomited in the gutter.⁵¹

It would seem that the incitement to maintain one’s poise during a beating is not deemed as essential for the affirmation of one’s masculinity in Spud’s school as before.

Nevertheless, the desire to come across as ‘manly’ still influences Spud’s behaviour. For instance, when he

begins to experience the first physical symptoms of puberty he confides that he ‘definitely felt more rugged and manly in the showers and I’m working on a new macho swagger in my walk’.⁵² Similarly, when he describes his first date with the Mermaid he reflects that the movie ‘was a real tearjerker so I decided to look *manly* and *rugged* and *unaffected* throughout’.⁵³ The fact that Spud associates manliness with the ability to suppress emotion is a clear indication that the old (arguably dated) constructions of masculinity are still active in Spud’s world.

This may not necessarily be the result of any particular indoctrination on the part of the adult leadership of the school. On the contrary, as Kipling remarks, ‘boys educate each other, they say, more than we can or dare’,⁵⁴ and hence, it is (in the Spud books almost exclusively) the physically stronger or more senior boys that give the protagonist the most grief. Van de Ruit, in recollecting his experiences at Michaelhouse, claims that ‘you can’t show weakness or vulnerability as they [the other schoolboys] will jump on you when you’re down. You had to suppress it all and learn not to express your emotions’.⁵⁵

In this context, the report written by the Rector of Michaelhouse in 2008 seems not only ironic in the given context, but also suggests that the way boys handle their emotions has not changed much over the years. Under the subheading ‘Complexification – Venturing inside the hurting teen world’, Pearson remarks that ‘[m]any boys’ behaviour, for much of the time, appears on the surface to show that they are calm and in control, disinterested or angry. Often this surface impression is a mask or a costume hiding other

emotions or feelings. We need to be prepared to accept that what we see with our teenage boys is not always what it seems.⁵⁶

According to Morrell, an integral part of the toughening process embraced by the old private boys' schools in Natal was the initiation which awaited all boarding pupils. 'It was an ordeal, [...] part of the assertion of hierarchical power by senior over junior boys but also part of the creation of identity.'⁵⁷ In his second year at the school, Spud and his dormitory mates eagerly await the opening of the 'first year hunting season'⁵⁸ when they are permitted to assert their undeniable (albeit limited) authority over the first years. Similarly, Van de Ruit admits that, like Spud, 'his first year at [Michaelhouse] was very hard, [but] he felt like a king when he finally left'.⁵⁹

While the formal initiations at Spud's school are not portrayed as exceptionally tortuous, it is the dreaded birthday rituals that strike one as particularly harsh – especially considering that these affect only one victim at a time. The sense of mutual suffering and camaraderie that sustains the boys during group initiations is therefore absent when, for example, Spud is subjected to a painful scrubbing and polishing by between 15 and 20 boys.⁶⁰

As in the early years, the teachers, prefects and seniors generally turn a blind eye to such procedures, probably regarding them as 'a healthy and important part of the extra-curricular activities of the school'.⁶¹ Moreover, initiation is, in many instances, still viewed as an essential 'ritual of institutional entry'.⁶² As Rambo explains to the distraught Vern, even Roger (the dormitory cat) cannot

be accepted as a proper member of the Crazy Eight unless he is given a birthday present (ducked in the fountain).⁶³

This unavoidable process remains, nevertheless, a painful one and Van de Ruit recalls that 'there were things going on that I didn't like and the school couldn't control the cruelty of some of the boys. I have an ambiguous response to it and that comes through in *Spud*. The physical bullying you can handle, but the verbal stuff you can't. It hurts.'⁶⁴ Spud experiences verbal abuse from Rambo and the rest of the Crazy Eight when they turn against him for talking politics with Luthuli and keeping a diary. Spud recalls the tension and emotional turmoil of the event:

I waited until Rambo released the front of my T-shirt. I felt relieved that he wasn't going to hit me although this didn't make up for the sudden loss of all my friends. I lay in bed with everything humming and spinning. When I tried to close my eyes large yellow and red shapes rose up deep in my head. There was a pain in my stomach halfway between my belly button and my chest bone. It felt like a giant octopus wrapping his tentacles around my organs and then squeezing them in one long movement. I felt so homesick.⁶⁵

In this kind of environment, it seems inevitable that the boys who would suffer most would be those who were perceived as odd or weak. Morrell, in the context of boys' private schools during the colonial period, comments that

little is known about the secret lives of anguish in the boarding schools. There is nevertheless sufficient evidence to show that intolerance of difference (sexual, social, morphological) existed. If one's voice was too high, one's legs

too thin, ability at games absent, one became the object of ridicule.⁶⁶

Gecko, Spud's frail friend, feels the effects of this treatment and says, "I tell you, Spud, this place is like an insane asylum! There are maniacs in this place – even our headmaster's a maniac! Don't you feel it too? It's like there's always someone out to get you, or laugh at you or make you feel like an idiot or a coward or something ..."⁶⁷ Spud reflects, "Gecko is right – if you are on the wrong side of the fence, this place is hell."⁶⁸

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that when Van de Ruit is asked whether he would send his own son to Michaelhouse, his answer is ambivalent: "If I had the money ... it would depend on the child. The extrovert, sporty, leader type, yes, I would. Not otherwise. A school dormitory can be a war zone, and it's something no school can really control."⁶⁹

It is clear from extracts like this that Van de Ruit is anxious to give the impression that he does not bear a grudge towards his old school. By emphasising that the bad experiences he had at Michaelhouse were beyond the control of the school authorities, the author is obviously attempting to mitigate the potentially negative effect of the novels on the reputation of the school itself. Moreover, according to Paterson, "Van de Ruit doesn't name the school in the book as he didn't [*sic*] want people to get caught up in the idea that the book was about Michaelhouse. "I didn't want to name the school as I didn't want to smack it on the head"⁷⁰

Evidently, Van de Ruit had to deal with several issues which arose during his high school years, and it is possible

that writing the Spud books has helped him come to terms with his ambiguous feelings. During an interview, he claimed that "the anger has passed. [I]n retrospect, most people will agree that it is more enjoyable to laugh at awful rituals, belittling pranks and general boys' school behaviour than it is to get all riled up about it."⁷¹

It is not surprising that before *Spud* was published 'plenty of people associated with [Michaelhouse] were anxious about what was coming. There have been many coming-of-age novels and school memoirs over the years, although not usually funny ones, that could have done the schools where they are based no good at all.'⁷² For example, Alec Waugh's *Loom of Youth*, which was published in 1917 shortly after the young author had been removed from Sherborne (a British public school) because of improper behaviour, sparked an enormous debate about the state of boys' schools in several prominent British newspapers.⁷³

Therefore, in view of the generally subversive tenor of the novels, the question arises as to whether Van de Ruit's frank depictions of schoolboy experience (though neither explicitly autobiographical nor entirely fictional) could be injurious to Michaelhouse's reputation.⁷⁴

In order to mitigate this possibility, Guy Pearson (Michaelhouse Rector) stressed the fictional aspect of the novels in an interview with Margaret von Klemperer in response to her allusion to the school's 'new notoriety'. He said, "The important thing to remember is that this is fiction. [...] And a lot of the stories in the book didn't happen here. For us, that's critical. People must understand that it is not Michaelhouse."⁷⁵

Nevertheless, despite the headmaster's concerns, he admits that *Spud* 'has been good for the school' and that the interest [the book] has generated in the school over the past couple of years has been extraordinary; it seems that, even though it depicts a school where boys and staff alike are borderline lunatics, *Spud* [sic] has been a good recruiting tool'.⁷⁶

The headmaster further identifies the school with the novels by claiming that 'underlying the [novels] is a thread of affection and loyalty – something that Michaelhouse is all about'.⁷⁷ Thus, it seems that the school has 'totally embraced' the book as a fictional representation of itself. According to Van de Ruit, Michaelhouse is even using the novel 'as a text book'.⁷⁸

Moreover, the school's association with Van de Ruit's novels has become inescapable since it was agreed that *Spud – The Movie* (which is due to be filmed on location at Michaelhouse. According to Van de Ruit, 'to be back in the old haunted dormitory at Michaelhouse and to see Spud's Good Knight duvet draped over my old bed, spewed out so many memories both nasty and beautiful'.⁷⁹ Despite the bitter-sweet associations the school holds for him, Van de Ruit has also further strengthened his ties with Michaelhouse by presenting the Spud Trophy for Dramatic Writing at a school dinner to which he was invited as the Guest of Honour.

Hence, in view of Van de Ruit's phenomenal achievement, the Rector of Michaelhouse claims that 'the school is doing the only thing it can. It is celebrating with Van de Ruit and enjoying his success'.⁸⁰ He further comments that 'the association with

John is one we are proud of and that we are benefiting from'.⁸¹

Conclusion

In colonial Natal, according to Morrell, 'The physical demands which the schools made on the boys stressed being tough in body and mind. It was the schools also which "*made the man yet kept the boy*"'.⁸² This was purportedly achieved by combining harsh elements (such as corporal punishment, initiation and meagre food rations) with an obsession for competitive sport.⁸³

Approximately a century later, on his sixteenth birthday, Spud reflects, 'I'm practically a man in most areas'.⁸⁴ And indeed, although Spud's physical development into manhood is described with a painstaking attention to minutiae, the tone of the narrative and the degree of emotional maturity remains essentially adolescent throughout the novels. As Van de Ruit comments, 'absurdity, madness and exaggeration cling to my missives like a suspect body odour'.⁸⁵

Moreover, when Van de Ruit was asked what he actually intended with the *Spud* novels, he said that he was attempting to 'recreate and even fictionalise adolescence'.⁸⁶ In this respect, Van de Ruit has undoubtedly succeeded; Spud is clearly becoming a man, but remaining a boy – though probably not in the sense that the historical private schools once intended. Hence, Van de Ruit's internet greeting on 16 October 2009 seems particularly apt and sums up, in essence, what the author has achieved through the *Spud* novels: 'Bye for now, and once in a while remember to release your inner idiot'.⁸⁷

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 2 John van de Ruit, Speech at Launch Dinner 15 June 2009.
- 3 Carte Blanche television interview with John van de Ruit 1 July 2007, accessed 14 June 2010, <http://beta.mnet.co.za/carteblanche/Article.aspx?Id=3344>
- 4 Shirley le Guern, Interview with John van de Ruit 7 July 2009, accessed April 2010, <http://www.newsonline.co.za/articledetail.asp?ArticleID=1808>
- 5 Margaret von Klemperer, 'No Room for Angst' *Natal Witness*, 8 September 2005, p.1.
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- 8 Le Guern, 2009, p.2.
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- 10 Le Guern, 2009, p.3.
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- 20 Janice Robertson, "Tom, Dick and Harry at School: The construction and representation of boyhood in selected children's literature" (DLitt dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2009), p.200.
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- 22 Morrell, 2001, p.58.
- 23 Official Michaelhouse Website s.a.
- 24 Morrell, 2001, p.58.
- 25 John van de Ruit, *Spud – The Madness Continues* (London: Penguin, 2007), p.179.
- 26 John van de Ruit, *Spud – A Wickedly Funny Novel* (London: Penguin, 2005), p.127.
- 27 Official Michaelhouse Website s.a.
- 28 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.10.
- 29 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.5.
- 30 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.4.
- 31 John Honey, 'Arnolds of the Bushveld' in *Symposium*, 1975/6. Volume 25, p.25.
- 32 Morrell, 2001, p.59.
- 33 It is in view of this circumstance that the claim by the fictional headmaster, nicknamed 'The Glock', that Spud's school, which is publicly understood to be a fictional representation of Michaelhouse, has 'always supported multiculturalism and liberalism' (Van de Ruit, 2005, p.56; my emphasis) appears rather disingenuous
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- 35 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.8.
- 36 Such as Ntabeni, 2006, p.1.
- 37 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.125.
- 38 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.54.
- 39 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.55.
- 40 Van de Ruit, 2007, p.84.
- 41 Van de Ruit, 2007, p.328.
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- 43 Morrell, 2001, p.87.
- 44 Morrell, 2001, p.52.
- 45 Morrell, 2001, p.61.
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- 47 Rudyard Kipling, *Stalky & Co.*, (Ware: Wordsworth [1899]1994), p.128.
- 48 Van de Ruit, 2005, p.98.
- 49 Van de Ruit, 2007, p.50.
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- 54 Kipling [1899]1994, p.157.
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71 Kate White, Interview with John van de Ruit, accessed 14 June 2010, <http://www.jhblive.cm/live/kultchaview.jsp?kultchaid=10597>
72 Margaret von Klemperer, 'Book Brings Notoriety for Midlands School' *Natal Witness*. 30 May 2007, p.2.
73 Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), p..
74 Robertson, 2009, p.215. For instance, Rambo claims that the school 'is no place for born leaders and lateral thinkers' (Van de Ruit, 2007, p.286).
75 Von Klemperer, 2007, p.1.
76 Von Klemperer, 2007, p.1.
77 Von Klemperer, 2007, p.1.
78 Lee, 2005, p.2.
79 John van de Ruit, Penguin Books Author's Blog Spot, accessed April 2010, <http://www.spud.penguinbooks.co.za>
80 Von Klemperer, 2007, p.1.
81 Von Klemperer, 2007, p.1.
82 Kirk-Greene in Morrell, 2001, p.79; my emphases.
83 Rugby, in particular, was seen as definitive in terms of developing manhood. Van de Ruit subverts this obsession by depicting several of the main characters as hopeless at this sport. The under 15D coach, an Afrikaans veteran of the Mozambican war, disputes the boys' masculinity on the basis of their pathetic rugby skills. At their first rugby practice, the coach keeps saying (in his thick accent), "You guys is a bunch of girls!" or "Rugby are not a game for poofers!" (Van de Ruit, 2007, p.120).
84 Van de Ruit, 2009, p.131.
85 Van de Ruit, 2010, p.2.
86 Le Guern, 2009, p.3.
87 Van de Ruit, 2010, p.4.