

Notes and Queries

BANYAN TREES AND BUNNY CHOWS

By Adrian Koopman

ALL languages, to my knowledge, enlarge their lexicons through the simple expedient of adopting words from other languages. Many linguistic textbooks refer to such words as “loan-words” or “borrowings”, but I prefer to call the process of absorbing words from other languages as “adopting” as the words are never returned to the source language after a period of use. Very often the word or words from the source language undergo some change, especially if they move from one phonological system to another. Sometimes a single word from a source language is adopted into the receiving language on more than one occasion, and to suit a different purpose. In such cases two new words are produced and it often comes as a surprise to find that they come from the same original source. Such is the case with “banyan tree” and “bunny chow”.

Shortly after entering the Sydenham Road entrance of the Durban Botanical Gardens, one comes across a splendid specimen of a banyan tree. I should perhaps say “a grove of banyan trees” for the original banyan tree, planted several decades ago has dropped aerial roots which, on touching the ground, grow into new trees. The banyan is a fig tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) and this would appear to be a habit of fig trees, for the famous Wonderboom Fig north of Pretoria, consisting of two concentric circles of trees, was formed as branches of the original tree touched the ground and re-rooted, and once these new figs had grown large enough, the process was repeated. An informative plaque on the nature and habits of *Ficus benghalensis* is displayed next to the Durban Botanical Garden’s banyan. This plaque is entitled “This tree walks”, a reference to the process of new trees being



A banyan tree in the Durban Botanical Gardens

formed from aerial roots which touch the ground. The plaque gives interesting information about the cultural and ecological importance of the banyan tree in its native India, and explains that the word “banyan” is derived from the Hindi word *bania* (shop keeper or trader) as these merchants traditionally used the shade beneath the banyans to set up their market stalls.

One of the most popular places for students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg to buy takeaway food is Kara Nichas, situated just outside the university gates in King Edward Avenue in Scottsville. Here the students can buy cheap vegetarian food, including samoosas and “bunnies”. The word “bunnie” is a shortened form of

the phrase “bunnie chow” or “bunny chow”, and as every resident of KwaZulu-Natal knows, a “bunnie chow” is a very cheap and very filling meal, consisting of a half or quarter loaf of bread, with the inside hollowed out and filled with fish or vegetable curry. Signs advertising “Bunny Chow” can be seen outside takeaways and cafes in all the towns and cities of KwaZulu-Natal, usually in the areas where members of the lower-income groups work. Branford tells us (1980:45) that “chow”, meaning simply “food”, is derived from Chinese, while “bunnie”, a form of chow introduced mainly by Indian shopkeepers in KwaZulu-Natal, is derived from – you have guessed it! – the Hindi word *bhannia* (of which Branford notes: “various spellings”). Dore

et al (1996:121) give the origin of “bunny” in “bunny chow; as from the Hindi *banya*, derived from the Gujarati *vaniya* (“one of a Hindi caste of merchants and traders”). They quote a report in the *Daily News* of 16.01.1984 as saying “In those days [1950s] all Gujarati [sic] Hindu businessmen were called ‘Banias’ so we called our takeaway lunches ‘Bunia Chow’.”

REFERENCES

- Branford, Jean 1980 *A Dictionary of South African English*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Dore, Wendy, Mantzel, Dorothea, Muller, Colin, and Wright, Madeleine (eds) 1996 *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AT THE CAVERSHAM PRESS

By *Natalie Fossey*

THIS year the Caversham Press – now Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers, or CCAW – has marked its silver jubilee. To have achieved 25 years as the premier comprehensive printmaking and arts facility in South Africa, and the first of its kind in the country, is a truly impressive achievement. The press has grown, learnt, changed, and developed relationships with many people, from artists and writers to the local communities and their young people and schools.

Caversham Press has been a part of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands landscape and community since 1985, working with white and black artists alike to contribute works of art to the national heritage. The press made its start in the small and picturesque former Wesleyan Methodist church, erected in 1878 in the Balgowan valley above the Lions River. With a lot of work and excitement the owner Malcolm Christian and his wife Rosmund turned it into a professional print shop, relatively small in size but not in spirit, which initially worked almost exclusively with formally trained artists.

Some artists who worked at the press during this early period were William Kentridge, Robert Hodgins (who died in March 2010) and Deborah Bell, who have been significant contributors to South Africa's resistance art. Their major exhibits of work produced at Caversham include *Hogarth in Johannesburg* (1986), *Little Morals* (1991-1992) and *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1996-1997). Each of these exhibitions gives a perspective unique to each artist's experience of South Africa,

depicting the difficulties as well as the changes that South Africans were going through.

The press has since grown in physical size and exponentially in spirit, having by the end of the 1980s developed a community outreach programme with the motto "self belief though self expression". In addition to arts training and the transmission of skills, this focuses on individual development together with HIV and Aids awareness and education.

Many of these interventions are facilitated through one of the most invaluable achievements by the press, the development and sustaining of nine "creActive" centres that are scattered across Natal. Some of these include *Ulwazi* (place of knowledge) in Lidgetton (Natal Midlands), *Isipho* (gift) in Mtubatuba, *Isidleke* (the nest) at Rorke's Drift, *Umthombo* (the fountain) in Clermont and *Ingcambu Ezikile* (tap root) in Harding. All of the creActive centres were set up through collaboration with local communities, women and the youth, to provide arts skills, such as drawing, bead work, lino cut and digital arts as well and life skills for the children.

A shining example is the contribution of the late Gabisile Nkosi (1974-2008) to her local community of Lidgetton. Through collaboration with Caversham, where she worked at the time, and Jabula, the local Lidgetton school, Gabi was able to create the *Ulwazi* centre in a classroom at the school. She spent much of her time working with children and the community, sharing her skills as a printmaker and artist through



Journey of Inspiration, linocut by Gabisile Nkosi

projects which at the same time served to transform and empower her community.

The impressive achievements of the press in its 25 years of operation were recently celebrated with three major exhibitions. The first was held at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg from October to December 2010 and was titled *People, Prints and Processes: 25 years at Caversham*. It was received well and with a great deal of excitement.

The next two exhibitions ran concurrently from February 8 to March 27, 2011 at the Boston University Art Gallery and the Boston University 808 Gallery in the USA. They were entitled respectively *Three Artists at The Caversham Press: Deborah Bell, Robert Hodgins and William Kentridge*, and *South Africa: Artists, Prints, Community. Twenty Five Years at The Caversham Press*.

The exhibitions were made possible through the co-ordinated collaboration of many artists and art historians across the globe, but at the heart of

it all was the partnership between Malcolm Christian, owner and director of Caversham Press and Lynne Allen, Director of the School of Visual Arts at Boston University. Selected works from these exhibitions were also shown at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in July 2011.

The exhibitions showcased more than a hundred prints made in various printed media, including etchings, aquatint, drypoint, mezzotint, sugar lift, screen printings, lithographs, and lino cuts.

Each print was made at Caversham Press in collaboration with Malcolm Christian and with Simon Zuma, printing technician for the past 10 years. The artists represented are many and from various backgrounds with diverse experience and training, and this national and international exposure emphasises the importance of having a printmaking press with the facilities and flexibility to offer the experiences and create the art works that Caversham has done and will surely continue with into the future.

“THE REST OF THE STORY”

Contributed by John Deane

NATALIA'S website www.natalia.org.za now leads to some interesting communications. One such was an e-mail we received in February 2011 from Lesley A. Wood in British Columbia. She had seen in *Natalia* no.6 (1976) John Clark's article "A Curiosity of Settler Literature", which deals with a narrative poem by one John Coventry entitled "Viator: A Poem of a Voyager's Leisure Hours". Coventry was a young medical doctor who in 1850 sailed to Natal with a party of 60 emigrants on a 390-ton barque, the *Amazon*. He himself remained in Natal for only 19 days before returning to England, where his poem was published in London in 1854. His subsequent history was unknown in Natal – until we heard from Lesley Wood.

She enquired whether John Clark was still alive and whether he would be interested to know "the rest of the story" of John Coventry. We replied that John Clark had passed away some years ago. (A former editor of *Natalia*, he died in 1987.) In thanking us for our response, Mrs Wood included the following information.

... for anyone who is interested in what became of John Coventry (Viator) – he married in 1854 – the same year that he published his poem, in Brighton, to my G3Aunt Juliet Lyndon. Juliet was the youngest daughter of a Gray's Inn Barrister, George Lyndon (a rather interesting man in his own right). Juliet gave her age as 37 on her marriage certificate, but she was actually 39 at the time of the marriage, and it was her first.

Unfortunately, things did not go well

for them. John Clark suggested that John Coventry had money ... and he may have, to have made his trip, but what became of it is anyone's guess. He and Juliet moved to Cheltenham, where he was the house surgeon for the Poor Law Union. They had a little daughter, who died shortly after birth. And John himself died of consumption in 1859 – he was just 43 years of age. Juliet made ends meet by running a small school. She and John had adopted a child (maybe from the workhouse?) – a girl named Alice. Poor Alice was left an orphan again when Juliet died in 1864 of "cerebral congestion and typhoid fever". I have never been able to trace what became of Alice, but rather fear the worst, as Juliet's Will indicated she had been having a hard time financially and she was unclear how much, if any, estate would be left to invest and hold in trust for Alice.

So, it's a sad little story. I like to think, though, that John's voyage and adventures in Natal were a fond memory for the rest of his short life. And I hope that he was the kind of man who would have brought some joy to Juliet in their brief marriage.

John Coventry was not a settler, but his brief connection with Natal earns him an entry in Shelagh O'Byrne Spencer's *British Settlers in Natal. A Biographical Register*. (Vol. 4 p.187). Although Coventry is a well-known surname in the province, especially in northwestern Natal – there is still one Coventry in the Bergville telephone directory – Dr John Coventry is the only one of his name to appear in the *Biographical Register*, and so it would appear that there is no connection.

RESTORATION AT REICHENAU

Contributed by John Deane

THE Trappist monks of Mariannahill (see *Natalia* numbers 12 and 15) established their first satellite mission in 1886 adjacent to a waterfall on the Pholela River near Underberg. They named it Reichenau after the Benedictine monastery of that name situated on an island in Lake Constance. Ten years later, taking advantage of the location, they built a watermill, powered not by a water wheel, but by a multi-bladed turbine that was probably the most up-to-date example of mill technology at the time. For about 90 years countless tons of maize and other cereals were ground for the monastery and nearby communities, but in 1987 exceptional floods destroyed the turbine house, leaving the turbine itself useless, precariously balanced on its tailpipe and still joined to the large diameter metal pipe carrying the water down the 12-metre drop.

It remained a neglected ruin for 20 years. Then in 2007 Peter Frow, a mechanical engineer and industrial designer, began and co-ordinated the truly

heroic Reichenau Mill Restoration Project. He managed to gather a group of volunteers who, through regular work parties, were able to save this valuable piece of our heritage. This is a story of great determination, commitment and team effort. The mill itself was completely restored to its original design and condition, while the stone turbine house, which had been destroyed by the floods, was replaced with a steel tower carrying the drive mechanism for transmitting power from the turbine to the mill. The entire project took three years and was made possible by generous donations in kind from a number of suppliers.

An illustrated account of the project can be found at <http://www.hdgasa.org.za/awards2009/Reichenau> or by googling “Reichenau Mill Restoration Project”. Thanks to the dedicated work of the restoration team, the old mill once again, to adapt *Puck’s Song*, “grinds her corn and pays her tax”, and is one of the many reasons why people should visit Reichenau.

TEA WITH MR CHETTY

From Moray Comrie

EARLY in 2011, *Natalia*’s editor received an e-mail from Vani Schütte, who described herself as a South African Indian now living in Germany who had been spurred by last year’s 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians in Natal to trace the history of her own family. In the course of her researches she came across the 1985

number of *Natalia* and the interview which I then did with Sam Chetty. Pointing out that Mr Chetty is her uncle, she suggested that we might like to meet again, a quarter of a century on.

In due course Sam Chetty and I did indeed meet over morning tea. The published interview had been conducted in the context of the 125th anniversary

of the Indians' arrival (Mr Chetty's grandfather was amongst them), and had focused on the experiences and business ventures of the Chetty family, particularly their bus company. This thriving service had been launched in 1958 and continued until, 20 years later, it was unceremoniously expropriated by the local government. Typically of the racist arbitrariness of the authorities of the times it was, in Sam Chetty's words, "something that was just ... taken away".

Perhaps foolishly (although the occasion was purely social) I did not have a voice recorder running at our

second meeting, 26 years later and under a very different constitutional and political dispensation. This time we were joined by Pat McKenzie, secretary to the *Natalia* editorial committee and an old acquaintance of Sam Chetty's. Their reminiscences, particularly of the Liberal Party and the goings-on at the social gatherings hosted by Peter Brown (whose biography is reviewed elsewhere in this issue) and involving several notable personalities of the time, really ought to be recorded. Here is something that surely ought to be pursued in a future number of the journal.

USING 'ISIZULU' IN ENGLISH DISCOURSE

Contributed by Adrian Koopman

THE word for the Zulu language, in the Zulu language, is "isiZulu". In South Africa in the 21st century, it is considered politically correct to use this Zulu word for the Zulu language even in English discourse. I read English-medium academic texts, popular magazines, and newspapers daily, and if they are South Africa-based the word "isiZulu" crops up all the time.

I am a professor in the School of *isiZulu* Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and "School of isiZulu Studies" is the official English name of this subdivision of the university in which I teach. [The Zulu version of this name is *iSikole seZifundo zesiZulu* ("school of studies of isiZulu", i.e. of the Zulu language).]

I have basically two problems with this, and both underlie my decision not to use the word "isiZulu" when I

am writing anything in English. Both problems have to do with consistency:

The first is the issue of consistency in the use of the word for a particular language in that language no matter what the medium of discourse. All of us are aware that the word for a particular language manifests in various forms depending what the language of discourse is. When I speak or write English, I use the word "English" to refer to the language of my own discourse. When the language of discourse is Afrikaans, the word for English becomes "Engels". In Zulu it is "isiNgisi"; in French "Anglais", in Finnish "Englantia", in Tswana "Seeñelese", and in Swahili "kiingereza". When a Zulu person wants to say "I do not speak English", I expect him or her to say *Angisikhulumi isiNgisi*, not *Angisikhulumi English*. I expect an Afrikaans speaker to say *Ek*

praat nie Engels nie, not Ek praat nie English nie; and a Finn to say En puhu Englantia, not En puhu English.

But political correctness requires South Africans to use the Zulu word for the Zulu language even when other languages comprise the bulk or entirety of a discourse. I basically have no problems with this, but then to be consistent, I would expect that in Zulu discourse, the word for the English language should be the English word “English” and not the Zulu word “isiNgisi”.

To take the point further, in Zulu, many words for national groupings are adopted (“loaned”) from other languages, for example *iTaliyane* (Italian), *iPutugezi* (Portuguese), *iJalimane* (German) and *iFulentshi* (French). When these words are given the class 7 prefix *isi-* they become the Zulu word for the language spoken by the national groups: *isiTaliyane* (“Italian language”), *isiJalimane* (“German language”), and *isiFulentshi* (“French language”). These are rightly and predictably the form used when these languages are referred to in Zulu discourse, as in the following:

EGoli kuyezwakala izilimi eziningi ezivela kubantu abaphuma ngaphesheya, njengesingisi, isifulentshi nesiJalimane.

(“In Johannesburg many different tongues can be heard, spoken by people from overseas, like English, French and German”).

The rule “the word ‘isiZulu’ must be used in English discourse”, if applied consistently, would require in place of the words “isiNgisi”, “isiFulentshi” and “isiJalimane”, the words “English”, “Française” and “Deutsch”:

EGoli kuyezwakala izilimi eziningi ezivela kubantu abaphuma

ngaphesheya njenga English, Française na Deutsch.

Although I know I am belabouring the point, to be consistent, a Zulu-speaker should not say or write the words *Angikwazi ukukhuluma isiBhunu* (“I do not know how to speak Afrikaans”). They should say (write) *Angikwazi ukukhuluma Afrikaans*. They should not say or write *E-Angola abantu abaningi bakhuluma isiPutugezi* (“In Angola many people speak Portuguese”). They should say (write) *E-Angola abantu abaningi bakhuluma Portuguese*.

When the rule “use *isiZulu* in English discourse” is only applied to the Zulu language (and the word *isiZulu*) and not to other languages, then the impression given is that Zulu has a special status which does not apply to other languages.

My *second* issue also has to do with consistency, but in a different way. Let us look at the English word “Zulu”, used both as a noun to mean “Zulu person” and “Zulu language”, as well as an adjective, as I have just used it (“Zulu person”, “Zulu language”). In English, there are no variations of this noun except the plural form “Zulus” (and perhaps “Zulu-ness”). In the Zulu language, however, we have the following variations:

The class 5 noun **izulu**, meaning “sky, weather”.

The class 1a noun **uZulu**, a personal name derived from *izulu* above. The modern clan name **uZulu** is derived from the personal name of a son born to a certain Mandela some 350 years ago. The word **uZulu** may also be used to refer to the Zulu people as a whole, as a single identity, as in *Uthini uZulu ngalokhu?* (“what do the Zulu people think about this?”). The plural of this

word is the class 2a noun **oZulu** (“a number of people all with the personal name **uZulu**” or “a person called Zulu and the crowd he normally goes around with”).

From the personal name **uZulu**, all the following are derived:

The class 1 noun **umZulu** (“a Zulu person”) and its plural, the class 6 noun **amaZulu** (“Zulu people”).

The locative form **kwaZulu** (“the place/home of someone named Zulu” or “the land inhabited by the Zulu people”).

The class 2 noun **abakwaZulu** (lit. “those at Zulu’s place”, i.e. “members of the Zulu clan” or “persons whose surname (clan name) is **Zulu**”).

The class 7 noun **isiZulu** (“Zulu language”).

The class 14 noun **ubuZulu** (“Zuluness”, “Zulu culture”, “Zulu customary behaviour”).

To be consistent with the requirement that *isiZulu* replace “Zulu” or “the Zulu language”), one would also have

to replace “Zulus” or “the Zulu people” with *amaZulu*, and “Zulu customs” or “Zulu culture” with **ubuZulu**, and so on. A paragraph like

(1) “The Zulu people of Zululand speak the Zulu language. Zulu customary behaviour requires a Zulu person to greet all strangers” would have to be replaced with

(2) “*AmaZulu* of *KwaZulu* speak *isiZulu*. *UbuZulu* requires *umZulu* to greet all strangers”.

The variant forms of the stem – *zulu*, with their subtle distinctions of meaning, are known to all Zuluspeakers. But to speakers of English, with no or little knowledge of Zulu, (2) above would be virtually meaningless, whereas (1) is perfectly clear.

To sum up, on the grounds of linguistic consistency and semantic clarity, *isiZulu* should not be used as a synonym for “the Zulu language” or “Zulu”. The English word for the Zulu language is “Zulu”.