

Editorial

INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Multilingual Margins* is the outcome of a postgraduate workshop entitled “Multilingualism in Transformative Spaces” (24-25 March 2016) and a follow-up writing retreat in Fish Hoek two months later (20-22 May 2016). The workshop was jointly hosted by the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research, the Linguistics Department at the University of the Western Cape, and the Linguistics Department at Ghent University (see attached program). It was generously funded by the Belgium Technical Cooperation (BTC) and endorsed by the Department of Higher Education. We would like to thank Patrick de Bouck for his generosity and encouragement through all stages of planning and implementation.

Phase one of the project took the form of a two-day event held at the University of the Western Cape on the 24th and 25th of March 2015, during which fifteen papers were presented in the form of lectures framed by discussants. The first day covered a wide range of papers on teaching, translation and multilingualism. Scholars presented ongoing research on multilingual diversity in the classroom, identity performances of multilingual teachers and students, translation in the teaching of isiXhosa, German and Afrikaans, all tied into the politics of language policy and planning.

The second day saw presenters showcasing papers on multilingual repertoires, multimodal media and linguistic landscapes. Both days dealt with the politics of language policy and planning. Nine presenters were postgraduate students, one of whom is a

PhD candidate at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane. Four of the presenters were UWC academics, and the two keynote addresses were conducted by two visiting scholars from Ghent University, Profs Piet van Avermaet and Stef Slembrouck.

The Writing Retreat was held at Calders Hotel and Conference Centre in Fish Hoek Cape Town from 20th-22nd May 2015. The aim of this writing retreat was to bring together the presenters from Phase One. Where some presenters were unable to attend (due to work commitments), we filled their seat with other students at the same level.

The theme of the workshop was ‘Multilingual Dislocations’, a title we chose with the purpose of stimulating thought on how situations of contact are inevitably also moments of unsettledness, disorientation, and vulnerability. Our hope was to encourage participants to reflect on how their projects spoke to the notion of ‘dislocation’ in relation to different types of difference, be it linguistic or some other articulation of diversity. Two of the papers attempt to problematize the idea of multilingualism against such a framing. Stroud and Guissemo in the paper entitled ‘Linguistic Messianism’ argue that discourses of temporality in which languages are inserted (for example the idea of ‘intellectualizing’ African languages for *future* academic use) actually serve as technologies for the reproduction of colonial relationships among speakers. An implication is that if we wish to work transformatively with a notion of multilingualism, we need to nudge languages out of such discourses. One suggestion for how this might be done can be found in the paper on ‘Linguistic Citizenship’, by Christopher

Stroud. Linguistic Citizenship refers to practices of language that ‘interrupt’, and that refigure language as a *repertoire* of multiple registers and varieties, linguistic or multimodal/transmodal. It is about realizing the potential of these alternative figurings of language to shift power relations, to relegitimize voice and to insert oneself into a space of dignity.

The third paper by Mooniq Shaikjee entitled “Drag Kings in Cape Town: the performance of gendered subjectivities online” is a critical analysis of to what extent the various practices in Drag Kinging really does succeed in ‘dislocating’ habitual, engrained and patriarchal understandings of sexuality. Whereas as the two first papers emphasize the need for a tactic of dislocation in order to move into a transformative understanding of multilingualism, Shaikjee’s paper points to the pitfalls and stumbling blocks in attempting to do precisely this in a diversity context other than language.

This issue also contains a poem written by Sindiwe Magona and a tableau of PhD/MA proposals that all in one way or the other address ‘dislocation’. The book review by Manuel Guissemo presents an exciting collection on ‘Global Portuguese’, a set of papers on a lesser-studied ‘dislocated’ language.

We give below some reflections of the workshop by participants on what worked for them at the end of this issue. Hopefully, this will provide some ideas for others planning similar events.

Amiena Peck, Quentin Williams and
Christopher Stroud

REFLECTIONS

Reflections by Fiona Ferris (PhD Candidate)

The workshop was very insightful and practical. It provided a space where we could be detached from our everyday hassles and learn more about publishing papers, transforming a thesis into a book, as well as translating academic genres into other forms and practices to reach wider communities – communities in and outside of academia.

We could interact about our school experiences and learn from that of others. In this way we learned that the writing process should be approached with optimism, as constructive feedback (often shaded as criticism) and rewriting chapters, papers, etc. forms part of the writing experience. We learned to be confident in this process.

This space also afforded one with the time to consider other aspects of my work as a student and young academic. Often we are so busy with our everyday tasks that we forget our community commitment. We talked about practical ways in which we can transform our dense, academic work into other forms to reach the communities. This was one of the highlights of the workshop for me personally, as I have neglected my agency in the communities I worked in the last few years. I will be more active again, as this is not as daunting a process as I imagined it to be.

Interacting with people who are not in academia, but writers also proved to be useful. We would share ideas on style, genre and our various takes on events in our private spaces.

The food, which was plentiful and rich in variation, deserves mention as one of the highlights of the workshop. I have explored so many of my taste buds in the 3 days.

The activities we did in our leisure time as well as the discussions we had whilst working, having coffee, sharing the scenery

proved that we can merge our academic selves into our everyday practices.

Thanks for a wonderful workshop.

Reflections by SindiweMagona (Research Fellow)

Often, in events such as this, little attention is paid to the environment. I commend whoever made this choice of such a convivial setting.

The people with whom you share time and space – this is perhaps even more important than PLACE. I don't even know why this group was comprised/determined - but even if I'd made the choice myself, I don't think I could have done a better job.

Which brings me to an aside – nothing per se, to do with retreat itself, but I believe, an important ingredient thereof nonetheless. The camaraderie that, throughout the period of this retreat, ran unflaggingly bodes well for the future – cooperation and mutual support, guidance, assistanceall things that can only lead to an effervescence; an explosion of ideas – of projects – publishing – New Caps.

The retreat – by and large fulfilled expectations – and then some more. Colleagues opened up and the discussions candid, sensitive, respectful. Issues were discussed – again frankly and where there are short comings, these were not only acknowledged but also examined and road maps toward overcoming them outlined, if tentatively.

In short – the retreat accomplished a whetting of appetite for vigorous intellectual pursuit in the intellectually timid. Hopefully, for those already in the game – it is applause on a job well done – for the now – and a charge to aspire to higher heights In your chosen field: strive to be the best or among the best!!

THANKS TO RETREAT LEADERS /
VISITING LECTURERS / SUPERVISORS

Reflections by Stanley Mutetwa (PhD Candidate)

It was quite a stimulating experience loaded with great exposure. The workshop exposed me to the harsh realities surrounding academics in the new global context which was publish or perish in the first presentation. I was challenged to be focused on writing and publishing. I also liked the enlightenment given concerning the publishing process. I also appreciated the fact that all participants were accorded an opportunity to shape the thrust of the workshop by highlighting their expectations. Also critical to the workshop was the knowledge imparted that publishing is not a bed of roses. This is so as rejection of papers is part of the game which can be disheartening. Having colleagues sharing their experiences about this will definitely have me prepared for an eventuality when I start writing and submitting my own papers for publication.

I enjoyed the session of identifying potential journals in which to publish papers. Through this exercise I managed to get hold of quite a number of articles from different journals that are pivotal in the thrust of my research. I was also challenged on how best to make my research impact on my peers, government and communities at large.

Over and above the workshop raised many pertinent issues that left me with lots of self-introspection. This was also possible especially through the choice of such a conducive venue with amazing facilities stimulating view of nature.

Reflections by Michelle Van Heerden (PhD Candidate)

This writing retreat has certainly contributed to my academic growth but more importantly it provided a necessary "safe space" to have a conversation about the often ignored emotional upheaval/dislocation when slaying one's thesis/beast.

I found the presentations extremely useful because it was practical and reflective of the real, lived experiences of the presenters. As a result, I am leaving with a sense of renewed energy and not only slay my beast but to write, write, write!!! The centre and organisers need to be commended for a highly efficient and well executed programme at a venue that contributed to an audience where participants felt motivated and inspired to tackle their academic projects with renewed vigour and commitment.

Suggestion: Might be a nice idea to start a blog page where we can continue to share and mentor each other.

Reflections by Mooniq Shaikjee (PhD Candidate)

The most rewarding part of this writing retreat was being able to connect with other postgraduate students, and to see that we have common struggles and concerns during the thesis writing process. It was helpful to share

strategies, to learn and get advice from more advanced/experienced students, as well as to mentor less experienced students.

Getting input about entering into the world of academic publishing was helpful, but it also made me quite anxious. For me, the sessions highlighted how inaccessible this world is, how many barriers there are to overcome, and how these gatekeeping mechanisms are in place that make the system impenetrable and hostile to young, inexperienced academics. I do also appreciate that we were critical of the system.

I was very impressed by the session on alternative means of getting your research out there, but I think it could have been radical in terms of thinking of how to challenge the system itself.

Lastly, I found out discussion around our future plans for supporting each other and continuing the process very exciting and encouraging. I look forward to having this kind of experience again.