

Herinneringe: Diegene wat my besiel en beïnvloed het

Reminiscences: Those who inspired and influenced me

From marginali(a)sed *Malabo*ch to an annotating Mmalebôh

Lize Kriel¹

I do not own a copy of Colin Rae's *Malabo*ch. Of course I do have a Xerox-copied version, ring bound in a Snoopy Dog file, which I am not sure I bought because it was cheap, or whether I was really that fond of Snoopy in my early twenties. I always thought I was rather a Garfield fan. That it happened to be Snoopy, is actually quite apt, in a way. Colin Rae recounts the episode of a little dog that had accompanied the Pretoria Commando during the 1894-campaign against the Hananwa of Mmalebôh, got its head stuck in a kettle, was rescued by Rae – who else? – and then got the name Malabo

ch-in-a-Kettle. There is also a globe on my Snoopy file, which I only noticed again after years the other day. If I want to be poetic, or just downright superstitious about it, I might suggest that this was a prelude to the “transnational turn” (some) historical writing would be taking in the early twenty-first century, probably in response to the globalisation talk in so many related disciplines. In accordance with the prophecy of Snoopy, I was destined to find it attractive (it *is* one way to critique our profession's obsession with nations and nationalisms, not so?).

Before those revered owls policing the copyright act pounce upon me, I should add that my photocopied version of Rae's book is not the only one out there. In the 1990s every Honours student who did Johan Bergh's Methodology course in the History and Cultural History Honours programmes at the University of Pretoria, went ahead and made such copies. Professor Bergh had obtained a letter from Juta, the South African publishers of the book, kindly encouraging him and his students to go ahead making copies of the book for study purposes, since they themselves no longer had any record of having published the, by then, almost hundred-year-old book.

All these, by now, former students will also have a copy of Christoph Sonntag's *My Friend Malebo*ch, *Chief of the Blue Mountains* published in 1983. We bought them for ten rand. This is how I got the topic for my post-graduate studies: I stole Professor Bergh's methodology exercise in which we had to apply our recently-acquired knowledge of internal criticism to determine whether Colin Rae, an Anglican clergyman, or Christoph Sonntag, a German missionary, was the most reliable observer of the Boer campaign of 1894 against Mmalebôh and his Hananwa people.

Well, I hope I did not quite steal it: Professor Bergh sort-of offered it to me out of desperation when he realised that my poor sense of direction and my standard 7 Geography destined me to make a bummer of the (now that I am old enough to appreciate it) stunning topic he had in mind for me: on African land occupation in the Transvaal by the end of the nineteenth century. The outcome of my hijacking the Honours course exercise was that Bergh had to find another text for the students to scrutinize. So, he teamed up with Fred Morton and they produced their remarkably

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insightful translated and annotated version of the 1871 report to the Transvaal government in which white burghers and black Africans spoke their minds about the ways they experienced their power struggles in the “contact zone”.² It was quite right that Fred Morton should have been the one to collaborate with Bergh in designing an *Ersatz* for the Rae/Sonntag readings in the Honours course: had it not been for the trouble he took to guide me with his talent for characterising historical figures through painstaking imaginings against the stubborn grain of colonial writings, I may have lost interest in the dead nineteenth-century people of Blouberg a long time ago.

I have two copies of the German publication of missionary Sonntag’s diary.³ I obtained the one as review copy, and the other was carefully inscribed and sent to me as a gift by the missionary’s son, Konrad Sonntag, shortly before his death. Of course it was Konrad Sonntag who, together with his wife Annegret, had taken the trouble to decipher missionary Christoph Sonntag’s handwriting in order to make selected sections from his diary accessible in published form.

I also have two copies of the English version of Sonntag’s diary, *My Friend Maleboch*. This abundance has nothing to do with my rather obvious preference for this witness of the “Malaboch War”. Regardless of my sterling training in the application of internal criticism, I have to admit my personal attraction to Sonntag’s easy inclination for self-righteousness. Oh, how I could read the passages in which he expresses his indignation in my own voice! Unfortunately, this stubborn insistence of mine on the elusiveness of historical objectivity, would flaw my own project in a way I had not seen coming. More and more I realise that, while working on my book, I was closing my mind off to so many other possible ways of reading Rae – subjectively, of course! I should have followed up on the hunch of a wise elderly mentor, one with a far more subtle take on the world than my own, that many of Rae’s troubles could have been linked to the homophobic environment in which he was performing for respectability in his time.

There is a far more pragmatic reason why I am the owner of two copies of *My Friend*: half-way through my project, I had a little accident in a coffee shop. I did not cry over the spilt milk, but over the dozens of dog-eared Post-It notes that stuck out from the pages. They were smeared and sticky where they were supposed to be smooth and readable and no longer sticky where they were supposed to cling to the relevant places on the relevant pages. So there is nothing of the charm of a J.K. Rowling-moment in my coffee shop writing (thank goodness for Alex Mouton who had managed to cajole four(!) people into spending some time trying to read my book). Rather, the image of pulling loose a piece of knitting to recover a lost stitch seems more apt. At least the fresh start, re-annotating a brand new *My Friend*, forced me to rethink several of my previous readings ...

Realising that I have probably spent more time with Rae and Sonntag’s books than almost any other person on Snoopy’s globe, I became curious about the other readers, the previous readers, the future readers of the *Malaboch* books. I discussed the book reviews I could find in my book, but I explored readers’ annotations in the

2 J S Bergh and Fred Morton (eds), *To Make the Serve: The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour* (Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2003)

3 C Sonntag, *Mein Freund Maleboch* (Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Ulrich van der Heyden & Konrad Sonntag – Edition Ost, Berlin, 1999)

two books only superficially. In fact, I did not even bother to look for any in Sonntag's book; in his case I restricted myself to the reviews that appeared in the 1980s, when Konrad Sonntag's English translation of his father's diaries was published. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that Sonntag's book is still too much of an artefact of my own time, and still is readily available. However, Rae's book appeared in 1898, only four years after the actual campaign. There is something about a rare old object that makes one curious to look into it ...

So I went in search of 1898 *Malabochs*. Since, as a book collector, I am rather into work-horses than show-dogs, I was not very eager to fork up hundreds of rands to stock-pile copies for myself (I do not even have a copy of my own book at the moment). So I turned to the libraries. As H.J. Jackson reminds us in his fascinating book *Marginalia, Readers Writing in Books*,⁴ public libraries are not actually the kind of facilities that encourage patrons to write in their books, but the chances are good that they would not have acquired their *Malabochs* brand new. Many of the books may likely have had several owners over the past century. Some of these owners may just have left signs of usage between, or on the pages – anything that could connect me to previous readers of Rae.

I am quite familiar with the two copies on the open shelves of the University of Pretoria's Merensky Library. The spine of the one has been broken – by me, in one of those clumsy moments when one handles an object of great fragility with so much care that it drops. I know there was one on sale in a small curio shop in Dullstroom in 1997. I know for certain, because I had held it in my hands and decided I'd rather spend the money on ... I don't even remember what. I had M-blues and I just wanted to get finished with Rae and Sonntag. I had not yet been introduced to the joys of book history – that only happened a few years later at a regional SHARP⁵ conference hosted by Rhodes University in Grahamstown (incidentally, that was also the conference at which I first met Alan and Tessa Kirkaldy, from whom I have learnt so much about the history of the Soutpansberg, English grammar, the joys of children, and a great many other things, ever since). But back in 1997 when I had my chance to buy a *Malaboch*, my attempts at reading against the grain were still restricted to playing with the text put at my disposal by the publisher. Had I only been more attentive in Professor Cobus Ferreira's Cultural History classes as a student, then I would have learnt my lesson about the connectivity between the intangible and material culture on time! In order to be able to live with myself now, I have to convince myself that that Dullstroom *Malaboch* was a clean copy, containing no marginalia.

That, then, accounts for three *Malabochs*. I wonder how many were never sold, how big a loss Rae had actually made, how many were destroyed by flood or fire. But also – how many survived?

I turned to the internet. I found that, according to SACat, sixteen South African libraries, ten of which are university libraries, hold copies of the book; that there is a fair representation in British and former Dominion libraries; and that even the august

4 H J Jackson *Marginalia, Readers Writing in Books* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2001), p 264

5 Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing

University of Chicago Library holds a copy. That one was scanned for open access on the web by Google. Rae should be proud ...

It is hard to keep counting when browsing through the catalogues of the different online bookshops. One does not know how many of the same copies are offered for sale on different on-line establishments' sites. While browsing, I started noticing a cover that looked slightly different to the one I am so familiar with. The description indicating "paperback" and "Rae" (spelt "Ray") popped up several times, as well as the awkward publishing date of "2002".

Sowaar! An establishment calling themselves the Naval and Military Press actually took advantage of the same hundred years' lapse of copyright that Google had also pounced upon and brought a new batch of hard copies into circulation:

This detailed account by a British cleric is the standard work on the little-known Boer Campaign of 1894 "police operation" to oust the Chief Malaboch's tribe from their homeland in the North [sic] Transvaal. The campaign was touched off by the refusal of Malboch [sic] to pay taxes to the Transvaal, in lieu of which he scornfully presented "ninw [sic] miserable bullocks" to the commissioners who were sent to collect his dues. A military drive was launched against him, which succeeded in its objectives. Malaboch himself was captured alive and imprisoned in Pretoria jail. Replete with racist attitudes and terminology this account is unmissable to all interested in the history of black and white relations in South Africa.⁶

Shocked at this proliferation and readily availability of Rae's bad book, *nogal* hailed as the "standard work" on the conflict, a Sonntag-like indignation pushed up in my throat. Something inside me argued that perhaps the publishers at Naval and Military Press might have benefited from reading what *I* had to say – fair enough, if not the whole doorstop of my pedantic book, then at least the little article in the *South African Historical Journal* in which I exposed Rae as a tipsy-plagiarist-charlitan-war-correspondent-not-even-quite-a-priest.⁷ All right, let me be modest, forget about my own writing: surely Tlou Makhura's MA dissertation offers the far better, more readable, more engaging, more relevant account of the war compared to Rae.⁸ Even N.C. Weidemann's study, dating from the 1940s, is better than Rae's botched job.⁹ After all, the Naval and Military people had made it clear that reproducing contemporaneous prejudicial and pejorative concepts is part of what they are in the market for.

The Snoopy prophecy had been fulfilled: Rae's bad book is spinning around the globe on websites listing prices in pounds and dollars (anything between 24 and 54 USD) – even rupees and yen. But who in India or Japan might still be interested in buying this reprint, since the Chicago University Library's copy, a gift from one

6 Naval & Military Press. Specialised books for the serious student of conflict <http://www.naval-military-press.com/malaboch-or-notes-from-my-diary-of-the-boer-campaign-of-1894-against-the-chief-malaboch-of-bl>, accessed 8 September 2009

7 L. Kriel, "Colin Rae's Malaboch: The Power of the Book in the (mis)Representation of Kgaluši Sekete Mmaleböhó", *South African Historical Journal*, 46, 1, pp 25-41

8 T J Makhura, "The Bagananwa Polity in the North-Western Transvaal and the South African Republic, circa 1836-1896" MA dissertation, University of Bophuthatswana, 1993

9 N C Weidemann, "Die Malaboch-Oorlog (1894)", *Historiese Studies*, 7, 1, Maart 1946. This was the published version of his MA, completed at the University of Pretoria in 1944

Jane K. Sather, has been scanned by Google and has been available online for free downloading since 12 October 2007? By 8 September 2009, it had been downloaded 34 times (I am not sure how the counter works, but I have to point out that I tried four times. A full hard drive at work and a fickle connection at home necessitated some repetition). How many of these thirty-odd downloaders will actually go ahead and read the whole thing? Wondering about actual readers, and not just handlers of the Rae book, the 1898 *Malabochs* jointly published by Juta and Sampson Low, Marsden & Co, shifted back into my focus, and further increased in value in my estimation – curiously, for the very reason Google had taken on their digitising project:

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary from country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file – a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.¹⁰

Unfortunately Ms Sather was a very neat lady. Her book only contains a single marking next to a paragraph on page 16, in which Rae admits his inability to communicate with the Transvaal Boers:

...the General addressed the men. I could not understand what was said, as he spoke in Dutch, but it was evident that an impression was made, judging by the hearty cheers that were given at the end of the speech.¹¹

Perhaps this was what made Ms Sather decide to donate the book to the University of Chicago Library! Rae's early admittance about his lack of proficiency in Dutch made her lose interest in his attempt to account for their campaign against the Hananwa. Perhaps this was enough for Ms Sather to have closed the book and decided to get rid of it ... Oops ... Here I am, of course, as guilty as Rae, given that my standard 7 Sepedi is even worse than my standard 7 Geography. I presume, at least in part, this explains why I am so loath to interview people and why I prefer to stick to the paper legacies of the dead which I can understand. This definitely explains why Tlou Makhura, Annemie Joubert, Johnny van Schalkwyk and Chris Boonzaaier will remain the experts on Hananwa history and ethnography. I shall gratefully continue to look up to them and rather monger my own proclaimed expertise as "history of knowledge production".

It remains highly speculative whether Ms Sather had actually read Rae, or whether she gave it to the library, realising that she never would. Someone took the donated copy out from the University of Chicago Library in February 1939, and again

10 Google Books, http://www.archive.org/stream/malabochomotes01raegoog/malabochomotes01raegoog_djvu.txt, accessed 8 September 2009

11 C Rae, *Malaboeh* (Sampson Low, Marston & Company and J C. Juta & Co, London and Cape Town, 1898), p 16

in March 1939. The third and last due date stamped on the slip, warning against “an initial fine of 26 cents”, is 3 May 1940. Then a librarian at some point put it on “hold”, encircling the word twice, where after this old dinosaur of a book must have been sent off to some closed and safe section of the building, just in case someone at some point makes a movie about Malaboch – or would it be about Rae? Imagine fans banging at the library doors, jostling to be the first one to dash to the shelf and triumphantly carry the actual artefact to the check-out counter ... once more singing the song composed at the time of the campaign, and painstakingly recorded in Rae’s book: “*Malaboch! Malaboch! Ons’t jou gehaal!*”¹²

With admirable perseverance, University of Pretoria librarian Rachel Mahlangu has so far managed to collect four more of the original *Malabochs* for me through inter-library loans. This has been no mean feat, because it is hard to beat a lending system designed on the assumption that users think about books in terms of their content, and not as singularly unique things. Why would the same user want to read six of the same book simultaneously?

The *Malaboch* of the National Cultural History Museum is still in fairly good condition: no marginalia, but the fold-in map has been torn, and some pages have gone loose from the spine – at least some evidence that the book has been handled. A small sticker in the top inner corner of the cover indicates that it was once sold by one “JAMES MCKENZIE, New and Second-hand Bookseller, 238 Buchanan Street, Glasgow”. More recently it must have been picked up locally for R80-00, because that is the price pencilled in at the top right-hand corner of the first page. The Afrikaans stamp at the back reveals that the book was made part of the museum’s anthropology collection. Cataloguers have a propensity for doing things verging simultaneously on the dangerous and the visionary ...

Two copies are from Unisa and both have actually been taken out a couple of times. The one acquired by the library in 1961 (according to the purple stamp a few pages into the book) was loaned out twice in 1994, and once in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 2001 respectively. After that, my inter-loan was stamped in with a warning: “No extension”. On the dedication page, someone had written, in pencil, vertically all along the spine: “12n19 Edwards 1.00 History”. The copy acquired in 1965 was stamped once in 1971, twice in 1982, twice in 1985, twice in 1986, seven times in 1980, twice in 1992, once in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2007 each, and then my inter-loan fills up the remaining space on the slip with another “No extension” stamp. A type-written note was stuck on the inside of the cover, reading: “*Hierdie boek is aangekoop uit die nalatenskap van Prof. C.J. Uys, Hoogleraar in Geskiedenis aan die U.O.V.S.*”¹³ At some point in time, Unisa librarians had replaced the Dewey classification number of 968.205, which was filled in on the acquisition stamp with a ballpoint pen, with identical electronically produced stickers stating “968.204 RAE”. Professor Uys’ book bears some pencil dots and little stars in the margin. There an actual reader had left his mark.

12 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 40 It is a terribly derogatory song and really not worthy of yet another translation – the one made at the time of the campaign is in Rae’s book The phrase I am quoting here literally states (and the literal implication is what I am after): “Malaboch! Malaboch! We got you!”

13 “This book has been purchased from the estate of Prof C J Uys, Professor in History at the U O F S”

The University of Johannesburg's *Malaboch* has been in for rebinding, boasting the former RAU's coat of arms on the spine. A fancy new University of Johannesburg due date sticker, with the two bookish birds forming their new logo, has been stuck in especially for my inter-library loan. I presume previous evidence of this copy's lending history was destroyed in the rebinding process – together with the map which no longer appears at the back. The picture of Rae which was supposed to have faced the preface, has disappeared too, and in its place was bound the rather charming sketch of Mmaleboho (after a photograph taken in the Pretoria Goal by Leo. Weinthal), which in the original form of the book appears facing the introductory chapter. I am tempted to read some unintentional poetic justice into this! Someone must at some point have used this very illustration for some or other publication, because it is marked in pencil as “Foto 5”, and pencil lines indicate how it has been cropped to create a close-up of the face with almost no background, but at least the collar and tie still visible. Was this recognition of the subject's decision to portray himself as a modernist African leader intentional?

This rebound RAU-copy of *Malaboch* manages to keep my attention for yet another while. On page 2, the word “Providing” from the text is rewritten in the margin, and “excitement” is underlined in the text. On page 79 appears a precious snippet of information: a stamp in blue ink: “VERSAMELING TS van Rooyen”, with the name resembling a signature. This I find quite significant. T.S. van Rooyen was the supervisor of N.C. Weidemann, who in the 1940s wrote his MA on the Boer campaign of 1894. Some of Van Rooyen's other students wrote up some of the other Boer campaigns against Africans of the present-day Limpopo Province. Alex Mouton published a poignant biographical sketch of this historian.¹⁴ Here was one historian at the University of Pretoria who encouraged his students to study the history of Africans.

This is then actually not bad: out of the six *Malabochs* which had ended up in libraries and which I was privileged to handle myself, the previous owners of four could be established. The UP copies were the property of Charles M. Stewart and W.H. Younger respectively. For the moment “CHARLES M STEWART” remains for me the little purple-inked-all-caps stamp he had designed for himself, but as I have indicated in my book, Younger was a “marginalist” *par excellence* – luckily I am no handwriting expert, because I would wish to believe that the revealing remarks in the margins were indeed from the pencil of the man who had claimed the book as his property with a confident fountain pen signature dated “13/5/8”. It thus seems that, serendipitously, the *Malaboch* on my own doorstep at UP was indeed one of the most precious artefacts around. Allow me to elaborate on some of Younger's pencil-thoughts (let's assume that it was him, for the beauty of the argument, considering that what I am writing here is not an article requiring scientific rigour – given the specific nature of some of his remarks, I should do my homework properly and go and find out more about this book owner):

14 F A Mouton and A van Jaarsveld, “Angry Young Men: F A van Jaarsveld, T S van Rooyen and the Afrikaner Historiographical Polemic of 1953-1954”, in F A Mouton (ed), *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism. Essays on the History Department of the University of Pretoria, 1909-1985* (Kleio, Vanderbijlpark, 2007)

Herinneringe/Reminiscences

because they c 'not help being robbed

[Upon Rae praising the Transvaal business houses for showing "their loyalty to the State by giving most cheerfully" when their goods were commandeered]¹⁵

Typical Boer procedure

[Comment when Rae accounts how they obtained fresh oxen to pull their wagon – "seized from a kraal nearby"]¹⁶

Minister, literally "preacher"

[To explain the Dutch word "predikant" used by Rae]¹⁷

Very free

[Underneath the English translation of the Malaboch War Song]¹⁸

doubtful

missionaries cannot always be trusted when native troubles are on

[This one I quoted in my book It follows upon Rae quoting an indignant Sonntag, stating that the reports accusing him of having warned the Hananwa by ringing the church bell, were "fabulous and altogether false"]¹⁹

quite true

[Next to Rae's diatribe about the laziness of Africans This one too, if I remember correctly, I mentioned in my book I should have ...]

compare this with page 149

[On page 108, where Rae describes how the Hananwa respect the Boer's white flag]

... and then ...:

One of many instances

Compare with p 108

[On page 149, where Rae recounts how a Hananwa attempt to raise a white flag was literally "shot down"]

Doubtless the notorious Barend Vorster ...

a great friend of Paul Kruger who wa...

granted the contract of supplying donkey...

@ £10.- ea, no stipulation as to age or condition

15 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 2
16 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 14
17 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 15
18 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 43
19 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 104

[In the top left-hand corner of page 160 The ellipse is mine, indicating where the corner of the brittle page had broken off I was a fool not to have mentioned this one in my book]

an incident typical of commando time – by no means unusual

[Comment on a Boer's theft of a bandolier offered him for sale by an English-speaking member of the Pretoria Commando]²⁰

What a precious unveiling of the conversation of his time Younger had left us! He was an observer of both the Hananwa and the Boers as “others”; he confirmed Rae's remarks about African laziness, but he more frequently indulged in typifying “the Boer”. Next to both General Joubert and President Kruger's pictures he remarked “good portrait”.²¹ He meticulously corrected and supplemented Rae's glossary of South African concepts. He had specific information to confirm certain observations, but speculated on other occasions, with a slight anti-Boer bias. He commented with the confidence of someone in possession of insider knowledge, but an insistence to preserve the hierarchical difference between himself and the Boers, as well as between himself and Rae, as a less competent commentator on Transvaal affairs than himself (that the Africans were meant to be subjugated was a “taken for granted” – they provided a platform for this reader's discourse on Boer-ness).

The map at the back of Younger's book is missing. This is the type of reader who may have torn it out and stuck it against his wall to mark beacons on the landscape, or better still, kept it open in front of him on the desk while reading. I remain struck by this reader's sense that it would benefit subsequent readers to read his marginalia – he had corrected and supplemented Rae's text. He had enriched it. A century after the war, he may have made the publication of Rae's book worthwhile – not because he read it in the firm belief that it would help him better to understand the Transvaal on the eve of the South African War, but because it offered him a testing ground for his own preconceptions.

How grateful I am to the editor of *Historia* for the opportunity to write this memory piece. It has ignited in me one last quest for *Malaboch*. Marginalia has proven its propensity to turn a hundred-year-old artefact into a monument of counter-reading. Who knows how many other *Malabochs*, with even more revealing scribbles in the margins, are slumbering in private collections or in shops full of bric-a-brac!

As Jackson warns, however, even though he would like to encourage a change in this approach, one has to keep in mind that many booklovers treat books as collectors' objects, as memorabilia much in the same way as the feathers, the beadwork and the Bible Rae had pinched from a Hananwa household as mementoes during the campaign of 1894. To many collectors the value of a book lies in the pristineness of the object, in how preserved it has survived.²² This is, after all, the mistake we keep on making: that, as we move further and further away from the Boer-Hananwa War in time, the book of which the publishing date is still in such close

20 Rae, *Malaboch*, p 193

21 Rae, *Malaboch*, pp 8; 204

22 Jackson, *Marginalia. Readers Writing in Books*, p 235

proximity to the actual event, should somehow connect us to those events, not particularly through the act of reading it, but through the fact of being there, being tangible and old, and being about the campaign. It is a matter of confused authenticity.

So is Google's mission, by digitising books like Jane Sather's, "to organise the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful". Visible proof thereof is the fact that the Google people failed to open the map at the back of the book to scan that properly too. Perhaps the Google person who did the scanning had lost interest in Geography in the ninth grade too ...

But I've been redeemed. I married a Geography ace, who got distinctions in matric and beyond! After having lived with his maps for almost a decade now – regularly replaced maps that, every time, soon fill up with photos and clippings and colour-coded pins of places we've been to, places he's been to and places I should be going to, I think I am finally learning to appreciate this very particular type of inscription. And I realise this might be the crucial gateway out of the virtual world according to Kriel, Snoopy (eh, Malaboch-in-a-Kettle) and Google.

So, two years ago, pregnant and brave, I drove up to Malaboch's ... no: Mmalebôhô's world for the second time in my life. However reading a map and immersing oneself in the three-dimensional world represented on that map are still two very different things. This is where Snoopy's globe unfurls into a landscape, and where the landscape swells all its conventional romantic proportions to expand into a local world which may have transcontinental connections, but is, in its *everyday*, its own *here*, in which men and women and children and dogs and cows and baboons (one of the animals which the Hananwa people dance/revere – *go bina*) are living *now*.

My companion, like the previous time, was Annemie Joubert. Although now living in Berlin (such irony that she went there where missionary Sonntag came from), she is a child of this region and speaks the Hananwa variety of Sepedi fluently – in fact, that is what she does for a living at the Centre for African Studies at Humboldt University. I was accompanying her and her German students on a practical stint to improve their (already remarkably good) command of the language of this land. Annemie talked and recorded people, their places and their performances, and reminded me that the information according to which the greater part of the world's population functions from day to day, ought not be reduced to what has been captured in text, written by writers now dead, and type-set by printers now dead, and distributed by publishers now dead, anyway.

And yet the temporal-spatial and my antiquarian-textual did meet, several times, during my stay with the generous people of Makgabeng and Blouberg. There are many ways of inscribing meaning ... and just as many possibilities for investing meaning in objects. In the heartland of the Hananwa now stands a statue of Kgaluši, the Mmalebôhô who fought against the Boers in 1894. The face is a three-dimensionalised version of the line drawing appearing on the cover of the 1898 book, also used on their cover by the Naval and Military Press people, and surfacing who-knows-how-many-times on Google. In as far as experienced and perceptive artist Philip Minnaar did what the Lebogos had assigned him to do (and they were

satisfied),²³ this is a construction of the royal household's own making, a visualisation of Mmalebôhô as mythologized from within: Ratšhatšha, master shot that he was, is depicted with his gun, displaying all the attributes he would have needed to hold his own on a colonial frontier. It is a post-colonial nationalist construction in response to, in defiance of, and thus, inevitably, in conversation with layers upon layers of white imperialist and colonialist mythmaking. I would probably first have to read more Annie Coombes before I would be able to say anything that might be of scholarly validity about the statue. Fortunately I have not been able to accumulate enough red Malaboch books for an artist to have built the statue out of those – mind you: if someone were willing to relieve the Naval and Military Press people of the stash in their storerooms ... paperbacks could offer an artist all kinds of possibilities!

Given the textual inclination in most of my attempts to get a grip on our malleable realities, past and present, I suspect my visual and material rendering of Kgaluši would somehow have had to be connected not with shooting, but with the act of reading. And I would have replaced the Bible he was holding on his lap while observed in the Pretoria Gaol by Percy Fitzpatrick²⁴ with Rae's book, of course. In the hand that was capable of pulling the trigger so accurately, I would have placed a pencil. My statue of Kgaluši would have to be one of Mmalebôhô annotating *Malaboch*.

23 T Nthite, "Ratshatsha Immortalised for fighting Boers", *Pretoria News*, 30 January 2006 http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20060130064300492C237783, accessed 19 September 2009

24 Mmalebôhô was held in the Pretoria Gaol until 1900, when the British marched into the Boer capital and released him. He went back to Blouberg and ruled over the Hananwa until his death in 1939. Percy Fitzpatrick served his sentence for complicity in the Jameson Raid in the same prison as Mmalebôhô, and wrote his observation of the Hananwa *kgoshi* reading into one of his letters to his wife. The references are all in the book.