

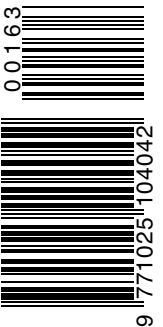
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163 **MAY** 2013



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Big issue: Scientists are thrilled by the prospect of resurrecting extinct species such as the woolly mammoth page 30

FEATURES

5 Dear Dr Coovadia

UCT academic slapped down for attack on Nobel prize-winner JM Coetzee

10 Winnie's ghosts

The full murderous facts emerge at last



18 Smooth stranger steals E Cape hotel

Owner left living in caravan after sharp dealer talks him out of business

21 Big Biotech stifles whistleblower

Scientist persecuted after lifting lid on genetically modified foods

24 Justice in slow motion

There's one law for the little people and another for the well-connected in the Northern Cape

26 Mauritians are slaves to their past

Hellish history still alive in Indian Ocean 'paradise'

4 Letters

7 Notes & Updates

8 Editorial

38 Smalls

COLUMNS

33 Books

34 Sport

36 Letter from Umjindi

37 Last Word

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Letters



Mercky business: Vintage dodge (below)

Vintage dodge

IT'S NOT A VINTAGE MERC IN THE PHOTO (see top right) with Jacques Nell and Mathews Phosa in *nose163*, but a cheap kit car. Check the Volksie indicator on the front wing! The man has appalling taste as well as dodgy ethics.

Patrick
By email

Something more to worry about

OMG, SOMETHING MORE TO WORRY ABOUT. Now we have heavy metals from Sasol's potential use of its biosludge as "organic" compost. One fears that buying anything grown up north could make us very sick, if not kill us. Worse was the news of radioactive acid mine drainage seeping into our water supply (up north again) and filtering into our food chain. Have these companies no shame? Is it all about money?

Jo Maxwell
Pinelands

Drag act's repeat performance

IN RESPONSE TO THE ARTICLE "DRAG ACT", (*nose161*) I have a case against CMH Nissan that is four years old and headed for the high court.

I had a 180,000km service done at Gateway Toyota, Umhlanga. They failed to notice the rotten cam belt, which snapped two weeks later causing R12,000 in damage but Gateway refused to pay. I took my case to Toyota SA and after "thoroughly investigating" they found the cam belt was "fine".

I then went to the Motor Industry

Ombudsman. Gateway responded nine months later. The ombudsman, incredibly, found nothing wrong and dismissed the complaint. So we went to the Small Claims Court and won a default judgment because Gateway failed to appear.

Gateway Toyota did not pay and a section 65 notice was issued. Risking arrest, they appeared for that case and applied to have the judgment rescinded, claiming they had not appeared as no summons had been served. I managed to get an affidavit from the sheriff stating that it had been served – yet the the rescission was still granted.

I will present a copy of *Noseweek* to the high court as evidence of CMH's policy of dragging the customer along.

Thank you for a great magazine.

Neresh Makan
Durban

MBD pounces on another old debt

PLEASE ASSIST; MY DOMESTIC WORKER HAS received threatening messages, SMSes and a letter of demand from MBD Securitisation (see various past *Noseweeks*) for debt incurred 18 years ago.

She has no details and can only remember buying a watch (R999.00) on the instruction of her husband, since deceased. She thinks this is the debt, but is not sure. She paid an amount of R300.00 in December, after numerous threats from Thandini to call her employer (me) to get her fired and jailed and blacklisted.

I got involved after taking the phone from her earlier this month and asking for details and a copy of the contract.

Instead I received a letter of demand and on a second request, a copy of their general ledger which is out of balance.

My employee does not have the means to pay this amount or seek legal advice and only paid out of fear because of Thandini's threats. She is not even sure if she signed the contract – copies of which I am still awaiting.

I realise the debt has prescribed. Can you assist, please? When googling for assistance, I came across your website. You are clearly the watchdog we need.

M S Marais
Via *Noseweek's* website

We are overrun by such complaints, and simply don't have the capacity to deal with all of them. We are a news magazine and not a legal aid or advice bureau! But we try our best to help, when the issues are of wider public interest, as this one continues to be.

We demand of the authorities: when are you going to put a stop to this disgustingly exploitative business? – Ed.

Key information needed

APPARENTLY NEARLY 300 PLACES HAVE BEEN declared National Key Points and Strategic Installations. Is there a list? It makes sense if airports, power stations, refineries etc qualify, but it would be interesting to learn what else (apart from Nkandla) has been designated. Maybe Gupta's curry emporium?

Thank you for an informative journal.

Penny Tindall
By email



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Sharp criticism of Nobel literature prize-winner J M Coetzee (nose161) by a UCT academic reeks of jealousy and arrogance says Sabela Taylor

Dear Dr Coovadia

I HAVE WATCHED YOUR WRITING WITH great interest. As an up-and-coming novelist I believed I had found your talent worthy of following carefully. But your merciless dissection of J M Coetzee I find thoroughly distasteful for a number of reasons.

In the early 1980s, I slogged through undergraduate English at UCT, earning no distinction whatsoever. It was, however, my privilege to have brushed past J M Coetzee as well as Dorothy Driver, who very competently taught a course in African Literature.

Dorothy was in those days known as Dorothy, John as John, Jeremy Cronin as Jeremy, Mary Simons as Mary and so forth – we were generally on informal terms with our teachers.

I found myself in class with John, learning semiotics – of which I understood not a whit – and structural analysis, of which I understood even less. John tried his best to be patient – no mean feat as half the students appeared to be fast asleep.

According to you, John made “everyone” depressed. I found myself exhilarated by his teaching. He was unlike any other professor. His learning was broad and his research went way beyond the box of the set curriculum. I walked out of his course with an altered consciousness.

Dorothy did the same: she took us through the length and breadth of African literature and showed me things I had not imagined, given the narrow-minded so-called schooling of my youth.

So Dr Coovadia: I must take you to task. In first-year philosophy, I was taught that *ad hominem* argumentation was reasoning that hit below the belt and that, whilst a man might be deemed fragile in terms of his personal relationship to the world, this did not necessarily render his academic achievements redundant.

John has the human right to settle in Adelaide or wherever the hell he wants.

And what business is it of yours? Go then and consign yourself to teaching in a bush college if this is how a righteous man ought to behave.

Perhaps you find the atmosphere – and presumably the salary – at UCT “congenial”? Your accusation against John is contradictory; at the same time John found his position at UCT suffocating, he is supposed to have found it congenial. Perhaps the poor fellow was starving for a bit of intellectual air in a horribly constrained environment.

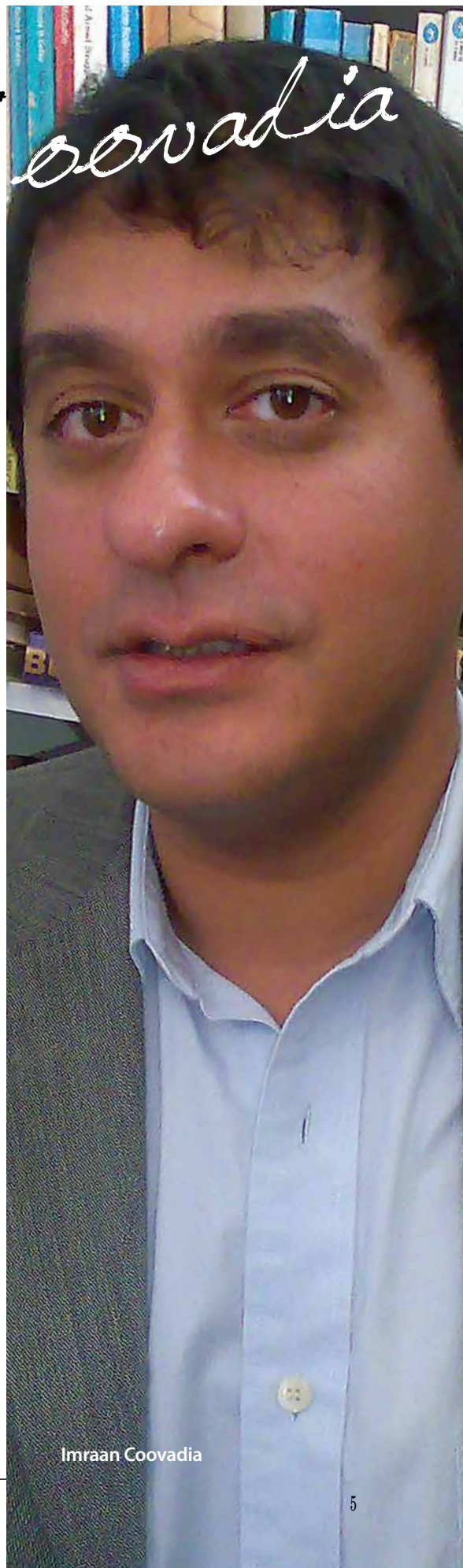
I know little about John’s personal life, since I have no interest in what is none of my business, but considering the women I have met who did have anything to do with him, including Dorothy, I doubt these intelligent people would put up with nonsense from any man.

You appear to imply that John ought to be friends with left-wing doctrinaire and fellow Laureate Nadine Gordimer. Maybe he just doesn’t like her? Maybe his preoccupations diverge from hers? Despite having won a Nobel prize, she is a mediocre writer.

You appear to be saying that John ought to have migrated to the more sophisticated United Kingdom, rather than following the pattern of other “well-heeled” white South African émigrés to Australia. If John is “well-heeled”, it is hardly because he came into luck by virtue of inheritance or fraud but through sheer hard graft.

According to *Noseweek*, you have implied that John may have relocated because he is afraid of blacks. This is an over-simplification. Research shows that approximately 40% of South Africans – white, coloured, Indian and black – would move somewhere else supposing they had the chance.

Me, I’m scared of not only blacks, but whites, dogs, baboons, rapists, institutional thieves and murderers. If this is the “black” South Africa John is allegedly afraid of – well, then, so am I.



Imraan Coovadia

Letters

In my naïvety I once believed there was a place in the sun for everybody. But if this is a “black” Mzansi, well, then, by definition there is no place for anybody who has the wrong kind of pigmentation, and this is simply racism reformulated. Nothing new.

So I too am off as soon as I can arrange it. Because I can. It is not the “blackness” of the New South Africa I object to, it is incompetent governance and a security establishment so unsophisticated it cannot even guarantee a woman the right to go to sleep at night or even walk the streets by day, unmolested. And this is why I am relocating.

Regarding what John does with his money, earned honestly, I am rather hoping he gives it to a home for unwanted felines. What right do you have to tell him what to do with it?

I have other things to say. Why might John and Nadine-the-orthodox have disagreed in the past? I dimly recall a debate between them at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town. The air was tense. Nadine thought PEN, an organisation that brought aspirant black and white novelists together, ought to be disbanded because “the time was not right” for such interaction pre some kind of revolution.

John disagreed, and probably his dispute had something to do with the possibility of bloodletting. John was evidently nervous, Nadine not so; confident in her assumption of rightness, she strode on to the stage. All John had to say after that was to comment that “politics tends to bring out the worst in people”.

It is complete rubbish to say the fact of colonialism did not affect John. The figure of Friday in his novel *Foe* has to be one of the most tragic I have ever met. Friday is speechless, having had his tongue cut out by slave owners. How better could one speak of the kind of barbarism which left millions dispossessed and deprived of the ability to speak for themselves?

So I doubt very much that martial law, segregated bus stops, handcuffed men in Black Marias, were sights unseen by John; or that he felt nothing about these things and that politics did not affect him. His objection always was simply to violence – an objection incidentally not shared by Nadine, one of whose forgettable novels very definitely espoused it.

I have not read John Kannemeyer’s biography [of Coetzee], as I did not have R500 to buy it. He’s dead anyway and can’t defend himself. But I have read most of Coetzee’s works. Though they are difficult, one thing a person cannot accuse him of is a lack of imagination. *Diary of a Bad Year*, *Slow Man*, *Elizabeth Costello*, *The Childhood of Jesus* – though these are liminal works and therefore incomprehensible to the hard-core materialist – they linger in my mind long after I have read them; factors which distinguish a splendid talent from a mediocre one.

Incidentally, your books, *Green Eyed Thieves* and *High-Low in Between*, had a similar effect on me, which is why I am so disappointed in your diatribe

He was unlike any other professor. His learning was broad and his research went way beyond the box of set curriculum. I walked out of his course with altered consciousness

against Coetzee. It has the unbecoming ring of envy to it.

Accusing Coetzee of being a gentleman, for enjoying cooking, of being courtly, humorous, wearing casual clothing, having charm (I admit, as a student I never quite saw this since he did appear to be quite depressed at the “congenial” environment he lived in) and of good looks – what the hell is wrong with all of these qualities? And even if he says nothing at the dinner table, it seems he is going to be crucified for what he says or what he doesn’t.

If there is one thing I find hard to digest in John’s works, it is his habit of self-flagellation. White guilt is most

often referred to in disparaging terms; but what other reaction, pray, should a sensitive person have to the atrocities perpetrated on innocent people by a police state which, I very much doubt, would have been allowed in a public referendum of knowing persons?

Coetzee even considered – I think in *Elizabeth Costello* – immolating himself in protest against the brutality of the social order. In *The Childhood of Jesus* he protests again, this time at a system of state security which robs intelligent people of their right to think differently. In fact, he is always protesting. It is just that the stifling environment in which he grew up did not consent to open protest, which resulted in his works being shrouded in opacity and allusion. He has obviously just not gotten over the habit.

No wonder that John is still despairing; all cognisant human beings ought to despair at the state of the world. Some take refuge in righteousness, others in fundamentalism, or by entering into liminal states. Or in criminality. Some in writing books.

Vegetarianism is an option, but it takes a huge amount of discipline to live that way. Coetzee is one who has never been able to come to terms with carnality – and why should he? His attitude to sex may seem strange to some, and his living arrangements, but does it not take all sorts to make a world?

I am, in truth, unqualified to make these statements. I once won third prize in a competition for aspirant writers. My reward was a second-hand copy of an Agatha Christie novel.

But Coetzee did not deserve the chilly welcome he received upon his recent visit to South Africa. Nor the bland, uncomprehending reception of his early novels. When he won the Nobel prize there was a kind of stunned silence in Mzansi, and my guess would be that it was because Mzansi had never recognised his greatness, and was embarrassed as a result.

There were hardly any reviews of his works in the old days, and there are precious few these days either. I think it is because there are very few intellects capable of either reading or digesting – or even willing to entertain – his work. And that is a very sad thing.

One day when I grow up I want to be a proper writer too. But please, save me from arrogance. ■

Wisedale responds

MOUNTAINEER AND MOTIVATIONAL speaker Sean Wisedale had been terrorising his Durban neighbours with night-long manic yelling (*nose162*).

When *Noseweek* first called Wisedale, we were told he was on an expedition to Kilimanjaro and would only be back after our deadline. A few days after his return, he politely offered *Noseweek* a limited admission of, and explanation for, the allegations. He also posted comments on *Noseweek's* Facebook wall.

"I'm a red-headed South African with Irish blood... I get angry and I wailed from the rooftop after a few boolies. The Simonses [*immediate neighbours*] recorded that, and *Noseweek* posted it. It is an isolated event."

Isolated? Not only were there several last year but, soon soon after the story appeared, Wisedale delivered yet another late-night rooftop performance

but soon stopped when a neighbour, Dr Roberts, arrived at his gate with a warning he couldn't ignore.

On Facebook he said: "I have not committed any crime in trying to restore the peace in my own home that has been destroyed by the Simonses' commercial self-catering accommodation interests. Today I will write to all the anonymous neighbours mentioned in the *Noseweek* story to apologise for having had to hear my protests."

He told *Noseweek*: "The racket the Simonses' illegal tenants made drove me berserk. I stood on the rooftop to wail at them and their tenants who we can hear arguing and swearing at each other. Then we have to hear their TV noises at 6am. We're always living on tenterhooks... Now their lodgers have a neglected dog that yaps all day, every day. In an isolated case when I went berserk I'd got nothing left in the tank."

Then he admits: "We have a history.

We've been litigating since 2004 about a fence, the height of a hedge, building plans, their B&B... On 8 March, 2013 the [*town planning*] Appeals Board suspended the Simonses from continuing their 'Bright Sky self-catering' business and from constructing garages to service those units. I've decided the simplest solution is to build a wall between us as a sound barrier."

No mention of the other neighbours with whom he has also been in legal dispute, nor of the bottles and rocks he has hurled on to other neighbours' roofs. Also, no mention of loudly smashing furniture in his own house.

Noseweek's story was not about a neighbourhood dispute over noise or building plans, but about Wisedale's terrifyingly abnormal behaviour when he's had "a boolie or two".

● *Wisedale is convinced Durban reporter Paul Kirk was the author of the story. Also not true.* ■



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Editorial

Winnie and Dirk

READERS MIGHT BE SURPRISED, EVEN disturbed, to note that in this issue we run a sympathetic obituary for Dirk Coetzee, founding commander of the apartheid-era's murderous police hit squads, while at the same time running a considerably less sympathetic report on the murder and mayhem once sown by the Mandela United Football Club under the command of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. It certainly calls for some explanation.

There is a personal element involved. I met Dirk Coetzee in 1983 and was the first journalist to whom he confided his shocking tale – and his growing disillusionment and disgust in what he was required to do in the service of the “*volk*”. He was the son of the then Commissioner of Prisons, a senior Broederbond. Encouraged by his father, and a touch delinquent, he had initially regarded it an honour to have been chosen for this daring, secret role in the war against the enemies of the *volk*. It was all gung-ho and bravado. But soon enough life beyond the law became plain lawlessness. Tacky, ultimately despicable. It is difficult to be proud of being an assassin, a sneak murderer. He would later declare: “I was in the heart of the whore. I despise myself.”

It was a gradual process. But he grew up and began to long for a respectable, open life. In mid-life he registered for a Unisa law course, signed up for extra Latin lessons, began to plan his escape from the underworld – which is, indirectly, how I came to meet him.

I believe that even the worst person can redeem himself. And that he did by coming clean; by taking that great leap of faith which allows one to believe that it is better to tell the truth, no matter how ghastly it might be.

In her obituary Susan Puren describes Coetzee correctly as an intelligent raconteur with a surprising sense of humour. Initially I found it easier to treat his tales as fiction, but they were all true.

The first problem we faced was that in 1984 I, in turn, dared tell his tale to no-one. Few would believe it and those who could were too dangerous to tell. When, six years later he, and I and my friends at *VryeWeekblad*, Jacques Pauw and Max du Preez, finally had the cour-

age to tell the world his story, most of our worst fears were soon realised: the Supreme Court of Appeal, in a moment of judicial depravity (see *noses6&7*) unanimously found his story unbelievable (resulting in *VryeWeekblad's* closure). They went on to snidely suggest that if we actually believed his terrible story, we should have privately confided it to the Commissioner of Police and the Minister of Law and Order. More or less as they were speaking, the police were dispatching hit squads all the way to London to kill Coetzee.

As fate would have it, he escaped death then and got to die in his own bed last month. So much for Coetzee.

Winnie Mandela is still very much with us. Ignore which side she's on, and the history of how she became involved in secret murder and mayhem at about the same time is not dissimilar to that of Coetzee. The radical difference, so far, is that Mrs Mandela has apparently, until now, not felt the need to come clean – or shared our belief in the power of truth.

But that is not the point of our incredible story: our story is about political expediency – necessity, if you like – and just how far it will stretch and bend. And where could you have found a better team of journalists to write it?

The Editor

GUS



Requiem for an enigma

DIRK JOHANNES COETZEE
15 April 1945 - 6 March 2013

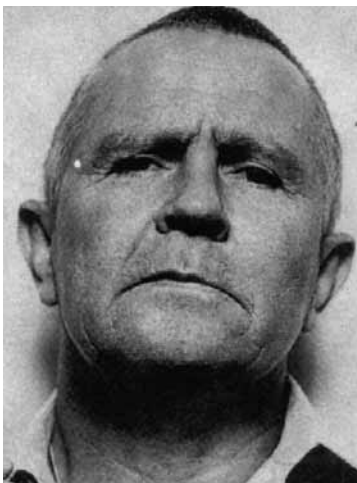
MILLIONS OF WORDS HAVE BEEN written about Dirk Coetzee, the former Vlakplaas boss: apartheid-era Death Squad commander, insane killer, psychopathic liar, scum of the earth. But very few of those scribes, those armchair arbiters, ever really got to know Dirk Coetzee. I am not sure even that I did, although I have spent countless hours in his company since I first interviewed him in 1994. These get-togethers were not always because I was chasing a story: mostly we talked nonsense, about this and that and everyone we knew and those we didn't know. Dirk was an entertaining companion who ruminated about life's cruel tricks and its pleasures in the same breath. We had become firm friends.

So, I was the only journalist who was personally invited to Dirk's funeral on the 11th of March this year. His wife Karin and son Carl, affectionately called Kraai and Calla by Dirk, had planned on a low-key personal farewell by family and close friends.

But the turnout was huge: mustachioed ex-cops, their graying hair matching their suits, sat side by side with shaven-headed spooks in jeans, muscles bulging under their shirts.

In the back row of the Skuilkrans Dutch Reformed Church in Pretoria sat Almond Nofomela and "Spyker" Tshikalanga, shy and unassuming and looking not a day older than when they first filled South Africa's newspaper pages and television screens, revealing the atrocities they had committed. They had stayed in touch with Dirk till the very end.

A small video camera rolled throughout the service so that Klein Dirk, now living in the United States, could have a memory of his beloved father's last farewell. Gospel music filled the church and on the stage stood Dirk's niece, Ds Liezel Krause-Wiid: she spoke of God's mercy for everyone. Her memorable Christian message was a far cry from the exit Dirk had planned for himself. He always said he had a deal with Spyker to wrap his body in a black plastic bag and throw it on a dumpsite!



With the last notes fading, a man in front of me turned around and greeted me as if we had met before. Possibly sensing my ignorance, he introduced himself. His weathered face betrayed difficult times.

"Dirk has always spoken fondly of you," he said, and introduced the man with him as his spiritual advisor. It was a bizarre situation but my curiosity prevailed. We walked together towards the adjacent church hall. I asked how they had come to know Dirk?

"I was sent to London to assassinate him," he said, to my astonishment. "But I couldn't get myself to do it because I walked into little Calla playing in the foyer of the apartment block where Dirk and his sons were hiding. Calla greeted me in Afrikaans saying "Hello Oom!" So I walked away.

"Years later, while I was in prison, Dirk came to visit me. He shook my hand and said "let's forget the past."

"Why were you in prison?" I asked the obvious question.

"I shot a member of Apla (Azanian People's Liberation Army) in 1991 and got 14 years."

With a list of new contact numbers punched into my cell phone, I left and walked into Pretoria's afternoon sunshine.

Susan Puren

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WINNIE'S GHOSTS WILL ALWAYS HAUNT SOUTH AFRICA

THIS IS A STORY MOSTLY ABOUT OUR murky past, but it opens in our equally murky present. Last July, in open defiance of her party's leadership, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela endorsed Julius Malema's campaign for "economic freedom in our time," which was tantamount to supporting the fat boy's plot to oust State President Jacob Zuma at the ANC conference in Mangaung. This did not sit well with ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe, who told reporters, "What she is doing is dangerous". Gwede did not add, Winnie will be punished, but, as young Julius has since learned, the price for challenging the ruling Zuma faction can be stiff.

A few weeks later, officers of the National Prosecuting Authority paid a possibly unrelated visit to the Soweto home of Dorothy Sono, biological mother of a youth who disappeared 25 years ago. They told her they had reason to believe they'd located her son Lolo's body and wanted a blood sample for DNA testing purposes. NPA investigators proceeded to exhume two sets of bones from a pauper's grave at Avalon cemetery, announcing that if laboratory tests confirmed they were the remains of Lolo Sono and his best friend Siboniso Shabalala, they might file murder charges against Winnie Mandela.

Kaboom! The story blew up internationally, for such is the power of the Mandela brand. Amid the excitement, reporters tended to overlook the affair's most puzzling aspect: the missing boys' parents anguished for decades about their sons' whereabouts, but there was no mystery at all as far as police were concerned. Within days of the boys' disappearance (on 13 November, 1988), police knew they were dead. They also

had a fair idea who'd murdered them, and why. They even knew where the bodies were buried. But they shut up about it. For 25 years!

Those police were agents of the apartheid state. Winnie Mandela was one of their deadliest enemies – a revolutionary bent on tearing down white rule by any means necessary: the mortar, the bazooka, the AK-47, even the necklace *in extremis*. Why would white racist cops protect a murderous black power fanatic? We've a shrewd suspicion why they're digging up those bones now, but why the failure to do so for the precious 25 years? As we said, it's murky. Let's investigate.

BORN AND RAISED IN MEADOWLANDS, Soweto, Lolo Sono is a child of the struggle. As a nine-year-old, he witnessed the Soweto uprising of 1976. As a teen, he served as a foot soldier in the UDF rebellion of 1984-1986, throwing stones and boycotting school. His political mentor was his own father, Nicodemus, a taxi driver by day but arms smuggler by night, operating under the direct command of the world-famous Winnie Mandela.

Nicodemus Sono owns a taxi with secret panels. From time to time, he is sent to places he can't identify, to pick up cargo he can't talk about, for delivery to underground cadres of MK – Umkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC's military wing.

Lolo's stepmother, Caroline, is a church minister who agonises about Lolo and his dad's dangerous escapades. Perhaps that's why Lolo and his best friend, Siboniso Shabalala, keep their plans to themselves: both boys want to join MK and go abroad for mili-

tary training. Meanwhile, they're making themselves useful running errands for older men who are already involved in the struggle.

On 9 November, 1988, they drop in to visit Lolo's cousin Tebogo Maluleke, an MK operative who has recently returned to Soweto on a secret military mission. They've picked a bad moment; a police helicopter is circling above the house where Maluleke and a comrade are hiding, and he orders the boys to leave immediately. As they walk away, a police SWAT team attacks, killing both MK guerrillas. A white policeman also dies in the gunfight.

Clearly, someone betrayed the two MK men. The house where they died belongs to Jerry Richardson, one of Mrs Mandela's closest associates and coach of her "Mandela United Football Club," a band of teenage runaways and struggle psychopaths who live in Mrs Mandela's backyard and act as her enforcers. A decade hence, it will turn out that Richardson was the traitor, but right now, he's the apple of Mrs Mandela's eye. Which is why suspicion falls on the two young couriers.

According to Fred Bridgland, a British journalist who has devoted decades to a study of Winnie's life and times, Lolo and Siboniso know they're under investigation by Winnie's cadres but aren't really perturbed because they have nothing to hide. On 12 November, Lolo voluntarily reports to Winnie's Diepkloof home. That day, several Mandela United footballers turn up at Siboniso's house. He packs his clothes and goes off with them, telling his folks he's leaving the country to join MK. Neither he nor Lolo come home that night.

The next evening – 13 November – Mrs Mandela's blue mini-bus Kombi

The extent of the conspiracy between apartheid police, prosecutors and the ANC leadership over the past 20 years to protect Winnie Madikizela Mandela from prosecution is extraordinary. Was the recent decision by the NPA to exhume some of the dead simply a ploy to silence the rebellious Winnie by rattling the bones in her cupboard?



Written by **Rian Malan**, based on reporting and research by **Susan Puren** and **Fred Bridgland**

draws up outside the home of Nicodemus Sono. Mrs Mandela is in one of the front seats. Among the passengers are Lolo Sono, his face swollen, and several Football Club members, one of whom is gripping Lolo by his collar and sticking a gun in his ribs. Mrs Mandela informs Nicodemus that they've come to fetch certain documents and photographs belonging to his son.

"She told me Lolo was a spy and that two comrades had been killed because of him," Nicodemus told Bridgland. "I saw Lolo had been badly beaten. He was shaking and his eyes were swollen. I pleaded with her that she'd got it wrong and that Lolo was an [ANC] activist." When Lolo tries to speak, Mrs Mandela tells him to shut up.

Because his son is trembling, Nicodemus asks Mrs Mandela to permit his wife to fetch a sweater for Lolo. As he hands the sweater to his son, Nicodemus manages to have a quick word with him. "He said he had gone to Winnie's [house] of his own free will because he wanted to be smuggled out of the country to train for the struggle. Instead, he had been beaten up.

"I pleaded with Winnie to return my son," said Nicodemus. "She totally refused. She said, 'I am taking this dog away, the movement will see what to do with him.'"

At that, the blue Kombi drives off, leaving Nicodemus shaken. He can't believe what he's just seen. He and Winnie are comrades. She had to know that on more than one occasion he'd risked his life for the ANC. But he says, "I was seeing another side of Winnie altogether".

At the time, those living in ANC strongholds are expected to report crimes to ANC-run People's Courts, not police. Talking to the police is a form of treachery. But Nicodemus Sono is frantic, and feels he has to do something to save his son. Next morning he walks into a police station and lays a complaint against Winnie Mandela. The date is November 14, 1988, and the timing is extremely awkward.

AS OF NOVEMBER 1988, NELSON Mandela has been in jail for 26 years, serving a life sentence for plotting the violent overthrow of SA's white government. In the 1970s, he was largely forgotten, but then the ANC decided to use him to personify the anti-apartheid struggle, and now he's the most famous prisoner in the world, a martyr whose most re-

'Any move against Mrs Mandela would have upset the political apple cart'

IN NOVEMBER 1997, THE TRC BEGAN A special investigation of the criminal activities of Winnie Mandela's bodyguards, styled the Mandela United Football Club. Almost immediately it became a probe into the relationship between Mrs Mandela and South Africa's security police, hardline authoritarians who held the line against "terrorism" and routinely tortured or even murdered those suspected of involvement in it. But not Winnie Mandela. When she was involved, the hard men became curiously ineffectual. (Similarly, then Transvaal Attorney-General Klaus von Lieres appeared to have closed the door on prosecuting or even questioning Winnie.)

Consider this exchange between the SAP's Superintendent Andre Kritzinger and the TRC's Hanif Vally, who was trying to find out more about an incident where Mandela footballers carved slogans into the bodies of the Makhanda brothers, Peter and Phillip, for allegedly being sellouts.

Vally: "Where was this incident alleged to have taken place?"

Kritzinger: "It occurred in Mrs Mandela's house."

Vally: "Why did the Security Branch not take a statement from Mrs Mandela regarding this matter?"

Kritzinger: "Experience has taught us that if you have to go to Mrs Mandela's house to interrogate her and her daughter, I can guarantee you would be shown the door."

OR CONSIDER THIS ONE: COLONEL JAN Daniel Potgieter was tasked with investigating Winnie's ties with the armed underground. He conceded that evidence implicating Mrs Mandela was never acted upon.

Potgieter: "There was definitely a prima facie case against her. The names were ready and we were just waiting for Klaus von Lieres (the At-

torney-General) to tell us to go ahead with the investigation."

Roelof du Plessis (attorney for Potgieter): "Colonel, were you ever informed why the prosecution did not take place?"

Potgieter: "No, I just concluded that the political changes had caught up with us and that it wasn't a desirable thing to prosecute Mrs Mandela at that stage."

(And later.)

Potgieter: "It was quite clear to me that November 1989 had arrived and for all practical purposes the ANC and the PAC were unbanned. I then realised that never in a month of Sundays was Von Lieres going to prosecute."

All officers conceded that they were required to treat Mrs Mandela with kid gloves. Field Intelligence Officer Paul Erasmus summed it up thusly:

Erasmus: "Any move against Mrs Mandela would have upset the political apple cart. The Security Branch questioned why legal actions and prosecutions were not taken against Mrs Mandela but the general feeling was that she should be left alone as far as possible."

The TRC found that certain security branch officers had been "less than candid" and that certain members of the Soweto police were guilty of negligence: "If they had taken quick and decisive action regarding the charges laid by Mr Nicodemus Sono and the late Mr Shabalala, their children would possibly still have been alive."

Regarding the murder of Dr Abu-Baker Asvat, the TRC found that the police were negligent.

"The police investigation failed to access potentially vital information from the Security Branch and its records of telephone transcripts and other intelligence information.

As for the Attorney-General, the commissioners were "left with the distinct impression that he was at pains not to prosecute Mrs Mandela".

cent birthday was celebrated in absentia by hundreds of thousands of fans at London's Wembley Stadium. Nelson is also at the centre of a vast international plot to remake southern Africa in a form more pleasing to the rest of humanity.

This is at least partly the result of the Soviet Union's impending collapse. The Soviets are too broke to continue the great game. Their Cuban proxies have just left Angola, and they've warned the ANC to give up its fantasies of military victory. In return, Western powers are pressuring Pretoria to set Namibia free and talk to the ANC. As a result, secret peace talks are taking place everywhere. Boer generals are talking to Cubans. Willie Esterhuyse's group is talking to Thabo Mbeki, while National Intelligence supremo Neil Barnard virtually camps out in Nelson Mandela's prison cell, discussing the shape of the next South Africa.

Mandela hasn't appeared in public for 26 years, but his lovely wife more than makes up for his absence. According to research by writer Rian Malan, Winnie made 70 appearances on American network television and merited 22 stories in the *New York Times* in 1986 alone – more than most heads of state. Scores of flattering magazine profiles were written about her. She was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and showered with honorary degrees. "She was one of the most famous women in the world," writes Malan, "the brave and selfless 'Mother of the Nation'."

Soweto security police knew better. The activities of the Mandela United Football Club, or MUFC, had made Mrs Mandela profoundly unpopular in her own neighbourhood, to the extent that her Orlando mansion was eventually burned down by irate neighbours. Mrs Mandela moved her menagerie to a new house in Diepkloof, where the troubles continued. Her MUFC bodyguards were running wild, hiding guns under beds and atop cupboards in the Mandela house, borrowing Winnie's cars for murder sprees. Soweto cops arrested them on numerous occasions. In one case, MUFC members were found guilty of murdering two unarmed men after a fight in a shebeen. In another, they were accused of etching slogans ("Viva ANC") into the flesh of alleged sellouts with penknives and then pouring battery acid into the wounds dur-

ing a torture session in Mrs Mandela's kitchen. (They were acquitted when the frightened victims failed to identify their assailants.) Luckily for Winnie, there was no political fallout from these trials, because the international media ignored them entirely.

Then again, these trials took place at a time when the ANC and the National Party were still bent on mutual destruction. But by the time Nicodemus Sono walked into Protea police station, the game had changed completely. Nelson Mandela's name was on everyone's lips. He was the man of the moment, the linchpin in all peace plans. Allowing his wife to be branded a psycho was unthinkable. (*Psycho is unfair. Winnie was more like the Queen of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland, given to crying, "Off with his head!" whenever anyone irritated her.* – Ed.)

According to Bridgland, Nicodemus first told his story to the security branch at Protea police station. Noting that abduction was a common law crime, they sent Sono to Meadowlands police station, where he made a sworn statement to a Captain Kleynhans. What followed, says Bridgland, "is possibly the most sustained outbreak of chicanery in the history of policing". (See box on facing page.)

Bridgland notes that Soweto's security police almost certainly learned of Lolo and Siboniso's abduction within hours of its occurrence. At least one of those responsible, Jerry Richardson, was an informer. Police were also (according to TRC testimony) tapping Mrs Mandela's telephone around the clock. "If they'd acted immediately, they might even have found the boys alive," says Bridgland. That was also the finding of the TRC. According to TRC testimony, Lolo and Siboniso were kept bound hand and foot at Mandela's home for several days before being executed.

But Mrs Mandela had become mysteriously untouchable. "From that hour on," says Bridgland, "the police screwed up so comprehensively it's hard to believe it wasn't intentional." The Sono/Shabalala case docket went missing. Just over a month later, police phone taps presumably revealed that Mrs Mandela had sent a Kombi load of MUFC members to "arrest" four youngsters who were living un-

der the protection of Rev Paul Verryn in Soweto's Methodist church manse. Mrs Mandela suspected Verryn was sleeping with the boys, a charge the cleric has always denied.

Back at chez Mandela, the boys were savagely beaten to extract confessions, with Mrs Mandela leading the interrogation – and the beating. One of them, 14-year-old Stompie Seipei, was so badly injured that he couldn't hold a

coffee cup. Footballers took him to Dr Abu-Baker Asvat, an Indian activist who often treated wounded members of the underground. According to TRC testimony, Asvat recommended that Stompie be rushed to hospital, but that was likely to attract police attention, so he was murdered instead. Shortly thereafter, Dr Asvat was murdered too – shot dead in his surgery by gunmen who claimed that Mrs Mandela

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Why did the TRC fail to subpoena Bizos?

had promised to pay them R20,000. According to TRC testimony, Soweto police didn't want to hear this; they allegedly beat the suspects until they agreed to withdraw their story about Winnie and describe themselves as ordinary armed robbers.

For Bridgland, the nadir came in 1991, when police mounted what was essentially a show trial against Winnie and others for the murder of young Stompie. "Winnie claimed she was in Brandfort on the night of the boy's murder," says Bridgland. "The cops knew she was lying because they heard her talking on her telephone in Soweto. If they'd wanted, they could have blown her alibi out of the water and secured a murder conviction. Instead, they kept quiet." Winnie was found guilty only on lesser charges, and her brief prison sentence was reduced to a fine on appeal.

Police also played a role in silencing Katiza Cebekhulu, another key figure in the Stompie trial. Former MUFC member Cebekhulu, who now lives in the UK, was the subject of Bridgland's 1997 best-seller, *Katiza's Journey*. (Bridgland wanted to title it, "Winnie Mandela: The True Story," but publishers were too scared. – Ed.)

Katiza was one of the footballers sent to the Methodist manse to collar Stompie and other alleged "child sodomites". He also took part in the subsequent murder, and came to regret it. According to Bridgland, "Katiza decided to tell the truth at Winnie Mandela's trial. Word leaked out of his change of heart, and he was advised to go on the run if he wanted to stay alive. He had been hiding in various townships for three months when on 21 January 1991 a police car drew up alongside him and he was taken to Protea police station. He was ushered into the office of Captain Fred Dempsey, the Soweto Murder and Robbery Squad officer in charge of investigating alleged MUFC offences".

Bridgland went on: "Katiza assumed he would be handed over to the Transvaal Attorney-General's office because he was one of the co-accused in Winnie's trial that was about to begin in the Rand Supreme Court. Instead, Dempsey's officers took him to Winnie's Diepkloof house. According to Katiza, 'They [the police officers] spoke to her in Afrikaans and then handed

ADVOCATE GEORGE BIZOS SC IS one of South Africa's most distinguished human rights campaigners. He challenged police lies at dozens of inquests into deaths in detention; represented struggle icons Nelson Mandela, Mac Maharaj and Govan Mbeki; authored books titled *In Pursuit of Justice* and *Odyssey to Freedom*, detailing his work on behalf of truth and justice.

In 1991, Bizos was retained to head Mrs Mandela's defence team when she was charged with complicity in the kidnapping and assault of Stompie Seipei. (At a prior trial, her "chief coach", Vusi "Jerry" Richardson, was convicted of his murder.) A key witness with regard to Mrs Mandela's involvement in the assaults and kidnapping – and, he claimed, murder of Stompie – would have been Katiza Cebekhulu, but he

failed to show up in court. (He had in the meantime been abducted by an ANC special operations unit to Lusaka.)

Another key player who the prosecution chose not to call to testify was Colonel Daniel Bosman, the secret policeman whose minions were taping Winnie's phone.

This left Bizos free to argue that Mrs Mandela could not be held responsible for the assaults because she wasn't there; she was in Brandfort, 320km away. Bizos called two witnesses to support this claim – Winnie's friend, Xoliswa Falati, and her driver, John Morgan. The judge found Mrs Mandela guilty of four charges of kidnapping, for which she was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and of four charges of accessory to assault, for which she got a further one year. The judge

me over to her. I couldn't believe it. I refused to get out of the car, but they grabbed me and pulled me out. Jabu Sithole [another co-accused in the Stompie case] tied my hands behind my back and took me to the same back room in which Stompie lay after Winnie had beaten him'.

"There Winnie and other Football Club members began to kick Katiza all over. He told me: 'I couldn't do anything because my hands were tied. I was in the middle of a circle of them. My teeth began to be loose and some fell out. They beat me until I can't feel the pain: I couldn't feel anything'."

The Football Club then poured boiling water over Katiza's head, arms, legs and shoulders, and when Winnie ordered, "Take him!", he was put into the boot of a car and escaped only when the boot shot open and he rolled out. He reported to Baragwanath Hospital where his burns were treated and all his back teeth, broken and loosened in the beatings, were removed. He was on the run again.

After a time on the run, he called in on John Morgan, one of Winnie's drivers, whom he regarded as a friend. Morgan gave him shelter, but one day, it was 8 February 1991, Morgan sug-

gested Katiza go with him into central Johannesburg. Morgan drove to the ANC's then HQ in Sauer Street and took him into an office. A woman was sitting on a sofa with her back to him. When she turned around Katiza was so shocked to see it was Winnie that he burst into tears. Two members of the ANC's Special Operations unit, then led by Tokyo Sexwale, entered the room and Katiza was taken to Nelspruit, then Swaziland, then Mozambique before being flown to Lusaka. Which is where Bridgland found him, a prisoner in Kamwala Prison.

In an interview broadcast on BBC TV, Bridgland asked former president of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda why an innocent man had been incarcerated in one of his prisons. Kaunda said ANC president Oliver Tambo had asked him, on behalf of Nelson Mandela, to take Katiza out of circulation. "I asked whether he was certain the message had come from Nelson Mandela," says Bridgland. "Kaunda said: 'Exactly!'"

(Bridgland and Katiza are now working on a new book, described as a "forensic inquiry" into this and related cover-ups. Among those whose role will be examined is famed civil rights lawyer George Bizos – see "Bizos" box).

concluded that it was reasonably possibly true that she was in Brandfort when the serious assaults took place (on appeal her sentence was reduced to a R15,000 fine).

At the time, this seemed yet another feather in Bizos's cap. But things have since gone extremely pear-shaped.

First, Xoliswa Falati and John Morgan retracted their evidence, saying that they'd been asked to lie to protect Mrs Mandela. She was indeed at home on the fateful day.

Then Katiza surfaced in a Zambian prison (see main story), claiming that Bizos's friends in the ANC had kidnapped him and spirited him out of the country to keep him quiet.

And finally, Colonel Daniel Bosman admitted to the Truth Commission in 1997 that his phone tap annihilated Mrs Mandela's alibi. She wasn't in Brandfort at all. She was in Soweto, talking on her telephone. Bosman swore that the murder and robbery squad detectives working on the Stompie case

were informed of this. But they never used his evidence.

His explanation: "They said the information was 'too sensitive' to use. I reached the conclusion that people were afraid of her."

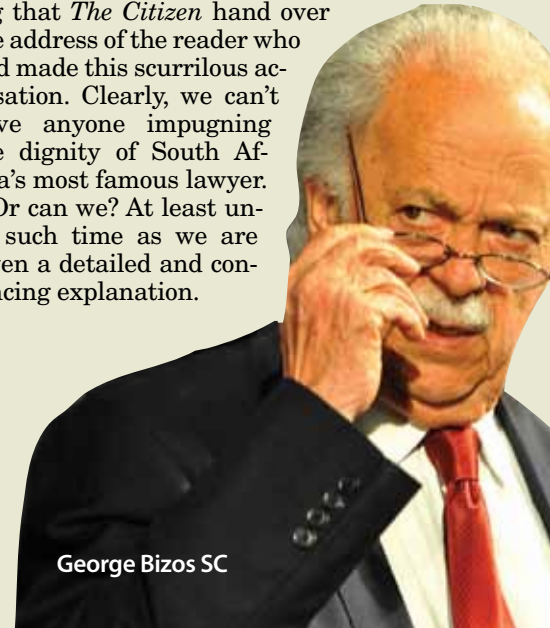
Given these reversals, the Truth commission found that Winnie's case, as presented by Bizos in 1991, was untrue from start to finish. "Madikizela-Mandela was present at her home (in Soweto) and not in Brandfort," said the TRC's final report. "She was present during assaults (on Stompie and others) and initiated and participated in the assaults."

Last December, journalist Fred Bridgland wrote an article in *The Citizen* wondering why the TRC hadn't subpoenaed Bizos to explain the apparent fabrication of Mrs Mandela's alibi. An anonymous reader offered an answer: "All and sundry bent over backwards not to embarrass the 'negotiating process'," said their letter. "The apparent complicity of advocate

George Bizos in the Winnie cover-up is ignored."

Bizos did not respond well. Indeed, he laid a complaint with the Press Ombudsman, at the same time demanding that *The Citizen* hand over the address of the reader who had made this scurrilous accusation. Clearly, we can't have anyone impugning the dignity of South Africa's most famous lawyer.

Or can we? At least until such time as we are given a detailed and convincing explanation.



George Bizos SC

AS AN OUTSIDER, FRED BRIDGLAND struggles to understand South Africa's view of the legendary Mrs Mandela; we devote, he believes, all attention to the spider-like Winnie, and almost none to the insignificant flies caught in her web. This story is little different: we have heard much about politics and relatively little about humble parents who spent a quarter-of-a-century anguishing about their sons' fate. Let us try to remedy that.

After reporting Lolo's disappearance

in November 1988, Nicodemus Sono and his wife heard nothing for two months. Then police picked them up and took them to a morgue, but Lolo was not there. After that, more silence.

Nicodemus went to Winnie's house to ask questions. According to his account, recorded by Bridgland: "She told me that after the Kombi left my house [on 13 November 1988], the Football Club had dropped him off at a place where he asked to be dropped off. I asked her: Where? She didn't reply or look me in the eye."

Nicodemus returned again and again with the same anguished questions, but no clear answer ever came. Just before Nelson Mandela's release, in February 1990, he called at Winnie's house three times in a single day. "Each time she refused to admit me," he told Bridgland. "I suppose I had become a nuisance. I've never spoken to her from that time."

In March 1995 Nicodemus and his wife Caroline were summoned to Cape Town by South Africa's new police commissioner, General George Fivaz, who asked them to tell him the story of the

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disappearance of Lolo and Siboniso. On their return from Cape Town, the Sonos were visited by officers of a special police unit in Pretoria working on unsolved cases. They asked for the number of the original docket – the one opened on the day after Lolo's disappearance. Nicodemus gave it to them.

A few days later the Sonos received a visit from a man they had never met before – Captain Fred Dempsey, the cop who handed Katiza over to Winnie. "Dempsey asked why Pretoria wanted the case number when he was already conducting the investigation," said Nicodemus. "And he demanded to know why we had gone to see Fivaz when we knew the effort he was making. I told him we knew no such thing and that he had never even troubled to find us before."

Nicodemus telephoned Dempsey several times after this visit, but there was no reply. More years went by. Winnie was divorced from Nelson, but she remained a prominent ANC MP, constantly fulminating against the Great Compromise engineered by her former husband and exhorting the masses to push for true revolution. These radical positions earned her a following that seemed completely uninterested in her moral standing. In 2002, Parliament complained that Winnie was submitting "outrageous" expense claims. In 2003, she was found guilty of fraudulently taking money from the ANC Women's League's funeral fund and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, reduced to a fine on appeal. None of this dented her popularity. When she stood for election to the ANC's national executive in 2007, she came first, an outcome that confirmed her standing: she was, and remained, The Queen.

As for Nicodemus, he grew old, lost hope and died in 2011 without ever finding out what had become of his son. To be sure, he lived to attend TRC hearings where various members of the Mandela Football Club offered various versions of Lolo and Siboniso's final hours, but these were so contradictory and in some aspects so inconceivable that the mystery remained unsolved.

In fact, it remains unsolved today, given that NPA investigators have yet to reveal what led them to those paupers' graves in Avalon cemetery, and what light this may shed on the

identity of Lolo's killer or killers. Nicodemus's widow, Caroline, continues to hope that the truth will soon emerge.

If it does, we may have to re-evaluate our understanding of South Africa's turbulent 1989-1994 transition. All that's clear at this point, is that faceless men at the top of South Africa's white power structure ordered police to take no action against Winnie Mandela, and to keep certain evidence against her under wraps. Perhaps they were hoping to use the evidence to blackmail her husband [or as a trade-off? – Ed]. And perhaps they were serving our collective best interests. If police had moved against Winnie, Nelson would have had to come to her defence – because he loved her, yes, but also because she was one of the ANC's most popular leaders.

Scarcely a week after Stompie's murder, the press reported that Nelson Mandela, still incarcerated in his "prison residence", was actively involved in attempts to resolve the crisis surrounding his wife and her "soccer team". According to a UPI report, "Mandela has met his wife twice over the past two weeks about the controversy that has caught anti-apartheid leaders off guard. With the permission of the authorities, Mandela last week also had talks with the leader of the Methodist church, Rev Stanley Mogooba, and with three legal advisors".

Mogoba is quoted, stating: "Mandela has a personal interest in the case and is personally involved in resolving it."

Had the apartheid authorities not collaborated in the cover-up, driven into a corner, Mandela would in all likelihood have been forced to dismiss the charges as a fabrication, break off talks and to return to violence. Many more might have died.

So perhaps we all benefited from Nicodemus Sono's quarter-century of pain. And perhaps we should let sleeping dogs lie. Luckily, we can probably rely on the ANC to do just that. If the decision to exhume the bodies and reopen the case was indeed intended to stop Winnie's support for Malema, the need has passed; young Julius has been crushed, and Winnie no longer presents a threat to anyone. Under the circumstances, why prosecute her? In all likelihood, the story will just fade away again, as it has so often in the past. ■

ON THE FRINGE OF THE FRANSCHHOEK LITERARY FESTIVAL

NOSEWEEK TO HOST TWO NOT-TO-BE-MISSED SESSIONS AND A MOVIE



Four sessions and two documentary showings in which three extraordinary activist-experts and two relentless journalists will talk about four news stories that every South African ought to know (more) about – but the government would rather you didn't.

Sam Sole, journalist, on the arms deal and its aftermath.

David Klatzow, forensic expert, on why so many criminal prosecutions are failing.

Shaheen Moolla, expert insider, on the destruction of South Africa's ocean fish stocks and fishing industry under the cadre mismanagement of yet another of the President's favoured acolytes, Minister of Fisheries Tina Joemat-Pettersson.

Mariette Liefverink, glamorous headline-grabbing campaigner, on the rising flood of acid mine drainage and radioactive fallout about to engulf the towns and rivers of the Reef.

Sylvia Vollenhoven, journalist, maker of the documentary film *Project Spear*. It was shot for – but never shown by – the SABC. "It raises questions the government would rather not have to answer," says Vollenhoven. It has nothing to do with paintings of presidents, but everything to do with billions of rands misappropriated from state coffers, mostly during the apartheid era. The film poses the sticky question: What's stopping the ANC government from recovering these billions from the entities involved? The director will be there to introduce the film and respond to your questions.

TIMES AND VENUES

All the Noseweek sessions will be at the **Franschhoek Protea Hotel**, 33/ 34 Huguenot Street, in two separate venues, on Sat 18 May between 10am and 3.30pm.

Vinothique Room

10 – 11 am Sam Sole and David Klatzow

11.30am – 12.30pm Shaheen Moolla and Mariette Liefverink

1 – 2pm Sam Sole and David Klatzow

2.30 – 3.30pm Shaheen Moolla and Mariette Liefverink

Café Du Present

10 – 11.30am and **1 – 2.30pm** Showing of Sylvia Vollenhoven's documentary, "Project Spear", with an introduction from Sylvia and half an hour devoted to answering questions.

BOOKING AND COST

R60 per person, payable at the door.

For **advance bookings**, phone Maud Petersen on 021 686 0570.

THE SPEAKERS

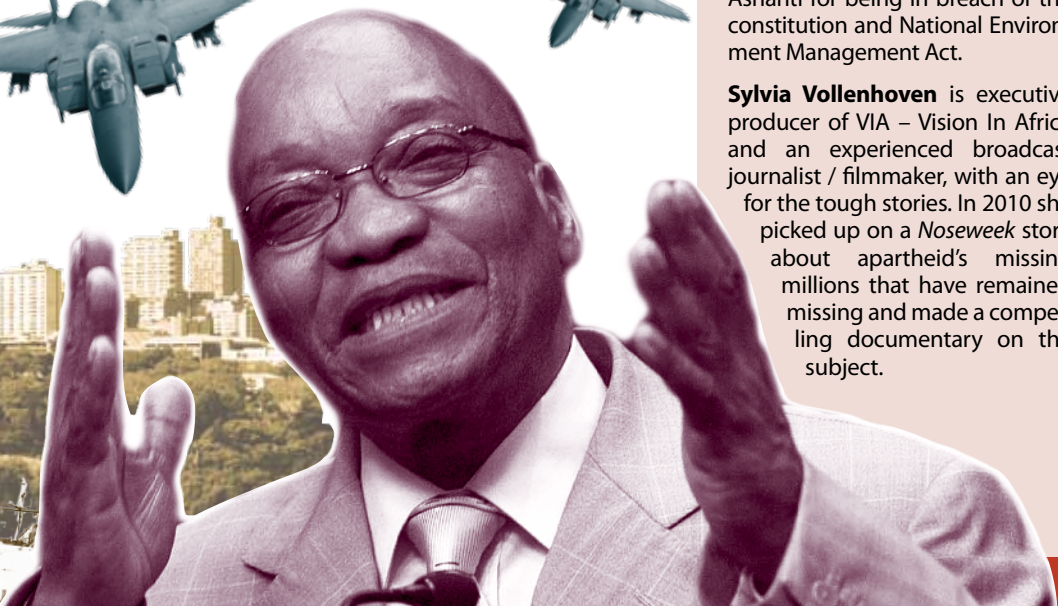
Dr David Klatzow, the well-known independent forensic scientist, has investigated many high profile cases in South Africa, including those of Brett Kebble, the Gugulethu Seven and Inge Lotz. His view of the state's capacity to investigate crime has to be heard to be believed.

Sam Sole, of the amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism, is a multiple award-winning investigative journalist. He was instrumental in revealing links between former police commissioner Jackie Selebi, slain mining magnate Brett Kebble and various figures from South Africa's underworld such as Glenn Agliotti.

Shaheen Moolla is the *bête noire* of the Department of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries (DAFF) and its Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson. He's also an advocate and managing director of Feike, a Cape Town-based natural resources advisory firm. Moolla has served as head of South Africa's fisheries management and compliance unit, Marine and Coastal Management.

Mariette Liefverink is called "Wonder Woman" on the cover of *Noseweek's* April 2013 issue, because of her unflagging commitment to exposing the negligence of mining companies in dealing with the rising flood of life-threatening toxic and radioactive waste water about to flood the towns, dams and watercourses of Gauteng. She has laid charges against AngloGold Ashanti for being in breach of the constitution and National Environment Management Act.

Sylvia Vollenhoven is executive producer of VIA – Vision In Africa and an experienced broadcast journalist / filmmaker, with an eye for the tough stories. In 2010 she picked up on a *Noseweek* story about apartheid's missing millions that have remained missing and made a compelling documentary on the subject.



A SMOOTH-TALKING MAN IN A BLACK hat rides into a one-horse town miles from anywhere, takes over the local saloon and then starts turning the screws. The locals send messengers galloping over the hills to summon the forces of law and order, but nobody answers their call because, well, somebody fired the sheriff. Sound like a typical 1960s matinée Western?

Maybe, but this is pretty much what's happening in the Eastern Cape village of Rhodes, where the legal owner of the village's only hotel lives in a borrowed caravan, while the man who usurped him occupies his premises, plunders his business and ignores two eviction orders.

In the background we have a tertiary plot involving a vacancy for a sheriff (only handicapped black women need apply), an *affaire*, gunplay, fraud, and at least one damsel in distress.

"I sold my car business in Cape Town and bought the Rhodes Hotel in 2005 as a sort of retirement project," says 66-year-old Nigel Owles when *Noseweek* visits him in the caravan park just 500 metres from the hotel.

"I ran it successfully for four years and then in 2009 Pieter van Wyk arrived in town, bragging about the R7.5 million he'd sold his farm for in Hartswater and saying he was looking for something else. I was willing to sell so we negotiated a price. Then he started coming up with all sorts of weird contracts, agreeing to pay 'at some time in the future when money becomes available' and so on. I said, 'Bullshit, we don't need all this'."

They then discussed doing a deal for half the business for R3m, but this evaporated when Van Wyk sneaked in a clause that would have given him a half share for R1.5m. "When I saw that, I knew I was dealing with a gangster," says Owles.

Gangster or not, the negotiations continued and the two eventually signed a contract whereby Van Wyk would buy the whole shebang for R4,690,000, payable within 40 days of the date he took occupation: 1 March 2009. Under the terms of the written agreement the buyer accepted all risks and benefits of the hotel, excepting ownership, until the payment was effected.



High noon at E Cape saloon

When a smooth-tongued stranger in a black hat strode into town, he managed to talk the local hotelier out of his business. By Gavin Foster

Should he fail to raise the necessary finance in time, Van Wyk could manage the hotel and associated businesses for his own account for up to 90 days while he and Owles tried to sell it for at least R4m-plus-interest. If that failed, it would be auctioned off to the highest bidder. Any money over and above that owed to Owles could be used to reimburse Van Wyk for accountant-certified costs incurred for improvements, after which any surplus would be divided equally between them.

Pieter van Wyk moved in and kicked up a storm doing alterations and re-vamping the place. This was perhaps naïve of him, but more cynical observers may believe it formed part of a bigger plan.

In 2010 things got messy. Van Wyk

failed to raise the necessary finance and, as no other buyer could be found, the hotel was auctioned off and bought by... Nigel Owles.

Van Wyk refused to vacate the premises and relinquish the business so Owles applied to the Free State High Court for an eviction order. Van Wyk successfully contested this on the grounds that it was a simulated sale – Owles could not buy what he in effect already owned – so the sale was invalid. The application for eviction was dismissed and Van Wyk hung on to the hotel.

Owles responded by forming a family trust that bought the hotel at a second auction on 17 September 2010. Van Wyk again refused to move out, so Owles went to the Grahamstown High Court and won an eviction order.



Picture: Gavin Foster

By this time Owles was taking considerable emotional and financial strain because Van Wyk was keeping all of the hotel's profits and paying no rent for the buildings. He also closed the hotel's bank account, which meant that Owles's debit orders started bouncing.

"My medical aid, my car, the computer equipment in the hotel – all of those remained unpaid. He also stopped paying Senqu Municipality's accounts in 2010 and the last statement I received, mid-2012, showed arrears of R186,284 on the rates and services."

According to Owles, Van Wyk also stole hotel property. "One day I discovered his workers unloading some of my stuff from a bakkie into a shed in town. I questioned them until Van Wyk arrived and got full of shit – he threw an overhead light from the pool table at me. I went to the police station to lay charges of theft and assault but the cops said it was my word against his, and this was all part of the civil case.

"Lots of the historical stuff I had hanging on the walls of the hotel are now missing, and the asset registers, permits for antique guns, liquor licence and other documentation have all been moved to his home office.

"My insurers also declined to insure the hotel buildings once they found out Van Wyk was involved because he had been caught out previously for lodging fraudulent claims."

Nigel Owles (left); the Rhodes Hotel in the Eastern Cape (below) and its bar (above)



Picture: Gavin Foster



Picture: Gavin Foster

With his back against the wall, Van Wyk bought more time by lodging an appeal against the second eviction order. This was turned down by the Grahamstown High Court on 3 December 2012.

Owles again mistakenly thought his ordeal was finally over. The Sheriff of the Court for the Rhodes district could not be called upon to enforce the order, because there wasn't a sheriff. The old one had resigned and had not been replaced. On 16 January this year Justice Minister Jeff Radebe announced that there were 130 vacant sheriff posts because many of the incumbents' contracts had not been renewed – Radebe had said he was planning to “enhance the transformation and attain gender equality of the sheriffs profession”.

While Owles's lawyers pressed for a temporary sheriff's appointment, Van Wyk lodged an application for his case to be heard at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein.

Four years into the battle Owles's lawyers have lodged opposing papers and that's where the matter lies.

“I'm convinced that the Supreme Court of Appeal is going to refuse this special leave to appeal,” says Hendré Conradie of Rossouws Attorneys. “It's simply a matter of Van Wyk stalling for time. The cost is nothing in comparison with what he's gaining, because in the meantime, he's taking all the profits and giving Owles nothing. We hope to finalise this within about two months, and we're still trying to get a sheriff appointed so we can be ready to proceed with the eviction. It's a very sad, frustrating case.”

Noseweek asked Pieter van Wyk where he thought he was going with this matter.

“I lost the appeal but that's not to say the Supreme Court can't find for me. I'm not giving the hotel back because I spent my money on it and he can't run it because he's bankrupt – he couldn't go on. I paid all his debts – about R475,000 – when I took over and then he put the hotel on auction and bought it back himself. I have to keep it going for as long as possible because the minute I give it back to him, he'll close it. Then it'll be worth nothing”.

Van Wyk has been in the news before. In 2000 he was acquitted of an

attempted murder charge after he fired gunshots during an altercation when he found his estranged wife's lover's car parked outside her house. (The object of his wrath, an ex-undercover cop-turned-farmer, Ludwig Oberholzer, achieved a modicum of fame in 2009 as a contestant in the kykNET TV programme *Boer soek 'n vrou* (Farmer seeks a wife).)

An enraged Van Wyk told his story to the Sunday newspaper, *Rapport*, which ran it under the headline “TV farmer seeks another man's wife”.)

Van Wyk was back in court in 2005, on a charge of assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, after he beat and kicked a farm worker. He was convicted of common assault and paid a R150 fine.

In Rhodes he had a narrow escape from the law after lodging a fraudulent motor insurance claim. One of his then-barmen, Francois Boshoff, rolled the hotel's bakkie while driving without a licence. Van Wyk's own licence had expired, so he got a friend, Leon Harmse, to say in the accident report that he had been the driver.

Soon afterwards Van Wyk fired a young couple who worked at the hotel and they went for the jugular. “He was rude to my wife, swore at her

and started physically pushing her around,” says Andrew Phillips. “Once he slammed a door on her hand, and when we left he didn't pay us all of our money, so I reported him.”

“I started making calls to insurance companies and eventually they sent an investigator around. They got him – he had to sell the bakkie to pay back the insurers.”

Owles, who met the investigator many times, tells *Noseweek* that it went further than that. Van Wyk had to repay all of his previous claims, to the value of about R350,000, or face criminal charges for the fraudulent accident claim.

The matter didn't stop there, says the former barman Boshoff: “After the accident, he took the R9,000 excess off my pay over the next few months. Then, four months ago I received a letter from Van Wyk's lawyers demanding that I repay him the full repair cost of the bakkie.”

Boshoff says he doesn't have the money, but he's worried because his employer made him sign an acknowledgement of debt for the written-off bakkie before giving him his final pay.

This is a Wild West story, remember. Ten minutes after our arrival in Rhodes we are told about a Cape Town woman, Jess Walters, who drove into the village in 2010, hoping to buy a house there. The owner of the house she fancied had moved to New Zealand, leaving it fully equipped and furnished. It was left in Van Wyk's care. He had been letting it to holidaymakers from time to time.

Walters bought the house, with its furnishings and about 20 original artworks. But when she arrived to take occupation, she was horrified to find that the house had been stripped of all its contents and fittings – the fireplace was gone, the stove, the kitchen cupboards, curtain rails, artworks and furniture were all gone.

She got the seller to intervene and Van Wyk eventually returned the fireplace, the stove and about four of the artworks.

Noseweek's source says that Walters knows where the rest of her stuff is but she's afraid to try to retrieve it. When we approached her for comment she refused to discuss the matter, saying only that “Rhodes is a very small town”. ■

Various injured parties are waiting anxiously for the appointment of the new sheriff to sort out the mess

The man who lifted the lid on suspect food

The biotechnology industry ran a dirty tricks campaign against Dr Gilles-Eric Séralini (pictured), professor of molecular biology at the University of Caen in France, after his research pointed to harmful effects of genetically modified crops

THE BIOTECH INDUSTRY HAS strenuously opposed the labelling of food as containing GM ingredients. It routinely refuses independent researchers access to its seed. And when scientists warn that GM foods may not be safe for human consumption, it goes to extreme lengths to shut them up. What could it possibly have to hide?

Considering the big food companies' unbridled enthusiasm for genetically modified organisms, you'd think they would want to shout about the presence of these technological wondercrops in their products. But they don't even want to whisper it in the small print below the vitamin content.

The only reason they mention it at all is because, since October 2011, they have been obliged to do so, at least on products containing any ingredient of which 5% or more is genetically modified. And some still don't.

Last year, the GM-cautious African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) tested at random four products unlabelled for Genetically Modified Organisms and found they contained little else.

GMO accounted for 90.36% of the maize and 71.42% of the soy in Premier's Bokomo wheat-free ProNutro; 66.18% of the ingredients in its Impala maize meal; 77.65% of the maize in Nestlé Cerelac Honey Infant Cereal; and 100% of the maize and 36.13% of the soy in Future Life Energy meal.

The Consumer Goods Council, a national fellowship of producers and retailers (chaired, incidentally, by Nestlé SA CEO Sullivan O'Carroll), defended its members on the fabricated grounds that the regulations do not apply to processed foods, only the raw mielie pit or intact soya bean.

Nevertheless, the requisite small-print has subsequently been added to Impala and FutureLife packaging and FutureLife says it is trying to source non-GM maize (no easy matter these days). Nestlé says it has already changed all its infant cereals to non-GM maize. Wheat-free ProNutro is still not labelled as GM, and Bokomo says it is in the process of changing its ProNutro packaging but the new labelled packs are not yet on the shelves.

The outcry from consumer activ-

ists also compelled the Department of Trade and Industry to re-draft the regulations, specifying that all food – imported, local, processed or raw – must be labelled if any of its ingredients are above the GM limit. The label needs to be displayed in “a conspicuous and easily legible manner and size”. It must state, without change: “Contains genetically modified ingredients or components”.

The draft was advertised for public comment in October, but the final version is yet to appear in the *Government Gazette*. (*Noseweek* has asked the DTI to explain the delay, but has received no response. The Centre for Biosafety has resorted to sending Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies a lawyer's letter demanding a release date).

It took more than 10 years after the arrival of GMOs on our plates for mandatory labelling to be introduced, so this tardiness is not unprecedented.

Getting in the way as much as possible has been not just the local food industry and organised agriculture but the alarmingly powerful, foreign-owned GM companies for whom public

Ghastly gagging

HERE'S SOME SCARY NEWS FROM the land of the free. Tucked away in the short-term budget resolution signed in March by President Barack Obama is a section that should send shivers down the spines of everyone who believes in the rule of law.

Dubbed the Monsanto Protection Act by civil liberties organisations, the provision allows biotech companies to continue selling and planting government-approved GMOs while the safety or legality of those crops is being challenged in a federal court.

In other words, it is pointless trying to gain an interdict against Monsanto, even if you have compelling evidence of harm; even if your organic crops are being contaminated by GM pollen or Roundup herbicide.

This is a major blow for non-GM farmers because the courts have proved far more cautious about GM than the US Department of Agriculture, and far less friendly to the biotech giants.

It's not just the contents of the provision that have caused outrage, but the way it was sneaked into the spending bill. It was introduced anonymously and without review by the judicial or agricultural committees.

In spite of a petition signed by 250,000 voters and a protest outside the White House, many members of the US Congress deny knowing that it was part of the budget.

The inclusion of the provision was only picked up by the mass media when it was too late.

Another one for the corporations, then. ■

OCCUPY MONSANTO
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 21
9:00AM
Syngenta Flowers Inc.
2280 Hecker Pass
Highway, Gilroy, CA 95020

Monsanto's genetically engineered GMO crops, weed killers, and pest killers are a danger to our planet!

We will occupy at any Bio-tech facilities in order to keep genetic biohazards out of our food supply

Contact for Carpool Meet Up!
<http://occupy-monsanto.com/>
gcu_san_jose@occupy-monsanto.com

ignorance is a state much to be desired.

Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Dow and DuPont have spent millions of dollars lobbying against labelling in the US and otherwise trying to persuade politicians and the media that GM is not only harmless, but the answer to world hunger.

Anyone who calls for caution is dismissed as a luddite who would rather Africa starve than embrace the miracle of Monsanto's Roundup Ready maize.

And yet no research has ever been done on the effects of GMO on humans, unless you count the uncontrolled global experiment to which we are all currently being subjected without our informed consent, and in most cases, without our knowledge.

There have been studies on rats though. Most of them have been carried out by GM companies themselves so you can imagine how completely independent and objective they must be.

Moreover, since few of these trials last more than 90 days, they are not designed to establish the long-term effects of GM on a creature that has a natural lifespan of around two years. Unsurprisingly, none of these sweetheart studies has picked up any problems.

It is the independent research, patchy though it is, that has repeatedly sounded a warning. One of the most recent trials, reported last year in the respected peer-reviewed journal *Food and Chemical Toxicity*, raised serious concerns about the safety of Monsanto's herbicide-tolerant NK6 03 maize, which currently occupies more than

Anyone who calls for caution is dismissed as a luddite who would rather Africa starve than embrace the miracle of Monsanto's Roundup Ready maize

50% of South Africa's mielie lands and is increasing its share every year.

The trial, named after lead author Dr Gilles-Eric Seralini, professor of molecular biology at the University of Caen in France, is one of the most rigorous ever conducted on GMOs. It was also the first to study the lifelong effects on rats of NK603, as well as Roundup, the weedkiller with which the crop is liberally doused in the field.

The researchers found that rats fed NK603, or very dilute amounts of Roundup, or both, tended to develop bigger tumours faster and die younger than those in the control group. The GM-fed rats were also more likely to suffer from liver and kidney disease, which was also the prime cause of premature death among the test males.

Scientific opposition is vilified

◀ Poster for an anti-Monsanto demonstration in the US

The Séralini report concludes that “the significant biochemical disturbances and physiological failures documented in this work confirm the pathological effects of these GMO and (Roundup) treatments... We propose that agricultural edible GMOs and formulated pesticides must be evaluated very carefully by long-term studies to measure their potential toxic effects”.

The GM industry, true to form, went completely spare.

Before the final report had even been published, the industry’s lobbyists had launched an international campaign of disinformation and personal insult aimed at discrediting the trial and destroying Séralini’s reputation.

Crude arguments, repeatedly and loudly proclaimed by corporate lobbyists, tame regulators and GM-friendly scientists were amplified further by lazy or embedded journalists to cast a pall of doubt on the study’s findings.

The distinguished scientist was accused variously of publicity seeking, making a political point, scaremongering and possible professional misconduct. Critics demanded that the journal retract the paper.

But none of their concrete objections stand up to scrutiny.

They said the strain of rats Séralini’s team used are prone to tumours. (They are the same rats used by Monsanto for its own NK603 feeding trial).

They said the rats were allowed to feed at will, which promotes tumour development. (So were the rats in Monsanto’s trial).

They said the number of rats (200) was too low. (Monsanto’s own feeding trials for at least two of its herbicide-resistant maize strains used just 40 rats and lasted 90 days).

Hundreds of independent scientists around the world sprang to Séralini’s defence, expressing outrage at the interference of powerful corporations in legitimate research and warning of dire consequences for scientific credibility.

Séralini is by no means the first scientist to have his reputation trashed for daring to call for a precautionary approach to GM (see box).

GM companies have also been accused of refusing to provide seed for research, and for failing to release the raw data from their own studies to academic institutions.

FROM 1995 TO 1998, PROFESSOR ARPAD Pusztai, one of the UK’s top protein scientists, led the first-ever independent, peer-reviewed animal feeding trial on GM crops on behalf of Britain’s top nutritional research laboratory, The Rowett Research Institute.

His initial findings – that rats fed an experimental strain of GM potato exhibited stunted growth and suppressed immune systems – led to an international outcry from the media, the science establishment, politicians and the biotech industry.

Rowett, after initially defending Pusztai’s work, subsequently suspended him and seized his data after accusing him of misconduct. His contract was not renewed.

According to Andrew Rowell’s book, *Don’t worry, it’s safe to eat*, pressure to sack Pusztai came from Monsanto.

In 2009, Dr Andrés Carrasco, a leading embryologist at the University of Buenos Aires Medical School, published a study which linked Roundup herbicide with deformations in chicken embryos that were similar to the birth defects which had increased four-fold over the previous decade among people living in farming areas dominated by GM crops.

The implications of GM for human health and food security are just one of the concerns raised by those urging better regulation and more research before these crops are let loose in the environment and the human food chain.

It has already been demonstrated that GMOs spread readily to non-GM crops and their wild relatives, with possibly devastating effects on biodiversity.

The Séralini study confirmed suspicions that Monsanto’s Roundup formula is more toxic than one can assume from examining only its active ingredient, Glyphosate. Yet Roundup is being sprayed in ever-greater volumes as GM crops spread and resistant superweeds take over from their more vulnerable ancestors.

Neither is the claim of plentiful, cheap food borne out by current evidence. According to the National Agricultural Marketing Council, the average price of South Africa’s cheapest maize meal increased by 26% from July 2011 to July 2012.

Last year’s figures from the Crop Estimates Committee indicated the low-

Carrasco has since been physically attacked, verbally threatened and harassed by what he and witnesses describe as representatives of agribusiness.

In 2001, Ignacio Chapela, a microbial ecologist from the University of California, Berkeley, discovered that Mexico’s indigenous maize varieties had become contaminated through cross-pollination with GM maize.

When his findings were published in the journal *Nature*, the Mexican government and the biotech industry hit back with threats and claims of misconduct and bias. Under huge pressure, Berkeley denied him tenure, a decision overturned only after Chapela sued.

Dr Irina Ermakova, a senior scientist at the Russian National Academy of Sciences, tested store-bought GM soy on pregnant rats. More than half the baby rats died within three weeks. When Ermakova reported her preliminary findings at a conference in 2005, she was vilified by her colleagues and her boss forbade her from doing any more GM food research.

And that’s just a taste of the pressure that independent scientists are under when it comes to testing the safety of GMOs. ■

est average maize yield since 2007, in spite of the wholesale adoption of GM.

One doesn’t have to be a luddite, or even anti-GM to be worried.

And one’s suspicions are not allayed by the secrecy, paranoia and bullying of the big companies or the supine attitude of national and international regulators (including South Africa’s opaque GMO Registrar and anonymous decision-making body, the Executive Council, on which the government and industry are represented, but not civil society).

Few of the people tucking into their GM mieliepap of a chilly morning in South Africa have read, would understand, or even care that their breakfast contains artificially inserted genetic material and herbicide that could damage their health, and have irreversible environmental consequences.

As Anita Burger, of the pro-GM lobby group Biosafety South Africa, boasted: “Over 90 percent of South Africans have no knowledge on the subject or are indifferent.”

And the GM industry would like to keep it that way. ■

One law for the well-connected ...

Justice moves slowly in probing magistrate's 'friendship' with John Block

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING – THE response of the Magistrate's Commission to the complaint lodged in 2010 about the Regional Court President of the Northern Cape, Khandilizwe Nqadala.

As reported in *nose130*, Nqadala, a close friend of ANC heavyweight John Block, had the local police at his beck and call and was therefore able to protect Block from both the police and the judiciary. Nqadala had instructed his magistrates to ensure all "sensitive" cases were reserved for him, and he contrived to preside over a corruption case brought against John Block (who got off with a discharge at the close of the prosecution's case, a so-called Section 174).

Noseweek's story included the fact that Nqadala ran the magistrates' courts of the Northern Cape as his personal fiefdom, and had it in for an uppity young magistrate called Phumele Hole. Eventually Hole lodged a complaint with the Magistrate's Commission – a litany of complaints, really. The most serious was that Nqadala was using the police to harass him (using spurious charges of Hole's car having been used in armed robberies), and that he (Hole) genuinely feared for his life. Nqadala denied all, and lodged a complaint of his own about Hole.

The two complaints were dealt with very differently. Hole's complaint seemed to get lost in the system, while Nqadala's was handled with alacrity.

Hole was interviewed by two Gauteng Regional Court magistrates, John Baloyi and Hein Louw. One of them, Louw, even started putting pressure on *Noseweek* to tell him whether Hole had been the source of the story – seemingly to establish that Hole had breached

the Magistrates' Code of Conduct by going to the press and was therefore liable to dismissal.

Noseweek naturally refused to reveal the source and Louw eventually threatened to issue a subpoena (although no subpoena ever arrived).

On 31 August 2011, Hole's attorney wrote to the Minister of Justice: "We no longer have confidence that the Magistrate's Commission will act fairly and impartially due to the manner it has conducted our investigation."

Hole had good reason to be concerned. On 10 October 2011 Justice Minister Jeff Radebe announced in Parliament that Magistrate Hole had been provisionally suspended pending an investigation into his conduct by the Magistrate's Commission. The main justification for the suspension was that Hole had been guilty of an "abuse of power". This related to Hole's having taken umbrage when Nqadala sent him prejudicial information about a person appearing before him in a criminal case. The information, Hole felt, required him to recuse himself, thus further delaying an already slow case.

Hole's response had been to subpoena Nqadala to appear in his court and explain his conduct in front of the accused. The document that Radebe submitted to Parliament suggested that Hole had humiliated his boss in court.

At last there's been some progress with Hole's complaint about Nqadala: the Ethics Committee of the Magistrate's Commission has sent a memorandum to the commission's secretary. This is based on a report drawn up by two magistrates from KwaZulu-Natal who investigated the matter. (It becomes apparent that the KZN magistrates, Messrs Singh and Nhleko, were

not the first to have looked into this – two Joburg magistrates, Messrs Thulare and Mhango, conducted an earlier investigation but apparently didn't do a good enough job.)

Says the memorandum: "The (ethics) committee resolved to disassociate itself from the language and tone employed in the report and resolved that two other investigators be appointed to investigate the allegations against Mr Nqadala and to also investigate certain complaints which were not fully addressed in the report."

Weirder still, however, is the way in which the Ethics Committee dealt with the investigators' report. In every instance where the investigators found that Hole's complaints were unsubstantiated – including the one of police





John Block

harassment where, implausibly, the investigators were unable to trace the police general who might verify Hole's claim that Nqadala issued an order to cut Hole down to size – the committee agreed with the investigators.

Whereas in every instance where the investigators found that Nqadala was culpable and recommended disciplinary proceedings, the committee disagreed, arguing that even if Nqadala were found guilty, it would not warrant dismissal, and citing the legal principle *de minimis non curat lex* (trivial things do not make law).

In the matter that was of the greatest public interest – Nqadala's decision to preside over John Block's criminal case – the committee actually rejected the investigators' findings.

The investigators' report makes it clear that they interviewed a number of witnesses in the John Block matter including Glen Chase, a member of the Northern Cape Civics Association and the complainant in the Block case.

Chase told the investigators it was well known in Kimberley that Block and Nqadala were friends, and that he, Chase, had told the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) of his concerns that Nqadala was hearing the matter.

Chase said the DPP had not asked Nqadala to recuse himself, and had not even called him (Chase) as a witness.

The investigators had spoken to Ross Henderson, a former member of the Northern Cape legislature, who told them he had seen Block and Nqadala together on various occasions, sometimes also in the company of the prosecutor in the Block case, Prins Olivier who, Henderson said, was subsequently employed by Block.

Henderson also said he had told one of the investigating officers, Senior Superintendent Jonkers, that Nqadala should not be presiding over the case but Jonkers had done nothing and had subsequently become a director in Block's office.

The investigators had also spoken to Vincent Mayisela, an attorney

with the Legal Aid Office in Kimberley, who had said Nqadala told him in his chambers that he wouldn't let the Block case be presided over by "wolves" (white magistrates, apparently) and that he himself would take the case because he would not allow the chairperson of the ANC to go to jail.

Mayisela told the investigators that he was in court on the day Block's case was dismissed; that Nqadala had "grilled the prosecution"; and that "impartiality was not coming from the bench".

Finally the investigators spoke to Colonel Petros Johannes du Plessis of the Hawks, an investigating officer in the Block case. Du Plessis told them Chase had deliberately not been called as a witness, and that a counter charge of theft of state documents had been brought against Chase to scare him off.

The investigators said their attempts to locate the Block case record had been "once again unsuccessful". They said Nqadala had denied having had any relationship with Block and claimed that, rather than simply allocating the case to himself, he had been asked to take it by magistrate Vernon Smith – initially tasked with it – because it had such a high profile.

Not convinced, the investigators said: "There is overwhelming evidence that Nqadala and Block knew each other and were friends before he presided in Block's case." They recommended that Nqadala be charged with contravening the Code of Conduct for Magistrates.

Not good enough for the Ethics Committee, which felt that the failure of the criminal case "is to be put before the door of the prosecution due to their failure to call the complainant".

The committee also accepted Nqadala's claims that the case came to him via magistrate Smith and said: "The case record is missing... The question is whether it can be proven that the two gentlemen are indeed good friends." Chase and Henderson had seen them "sitting next to each other at a public place" which "does not warrant the inference that they are indeed friends".

So, Hole is suspended and Nqadala has got off scot-free. No wonder our legal system is regarded as a joke.

● A new R49 million money laundering trial of Block and others will begin in the Northern Cape High Court on October 28. ■

A witness said the regional court president decided he would hear the case because he would not allow the ANC chief to go to jail

The statue of Adrien d'Epinaf, forefather of the Mauritian white minority stands in the centre of Port Louis

Fear and Loathing in Paradise





IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT, AND ON THE shores of Tamarin Beach, on the west coast of Mauritius, a group of white kids are sitting around in morose contemplation, smoking cigarettes,

swigging beer, legs swinging over the side of the wall, backs lit by the orange glow emanating from the bungalow just behind them. A wild party had been on the cards, but they've ended up talking politics instead.

"History annoys me," says Thomas, a lean lad in his early twenties. "We're always being bullied about slavery, about money."

People see him as a "daddy's boy", which clearly pisses him off. It's true,

such as Lagesse, Espitalier-Noël, Dalais and Harel evoke multi-billion-rupee empires encompassing sugar, textiles, trade and the island's most luxurious hotels. Not to mention vast tracts of prime land. Other elite – the Indian Gujadhur family, for example – have emerged, but few matching the scale of these families' assets.

In the era of social media and mass democracy, the island's social contract is starting to look a little outdated. Last year, a Truth and Justice Commission reported on the social inequalities that have persisted since the days of slavery. Its work may have focused on the struggles faced by descendants of slaves, who face systemic prejudice, but it couldn't avoid drawing attention to the descendants of slave holders, who remain the island's elite.

the first place, things are not moving fast enough. He wants the descendants of slaves to receive compensation and has led protests to this effect outside luxury hotels and the Mauritius Commercial Bank – the latter allegedly set up by whites with money received from the British government to compensate them for loss of profits when slavery was banned.

Last year, Michel also called for a statue of Adrien d'Épinay, a controversial 19th century figure associated with the pro-slavery movement, which still has pride of place in a Banyan-filled public park in the heart of Port Louis, to be pulled down.

"He battled so that slavery would not be abolished without compensation (for slave-owners). For those of you who like the statue – well, why don't you

Behind the happy tourist facade, dysfunctional race relations disturb social life in Mauritius.

Story and pictures by Lorraine Mallinder

he says, that some whites have a superiority complex, but he and his friends would classify themselves as *ti-blancs*, literally "little whites", living on the margins. "People call us 'the druggies'," he says.

Granddad's bungalow is a million miles from skid row, but it's true that Thomas and his friends are on the lower rungs of white society in Mauritius. His mum is a secretary, his dad, a small-businessman. He's not sure where he's going. Nevertheless, the island's Creoles and Indians often call him *patron*, or "boss", a form of colonial knee-jerk reverence that makes him feel uncomfortable. "I'm one hundred percent Mauritian, just like them," he says.

White malaise is a relatively new phenomenon on this multi-cultural island of 1.3 million people. Franco-Mauritians, the descendants of 18th century French colonists, comprise just 2% of the population, but a handful of illustrious families still control the majority of the nation's wealth. For many, white is synonymous with status and privilege.

The mere mention of family names

Mauritius being a tolerant sort of place, many islanders hasten to point out that Franco-Mauritians have nonetheless proven themselves to be canny investors with impressively diversified portfolios. But with the once-prosperous sugar industry as a basis for expansion, it's hard to deny they have had a headstart and first-mover advantage across the economic board.

As Kee Chong Li Kwong Wing, an economist turned MP with the left-leaning opposition MMM party, says, "Franco-Mauritians have done very well out of neo-liberalism. They have become stronger and wealthier. Everybody knows they have the power, the land, the access to resources. And, they are not afraid of politicians," he says.

The Truth and Justice Commission has issued nearly 300 recommendations in areas such as education, the environment and the economy to redress the balance. But, for Sylvio Michel, the leader of the Mauritian green party – Les Verts Fraternelles – who pushed Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam to set up the inquiry in

take it home with you?" he announced cheekily last year.

That d'Épinay's ghost should still be present in such debates is perhaps a measure of the extent to which this forward-looking island of sustained economic growth is struggling to get to grips with its complex past.

Wine merchant Jean-Pierre Lenoir is one of the ghost's most ardent supporters. Enconced in a dim back office of his Port Louis store, the portly descendant of an 18th century Breton sailor remembers his time as editor of *Le Cernéen*, once the oldest French newspaper in the southern hemisphere.

Le Cernéen was established by d'Épinay in 1832. One hundred and fifty years later, Lenoir found himself having to close its doors after its jittery sugar industry backers, keen to distance themselves from d'Épinay's by-now highly unfashionable legacy, pulled funding.

"I almost died with the newspaper," says Lenoir, emotions still raw after 30 years.

“When a minority lives in the context of a hostile majority, it seeks to rid itself of its identity. It’s better to melt, so as to be attacked less. The newspaper was the most obvious symbol.”

Lenoir still considers himself to be the voice of his community. According to him, Franco-Mauritians, victims of periodic bouts of “white bashing”, are now going through a full-blown identity crisis.

“Not the big businessman,” says Lenoir. “He is above all this because his identity is business, so he doesn’t really care, except when it affects his money.” No, it’s the “common guys” who are lost, who ring him up with their problems and concerns. “They want to be considered as fully-fledged Mauritians. They are being refused this right,” says Lenoir.

Defiantly proud of his heritage, Lenoir is a lone voice speaking out in defence of his “ugly duckling” community. But, the single-mindedness required for this role seems to have blinded him to other realities. With nonchalance, he dismisses the Creole campaign for compensation.

“If the indignation were real, I would understand, but all this is being stirred by agitators,” he says. “We force people to believe they are unhappy because they are the descendants of slaves. The truth is, the Creole hasn’t made a success of his life.”

Later, I meet his sister-in-law Alexandra Schaub, who seems to be his polar opposite. She has absolutely no sympathy for her white compatriots, whom she views as “*la pire espèce*”: the worst.

Half Franco-Mauritian, half Russian, with smartly cut blond hair and a frank gaze, Schaub arrived on the island at the age of 30 after a successful career as a journalist in France.

Looking for a place to stay, her first apartment fell through after the white owner discovered she was a journalist and surmised she was therefore likely to have coloured friends – a no-no in many Franco-Mauritian circles.

Franco-Mauritian society, she discovered, was tight-knit to the point of suffocation. “The typical white Mauritian has no non-white friends,” she says. “Non-white workmates and school friends are not invited home on Sundays”.

But the real heartache came when Schaub adopted a mixed-race daughter,



who found it difficult to fit in at school — “the fact that she’d been adopted by a white person meant she was rejected by the Creole and white kids,” she remembers.

When her daughter was refused entry to an all-white yacht club, Schaub confronted the board. Bizarrely, her daughter was friends with some of the organisers’ children and had already stayed in their homes. “They had to admit it was because she wasn’t

white, but that they had a responsibility to their members,” she says. The rules were relaxed thereafter.

Later, Schaub had a second daughter with a Creole partner, who was rejected by her family. “It comes from a mixture of fear and suspicion,” she says. “The irony of it all is that she’s white, with blonde hair.”

This is a world where ethnic purity still matters. “In Mauritius, being white is about the colour, not of your skin, but of your genealogy,” says one journalist. White people, she says, are so fixated on lineage that they can often tell if there’s mixed blood in family trees, an outing guaranteed to prompt a severe downgrading in the social pecking order.

These insular tendencies would appear to be a perfect breeding ground for paranoia, particularly among those with relatives who moved to Rhodesia after Mauritian independence in 1968, reluctant to entrust their cultural and economic future to the new Hindu-dominated government.

Caught up in the terror of Robert Mugabe’s land seizures, many were forced to return. Now, there is a renewed fear in some quarters of a Mugabe-like land grab.

But, people are opening up, albeit slowly. Thomas speaks of young friends who are naturally suspicious of other races, who have warned him against

According to Lenoir, Franco-Mauritians, victims of periodic bouts of ‘white bashing’, are going through a full-blown identity crisis



Jean-Pierre Lenoir (left);
Louis Leclézio (above) and
Alexandra Schaub



hanging out with black or Indian friends. But, then they go abroad and study, returning with a new outlook. "But, most white people tend to hang out with white people," he says. "We're stuck in our bubble world. It's a shame."

Just north of Tamarin, at Flic en Flac Beach, a man in a straw hat sits on a plastic chair by his vintage Range Rover, the back opened to display all manner of colourful paintings and crafts decorated with octopuses, turtles and dodos. He eyes the tourists coming and going, lifting himself when he scents a possible sale.

His name is Louis Leclézio, a member of one of the island's most prestigious white families. Now in his sixties, he was born in one of the island's best-known colonial homes, La Maison Eureka, now converted into a period museum. It's still the same as when he lived there as a boy.

He is full of anecdotes, about his 18th century ancestor from Brittany, about vicious family feuds over money and his wily great-uncle who became Tiny Rowland's right-hand man in Rhodesia. A cousin of Nobel Prize winner J M G Le Clézio, he claims the latter's side of the family split the surname into two parts to lend themselves aristocratic airs.

Fabulously wealthy, Leclézio left the island while still young and headed to America, where he made an even big-

ger fortune in real estate. But, after a lengthy legal battle, he lost it all and returned to Mauritius empty-handed. Now, he sells souvenirs on the beach.

It's all been too much for his family. "Nobody wants to associate with me. I'm never invited to anyone's house," he says. "They're ashamed to talk to me or to come to my table because I'm a beach vendor."

He shrugs. "Before, I used to be able to raise millions of dollars in a morning," he says wryly. But now, he feels he has something more precious – a sign on the back of his vehicle reads "Born Free". "I bought it because it reflects exactly who I am now."

As statements go, it seems a bit clichéd. But, watching him joking with his Creole and Indian colleagues at the adjoining food stalls, he does indeed seem freer than most other Franco-Mauritians, less self-conscious about his status, on an equal footing with his countrymen. Free, it seems, because he has absolutely nothing to lose.

● *With research contributed by Jean-Christophe Laurence* ■

WHAT'S WRONG WITH A BIT OF TAIL?

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Elephant in the room. Some scientists want to resurrect the woolly mammoth

GENETIC TECHNOLOGIES LIKE cloning are advancing so rapidly that extinct species might soon be brought back to life. Right now, scientists around the world are attempting to use DNA pulled from museum specimens, old tissue samples lying around in lab freezers or even (in the case of the Woolly Mammoth) ancient carcasses frozen beneath the Arctic tundra, to resurrect plants and animals we never thought we'd see again. Extinction, it seems, might not always be forever.

The new field of de-extinction – also called “resurrection biology” – recently had a coming-out party in Washington DC. TEDxDeExtinction, a live-streamed day-long talkfest choreographed in the slick, digestible TED-talk style, gave an unprecedented platform to a group of geneticists, conservationists and dreamers to pitch their plans to the world. The atmosphere of the event, which I attended, was generally hopeful and at times even exuberant.

The audacity of the ideas presented was only matched by the awe the audience felt at the prospect of legendary creatures like the thylacine, a wolf-like Australian marsupial last seen alive in the 1930s, walking and breathing among us again. Hints of a new path through history fluttered around in the room.

But not everyone loves de-extinction. Rutgers University's David Ehrenfeld, speaking from the stage, dismissed it as “recreational conservation”, pointedly reminding us that while we were being safely air-conditioned in DC, game rangers were risking their lives to protect elephants from murderous poachers in the jungle of central Africa.

Duke University's Stuart Pimm, a leading voice in conservation biology, calls de-extinction a “seductive fantasy”. *Time* editor Bryan Walsh tweeted that “At best, #DeExtinction seems like

it would be a hobby for the rich”, while *Scientific American* blogger Hannah Waters added to the insult pile with a post titled “The Narcissism of De-Extinction” which, she writes, “is less about the species themselves and more about us”.

Critics of de-extinction say that its technologies aren't yet mature and that species are more than just the expressions of their DNA, which can't always code for vital behaviours like migration or mating rituals that young animals normally learn from their parents. If we put de-extincted animals into nature, will they know what to do? Many de-extincted species won't even be pure; because we don't have all of their genes nicely preserved, we're going to have to splice the genes we can salvage with those of living relatives. The resulting beasts will be hybrids. Is there any point in having Mostly-Woolly Mammoths or Not-Quite Dodos?

Detractors say it'll likely be a waste to send extinct species back into the wild –

they vanished for a reason after all, so why would they not die out again? They might not have any habitat left. And the very idea of de-extinction could harm natural ecosystems: Why would our leaders protect a forest that shelters endangered species if we can store them in test tubes while its trees

Not everyone loves de-extinction. Rutgers University's David Ehrenfeld dismissed it as 'recreational conservation'



get turned into toilet paper? De-extinction will also be enormously expensive. Shouldn't we spend those millions on saving what we still have?

Raising the dead is also seriously creepy. Perhaps we should let extinct thylacines lie?

It's true that the technologies that de-extinctors propose using are not mature. Only one animal has ever been – briefly – resurrected. In 2003, Spanish conservationists used preserved cells from an extinct type of mountain goat, the Pyrenean ibex, to clone a single baby that lived for less than 10 minutes. The project then ran out of cash.

Lab-based biology has crowded out field biology in many universities. Theory-rich microscope jockeys suck up

all the cash while conventional wildlife preservation study and practice suffers. Many fear that the genetic tech focus of de-extinction will speed the withering of field skills that conservation projects really need.

ALL OF THIS MAKES DE-EXTINCTION A fantastic idea. If approached correctly, it could rejuvenate conservation and help save thousands of lesser-known species that are silently and sadly slipping off into history. Why?

People are strongly drawn to strange and dramatic stories of resurrection, as the massive fan club of the hero of the Bible's New Testament proves. A recent study of *New York Times* readers found that we're especially attract-

ed to good news science stories, which are more likely to be shared on social networks than non-science, sad stories. (#TEDxDeExtinction trended on Twitter during the event.)

When eager ornithologists claimed to have rediscovered the extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Arkansas in 2005 on the basis of a mere four seconds of bad-quality video, the infamously anti-environmental government of George W Bush immediately committed upwards of \$10 million to study and protect the bird, The Nature Conservancy (a conservation NGO) committed to buying an extra 200,000 acres of its habitat and the news made joyful headlines worldwide – a massive boost for the conservation of not just the putative woodpecker but also for thousands of other species that share the swampy forest where it lived.

Conservationists know the current extinction crisis as a visceral truth. They've seen species after species rise up the Red List and sometimes vanish into the void. They've become experts at spreading bad news and, often understandably, adopt a siege mentality when confronted with the advances of science, which have so often inflicted massive damage on the planet.

Their sense of powerlessness is amplified because they usually know why species are becoming endangered and dying out, they just don't have the money or the public support to do anything about it.

They're not wrong about crazy industrialists and politicians who might want to stick "inconvenient" endangered species in a freezer while they raze a forest or blow up a national park – as anyone who reads *Noseweek* knows – but bringing an extinct, charismatic species to life and telling powerful stories about its demise, resurrection and future life in the wider world can raise the cash and build the support needed to conquer the evil nutters.

Consider the California Condor, a massive North American vulture-like bird, which was extinct in the wild by the late 1980s. Although not de-extincted from dead cells, this scavenging species was painstakingly recovered from a small captive population. Over years and at a cost of over \$35 million, a few hundred have been released back into North American skies. Some even breed successfully in the wild. It's not,



however, an unmitigated triumph of conservation; the condor reintroduction project is at serious risk because the birds ingest poisonous bullet fragments left behind in hunters' kills. Some die, and wildlife workers must treat dozens more each year for lead contamination, which has cost millions.

But condor conservationists are fighting on – by mounting lead awareness campaigns and lawsuits. Public knowledge is rising and California might ban lead bullets this year, protecting not only condors but dozens of other species as well as hunters' health.

Conservationists have long known that animals which need large areas or specific habitats can be umbrellas to shelter thousands of other species from extinction; we can't have wild lions without big wild savannas for them to hunt in.

Species that are expensive and difficult to save can be especially good umbrellas. The multi-decade struggle to prevent South Africa's rhinos from going extinct means that we now have large, established conservation areas for them, backed by strong conservation institutions staffed by battle-tested people who have sunk so much into

It is a daring attempt
to fiddle with
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shouldn't be fiddling
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their mission that they're not giving up even when confronted with wave after wave of murderous poachers.

DE-EXTINCTION IS CREEPY. THAT'S GOOD,

because it's a chance to expand the audience for stories about endangered species and what we're doing to the Earth. Of course this is about us; all conservation is about us and our desire for a living planet filled with awe-in-

spiring, beautiful (and often very useful) creatures.

It *will* probably be really expensive (at least to begin with) but that means we can build strong institutions around it and build the political will to provide significant, functional habitats for de-extincted species and thousands of not-yet-extinct ones.

And, yes, it is a daring attempt to fiddle with things we probably shouldn't be fiddling with and build crazy things whose purpose isn't quite clear before we really know what we're doing. That's part of what makes us human.

The de-extinction bus is pulling out of the station. I reckon that, sooner rather than later, some species will be resurrected in some form or other.

For de-extinction's promise to be fully realised, conservationists must buy their tickets now. They must help pick the species to be de-extincted, help the media tell powerful, useful stories about extinction and help the lab-bound genetic engineers look out of the windows along the way.

I can't wait to see if we can get vanished South African beasts like the Bluebuck, Cape Lion and Cape Warthog back again. ■

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Turkish delight. Gothic family tale dissects a nation's identity crisis

TURKEY'S SEEMINGLY ENDLESS STRUGGLE FOR modernity echoes with South African analogies. Orhan Pamuk, 2006 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, has produced a finely crafted novel. In the age of the tiny attention span, *Silent House* requires an initial adjustment to the subtle, leisured exposition.

It gathers sinister momentum with myriad minute effects. Just like real life.

Ostensibly, *Silent House* depicts the history of a family in gothic decay. Crippled by indecision, self-indulgence and fear of change, they dither as Turkey waits in tense anticipation of social trouble. The country is on the verge of the 1980 military coup.

Pamuk's focus on the weirdly disparate members of a single family parallels the country's identity confusion. Teetering between Asia and Europe, it exhibits the post-colonial cringe in awe of the West's industrial and intellectual attainments. But the impoverished and uneducated masses prefer the unquestioning solidarity of Muslim fundamentalism.

It says much for Pamuk's wizardry that he is able to render the extraordinary family members convincingly. Consider the cast: evil ancient Grandma lurks upstairs in the crumbling villa, cruelly abusing her dwarf attendant (who just happens to be her dead husband's illegitimate son); boozily ineffectual would-be historian grandson Faruk dribbles his life away with arbitrary transcriptions of unrelated old documents; dreamy left-leaning granddaughter Nilgun retreats into literature; classically selfish adolescent grandson Metin yearns for a glamorous life in America.

Grandma remembers when the great Kemal Atatürk enforced a degree of modernity on Turkey (decades later she still resents the fact that men were forced to wear Western hats instead of traditional Muslim headgear). Elder grandson Faruk absorbs endless bottles of raki and threatens to write a great work – when he gets around to sorting his notes. His kind and charming sister chides her brothers gently and then retreats into the nearest book. Young Metin experiments with dope and drink and rages at an unkind world.

The heart of the family is the dwarf Recep. Lonely, modest and practical, he soldiers on while, all around him, doubt, anger and confu-

sion strangle the nation. The intellectuals rattle on, the poor suffer as they always have, but Recep makes sure that everybody, including even the old witch upstairs, gets a good breakfast.

A hopeless future? Well, Turkey appears today to be debating its identity with relentless intensity. As is South Africa. Let's hope that the Turks have more sense than to spend their time and energy arguing about the official formula for a true citizen. We all want a good breakfast. ■

SILENT HOUSE
by Orhan Pamuk
(Faber and Faber)



Moderniser and first president of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk



Handicapped by denial. Has golf become religion for the wilfully blinkered rich?

HEAD NORTH UP TREE-LINED Steenberg Road in Cape Town and you are faced with a startling contrast. On your right, lurking behind grim walls, squats Pollsmoor Prison. To your left, not 50 metres from the bars of cells, lies Steenberg Golf Estate, regularly named as one of the most expensive places to live on the African continent. The divide between the rich and the poor, the confident and the hopeless, and between those with all the choices in the world and those with none, is stark.

The internet suggests that the average cost of a house inside the electrified, peasant-proof fence of Steenberg is somewhere north of R10 million. But to stand in the real world on Steenberg Road and to peer through that ticking fence is to be underwhelmed. The houses are typical of those with lots of money and very little aesthetic sensitivity, all conforming to an unambitious, homogenous simulacrum of “luxury lifestyle”, a spiritual home for people who find poetry in Pam Golding brochures. But of course, value is what people are willing to pay, and if Steenberg’s residents think that these unremarkable piles are worth millions, then that’s what they’re worth.

Golf estates have plonked themselves down all over South Africa with the sunny confidence of the superwealthy, presenting themselves as the epitome of luxury. To quote an actual Pam Golding advert, “For many the dream is a relaxed yet refined lifestyle overlooking the rolling fairways and manicured greens of a Championship Golf Course.” And why does one live in such a place? There we turn to another Golding gem: “To know what is important and what matters. To people & to the environment.”

Apparently the rich don’t need to know what is important and what matters when it comes to punctuation

and syntax; but you get the picture.

And yet, none of this babble explains why people want to live on a golf course. Why is it “the dream”? Why should taking your morning poo near a fairway automatically make you “relaxed yet refined”? Is it because you love golf and living on your playground makes you happy? I doubt it. Many people who live on golf estates couldn’t tell a wedge from a wedgie. So how did we arrive at this point, where people are considered a success if they live on a golf course, when, if they expressed a desire to live in another sporting venue, perhaps inside a cricket stadium, they would be considered mad?

Perhaps the answer lies in the nature of golf itself. Mark Twain is supposed to have said that golf “is a good walk spoiled”, but in its purest form, the game is more than a leisurely ramble, interrupted by hacking a ball into the distance. It is a form of meditation, in which arbitrary rules serve

merely as boundaries within which the player tries to nudge psychology and physiology into some kind of harmony. As with many other meditations, it is most meaningful when done alone but slightly more enjoyable when performed alongside others; while the rewards it offers are a profound sense of balance, of belonging, of meaning. Simple physical and aesthetic pleasures – a sweetly struck tee-shot, curling in a putt from twenty feet away – seem to hint at the possibility of Nirvana waiting beyond the next fairway...

No doubt millions of golfers play the

Today we marvel at the sociopathic behaviour of Marie Antoinette, who would play at being a shepherdess in a specially built rural setting



game as humble devotees, following the commandments of their own particular coaching gurus and endlessly searching for Nirvana. But there are millions more who have lost the meditative point of golf, and for whom the game has become a hollow quasi-religious ritual. Their yearning for the sublime is real, but they have forgotten or unlearned the truth about meditation: that it is ultimately a solitary and introverted act. Instead, their worship has become extroverted. They buy the clothes, they learn the jargon, they follow their chosen prophet around the major tournaments, hoping that if they shout "Get in the hole!" loudly enough, they will somehow be Chosen.

Of course, one can't blame them. Their spiritual role models all come from organised religion, which has traditionally prized extroverted performance over introverted meditation, where rows of people think they are communing silently with their god

when in fact most of their energy is going into demonstrating their piety and humility to the people sitting on either side of them.

So why do people want to live on golf courses? Because they want to appear Saved. After all, if golf is the defining symbol of bourgeois virtue, then how much more virtuous, how much more Saved, would you be if you actually lived in the churchyard? But there might be another force tugging at their hearts and wallets, older than any Christian church or Muslim mosque: the ancient lure of the pastoral idyll. This fantasy has whispered to urbanites for almost three thousand years, convincing them that beyond their regimented, polluted lives, an Eden was waiting in the countryside, where they would find a simple and rewarding life among contented peasants and clean sheep.

There is nothing fundamentally problematic about pastoral fantasies. But when they become amplified by

money, ignorance and a lack of compassion, they can easily become obscene. Today we marvel at the apparently sociopathic behaviour of Marie Antoinette, the queen of France, who would play at being a shepherdess in a specially built rural setting at Versailles. The idea of her trotting after sheep, while her subjects starved beyond the fence, is repugnant to a modern person. And yet the insulated rich are still trotting after little white things across artificial meadows, and there are still people starving beyond the fence.

I am not accusing golfers of being as criminally naïve as French queens, or hinting at future guillotining. Only a handful of players live at estates like Steenberg. But I do think that too many of those who play golf do so because it has become infused with exclusivity and materialism. Despite its pastoral trappings, it has become profoundly anti-pastoral. The point of golf is no longer to find oneself in nature. The point of golf is that Untouchables, the Unsaved, the Ordinary, can't afford to play it.

Can we blame the game for the mores of the people who play it? Perhaps. Certainly, it often demands an active rejection of history, economics and above all, environmental concerns: how else can otherwise ethical people think it is okay to while away their afternoons on huge lawns that suck up over a million litres of water per course per day, while neighbouring townships resort to trickling taps? Perhaps there is a reason that 40 percent of American golfers do not believe that climate change is real. It is possible that the game itself demands a certain level of denial.

Perhaps it is unfair to pick on golf. After all, most sports are about escaping from reality. We play and watch sport to forget, for a little while, the complicated questions and pressures of the real world.

But not all sports are played on 150 acres of prime land closed to spectators. Not all sports make such a strong appeal to exclusivity and elitism.

Golfers must be on their guard: their sport can nourish and celebrate the better angels of their nature; but it can also seduce them into a deep and distasteful delusion. And that's a handicap no golfer can afford. ■



Marie Antoinette swanning around the Petit Trianon, her bucolic playground



Bricsbat. Shoprite panned over shoddy imported kitchen implements

ONE THING I HAVE LEARNED OVER the years that I have been engaged in this business of exposing wrongs and wrongdoers – a pursuit better known as journalism – is that most subjects of stories, when confronted, take on a defensive stance.

Corporate entities are no different from individuals or politicians, albeit that they use public-relations-style spin to tell us how much they care about their customers and would never compromise their loyalty (read cash source). But I felt disappointed at the absence of spin in a simply worded letter I received last month – along with two belts – from the CEO of Mr Price, Stuart Bird.

Bird’s “gift” of belts and his accompanying “simple” letter was in response to my displeasure at having bought two belts from Mr Price’s Barberton store which began to disintegrate within only weeks of wear and turned out to be made of “Pu/mock Suede” – I still don’t know what that is.

Anyway, Bird acknowledged reading the article and said “I... wanted to let you know that we do stock leather belts. However, I am not sure of your size, so I have chosen two which I hope you will enjoy wearing. Please accept these with our compliments”.

Short and sweet, no public relations spin, *nada*. But, while I appreciate that Bird read the article – an indication that my complaint had reached the right ears – I would rather he had told me Mr Price would exercise greater quality control when making purchases from our Oriental Brics partners. Even if it had been just spin, it would have made me feel as though the whole exercise had achieved something.

Yes, I certainly appreciate the gesture of the two leather belts – genuine leather – and I am enjoying wearing them. Not to worry about the size, with a size 32 waist, I’ve become accustomed to trimming belts I purchase to fit.



And enhancing my appreciation of these fine leather gifts – replacement, rather – is the fact that they are made right here in the RSA (Mr Bird’s patriotism is duly noted) by a company named Trail, as indicated on the belt in big white letters – unlike the Pu/mock-Suede label that was in such small print it reminded me of a print-media correction or apology. (Of course, I do not do that in my little *Guardian*!)

Be that as it may, this was not about Bheki Mashile and his belts. It’s about the hundreds and thousands of consumers who would end up with the same shoddy products but have no recourse and would be left out of pocket – highly unlikely that they would have saved the receipt. And as we all know: no receipt, no refund or exchange.

South Africa’s Consumer Protection Act states that a consumer may return a product to the shop within six months. It stresses that the shop must take responsibility and not hide behind the old “we have to send it to the

factory or head office” line. But the receipt requirement will see most people end up out of pocket.

I take my hat off to the young lady manager at Barberton’s Mr Price, who offered to exchange my Pu/Mock suede belts even without a receipt – though I did announce I was a journalist.

This shoddy-products problem from our Oriental Brics partners is not confined to Mr Price. For your viewing pleasure, please see the photo of two frying pans I bought from Shoprite. They began to rust two weeks later.

When the store manager suggested I must have left them in water too long, I remarked, You are joking, right? Then she hit me with the receipt line.

“No problem, I will express my dissatisfaction in my next edition,” said I. “Ok Bheki, bring them back and we will sort you out,” she responded.

Please, someone, tell me: are products from our Oriental friends not subject to SABS approval? Or are they just another brick in the wall? ■



Darwin. Thereby hangs a tail



HELL I'D HATE TO HAVE MY BODY guarded by this fellow. He's spent long hours in a gym somewhere, you can see his musculature flexing inside his suit, though if you so much as smile at him he goes all bangbroek and blushes all over his head and looks about for somewhere to hide if necessary. But the two ladies with him need his musculature all right, they are very vulnerable in their category of work. For sure. Their job is to go stranger-to-stranger in the street and politely ask if they could spare a few minutes. Folks think they are doing some sort of government survey, but they are not, they are fundamentalist godpersons trying to persuade one to take some of their literature, see, and one feels obliged to take a couple of pamphlets because after all there are not a lot of things one gets for free in this bitter life and one should be gracious. But certain gents reckon they can perhaps get further somethings for free. I mean that's what such godladies fear in exchange for their generosity, and that's where the gym man comes into the picture. See?

Now this particular group have got everything buttoned up, they buzz you on your street intercom and only after you've let them in and the security gate has automatically clicked shut do they take the free literature from their briefcases. The leading lady is 50ish. She steps straight up and says to me Do You Believe In Darwin? Well... er... that is... um, yes, say I. Well if we are descended from monkeys where are all those people with half a tail? says she.

She's probably a well-meaning old duck, think I to myself, and I'm polite because I'm too lazy to be rude, so I don't tell her to voetsek, I smile engagingly. Mama, say I, Darwin never said that, he said the great apes and we have a common ancestor seven million-or-so years ago, and if you want to include monkeys in the ancestry you should go back 10, 11 million years. Well there

You mean, says Leading Lady, it is only luck that I am not a monkey?

you are, says she, in 10 million years how many species would there be living around us with half a tail, a third of a tail, a quarter tail and, um, what comes next? She counts her fingers and toes, like a Japanese bank teller with his abacus. An eighth of a tail and a sixteenth, say I. Yes, she says, if you can show me a person with an eighth of a tail I'll believe in Darwin. Madam, say I, pointing at the Musgrave Centre, you can go this very minute to Adams Booksellers over there, it's not 300 metres away, and there buy his book about evolution, in 150 years it's never gone out of print. People buy it because it's exciting to read, maybe you'll get a bit excited too. Why should I look for excitement in this Life when I've got Truth? says she.

Lady #2 looks about 17 years old and wouldn't mind a bit of excitement now and then if Jesus didn't get in the way, I mean, you know, zizipompom. She coughs politely H'm H'm. Excuse me,

says she, what is Darwin's book about? Well he says it's about Evolution by Natural Selection, say I, but to me that's tautological, which means something is so because it is so: the survivors survive because they are survivors. He should have called it Survival by Random Advantage i.e. Luck. Nature is not a force, moral or physical, a judgmental old auntie who stands back and judges various competitors in the game of survival and decides which candidate best suits the situation, like the matter has been put up for tender. I see, says #2.

You mean, says Leading Lady, it is only luck that I am not a monkey? Indeed, say I, and there are many of you who are monkeys. So where are all the people with one eighth of a tail? says she. Oh shit! think I to myself, play another string on your harp. Missus, say I, it doesn't work that way, it goes slowly, individual by individual, having advantageous genetic mutations, generation by generation, until there are enough of them to redefine the species as new.

See that tomcat over the road, you and he have a common ancestor, also that lizard on the wall, also you are related to a shark with eyes left and right and a mouth with teeth opening horizontally and symmetrical limbs and a 100% tail, and with jellyfish and this palm tree growing here, right back to a single bacterium. Embarrassing silence. I click the remote, the street gate opens, all is polite, all is sour. Don't forget Adams' bookshop say I to #2. I bow to the bodyguard, he blushes.

Good morning, says Leading Lady, and nods. M'am, say I, you have 24 vertebrae down your spine, then comes a flat part called the sacrum that the hipbones are joined on to and at the bottom of the sacrum are three or four small vertebrae fused together and called the coccyx, pointing slightly inwards. The coccyx has no function, it is the 10 million-year-old remnant of a tail. Look it up on the internet, look it up in a dictionary, find it in an old X-ray photo or perhaps, best of all, ask your doctor. If you are looking for a person with an eighth of a tail, look no further, for you have found her, and she is you. ■

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Happy Birthday Dad/Gramps All our love Michelle, Vanessa, Sasha, Lucy, Cara, Scarlet and two boys.

IN MEMORIAM

MANDY ROUSSOUW

It is with deep sadness that all of us at Kwela Books (an imprint of NB Publishers) mourn the passing of Mandy Rossouw.



She was a ferociously engaged and knowledgeable journalist, who had so much more to add to the public discourse in South Africa. We will miss her dearly, not least her wonderful sense of humour. Our heartfelt condolences go out to her family and her many friends.

HUGH DAVID (CHOPS) WORKMAN

Chops, 78, passed away on 21 February at home in Claremont. He matriculated at Grey, Port Elizabeth, then went on to Rhodes to do his B Com. In Cape Town he was articled to Deloitte for his C.A. After a few years in the profession he went into commerce and bought and built up Morlan Lanolin Products. A keen squash player, he retired from competitive squash to concentrate on his new business. He is sadly missed by his wife Beverley.



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