Critical literacy and the social justice project of education

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Abstract

In this paper, I problematise the notion of social justice and the moral project that underpins critical literacy education. In plural societies do we all have a shared understanding of what social justice is or how education, currently a dividing practice, might contribute to a better social order? Do we know what 'better' looks like and for whom? Having dealt with this problematic, I will argue that the ability to critically interrogate texts, broadly defined, is fundamentally important for democratic citizenship. Critically literate subjects are precisely the kind of 'very clever and bright people' capable of critique, that President Zuma claims are not 'ordinary voters', (4 May 2014) and who, I believe, should be. Then in conclusion, I will suggest that a critical literacy approach needs to recognize that the ground is shifting away from texts and discourse to a focus on material practices that reconfigure the world and those who are entangled with it.

Introduction

Critical literacy is a socio-cultural orientation to literacy that is concerned not just with the meaning of texts and practices, but with their social and material effects. All texts and practices are positioned and they work to position us. An education in critical literacy enables us to interrogate these positionings in order to understand whose interests they serve. Once this work has been done, we still have to decide whether or not to take up the positions, on offer together with their attendant interests. This is a moral decision as not all interests contribute to a more just social order.

Morals are by definition specific to individuals or groups. They are not shared, but are tied to the beliefs, customs and rules of different social groups, which determine what is right or wrong according to the group. The question that social justice educators have to confront is how to establish a shared sense of justice in heterogeneous classrooms where there may be no shared moral code. This conceptual paper addresses this question.

The paper begins with Durkheim's attempt to answer this question with a focus on moral education based on rationality. His elements of moral education are applied briefly to two current political examples. This is followed by an account of critical literacy and how it has been influenced by the work of anthropologists, semioticians, and new understandings of multiplicity, discourse and power. This theory is then applied to two contentious events in post apartheid South Africa in order to examine the complexity of working at the interface of critical literacy and social justice.

Moral education

Durkheim addresses the question of morality in his response to the changing moral order in French education. The old moral order based on religion could no longer be relied on in the shift to secular education in public schools. His course on moral education offered at the Sorbonne 1902-1903, addressed the change to an education system

> that is not derived from revealed religion but rests exclusively on ideas, sentiments, and practices accountable to reason only – in short a purely rationalist education (Durkheim, 2002: 3).

He too was confronting a world in which shared morals could no longer be relied on. Slonimsky (2016) has argued that Durkheim's work on these three key elements of morality enables us to understand what is needed for ethical democratic citizenship. The three elements, the spirit of discipline, attachment to social groups and autonomy or self-determination, are all grounded in rationality.

1   Discipline is needed to 'contain our passions, our desires, our habits and [willingly] submit them to law' (p.46). Law provides the rules that we agree to abide by so that we can live 'in harmony with the physical world surrounding us and the social world of which we are members' (p. 48). Laws therefore provide us with a shared code of behaviour, provided we deem them to be reasonable. Durkheim recognizes that it is important not to conform to law 'to the point where it completely captures intelligence' (Durkheim, 2002, p.52).

2   If a person is to be 'a moral being he [or she] must be devoted to something other than him [or her]self through attachment to social groups – family, nation, humanity'. Moral actions do not serve personal ends but the 'collective interest' of the society (Durkheim, 2002, p.59). What counts as moral is 'directly related to the social structure of the people practicing it'. It therefore varies from society to society and changes over time in how it conceives of the good. Differences become more marked if people's attachments are too narrowly defined.

3   Third, as autonomous subjects we have to choose to submit to the law that articulates the society's sense of the good, freely and rationally. 'We must have knowledge, as clear and complete as possible of the reasons for our conduct (p.120)'. It is important to consider how what we know, based on the sealed social and filter bubbles[1] we live in, limits our reason.

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[1] 'A filter bubble is the intellectual isolation that can occur when websites make use of algorithms to selectively assume the information a user would want to see, and then give information to the user according to this assumption'. Downloaded 16 June at, https://www.techopedia.com/ definition/28556/filter-bubble. According to Bill Gates, filter bubbles 'let you go off with like-minded people, so you're not mixing and sharing and

If rational thought is the basis of moral action, then critical literacy education has to ensure that students can think critically. Critical thinking requires analysis based on reason. Critical literacy, on the other hand, is an ability to 'read' the world in order to understand how power works to include and exclude, and to privilege some at the expense of others. It requires both analysis and an imagination for transformative social action, sometimes referred to as 'renaming' (Freire, 1972) or 'redesign' (Janks et al, 2014, p.145).

Durkheim's three key elements of morality are useful in helping us to consider whether or not to support the positions on offer in texts and practices. On 5 June 2017, after terrorist attacks in Britain, the British Prime Minister said in a campaign speech, that she would do more

> to restrict the freedom and the movements of terrorist suspects when we have enough evidence to know they present a threat, but not enough evidence to prosecute them in full in court. And if our human rights laws get in the way of doing it, we will change the law so we can do it' (May, 2017).

From a social justice perspective it is clear that one cannot dispense with human rights just because they are inconvenient. Durkheim's moral principles can be applied to consider the morality of May's position. That she does not have the discipline to abide by law is immoral; that she would use her power to rewrite laws that get in her way is immoral; that her attachment is not to all British nationals but to a more narrowly defined group is immoral; and that she is prepared to act without full knowledge is also immoral. In a critical literacy classroom some students may want to argue that it is not reasonable to abide by laws that do not curb the threat to their safety. Focusing the discussion on what is morally right or wrong, however, centres the discussion on interests, and whether some British nationals have more of a right to have their interests protected than other British nationals.

Similarly, President Trump's withdrawing from the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change* is not moral. His expressed social attachment to 'America first', rather than to the rest of the world is too narrow an attachment because America shares the planet with other countries (Moral element 2), as is his lack of care for the planet. He lacks the discipline to live in 'harmony with the physical world surrounding us' (Durkheim: moral element 1).

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understanding other points of view.' (https://qz.com/913114/bill-gates-says-filter-bubbles-are-a-serious-problem-with-news/ -)

In addition to the use of social theory[2] as a means of arriving at a moral code that can be shared across differences, national documents such as the *Declaration of Independence* in the United States or the *Constitution* of South Africa are also used in critical literacy classrooms as moral touchstones for work in critical literacy. So too is *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, despite the fact that its universality was challenged from the outset by countries who did not sign the *Declaration* because they believe it has a Western bias and conflicts with Sharia law.

In 2009, The Conference for English Educators (CEE) published a position statement pertaining to social justice education. It begins with the assertion taken from the *Declaration of Independence*, that 'all men [sic] are created equal'. Similarly, Chapter 2 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) declares that neither the state nor any person may

> unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. (Chapter 2, sections 9.3 and 9.4).

These documents that pertain to rights, offer ethical principles that provide a basis for students to arrive at an agreed moral position that the can use to adjudicate interests that affect human subjects, but they do not consider ethical behavior with regard to other living entities or to the planet. That is why the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change*, signed by 195 countries is so important. Critical literacy education also requires the recognition that we are entangled in the world, such that we are constantly reconfiguring it by our material practices and in so doing all that is a part of it (Barad, 2007)

Critical literacy
Critical literacy originates in Brazil with the work of Paulo Freire. His two seminal books *Cutural Action for Freedom* (1972a) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972b) show how in the process of learning to read both the word and the world critically, adult literacy learners regain their sense of themselves as agents who can transform the social situations in which they find themselves. Literacy is inextricably linked to transformative social action. The relationship between literacy and power was further developed by Fairclough (1989) who added the dimension of Critical Discourse Analysis. Freire worked with a Marxist understanding of power and Fairclough worked with both Marx and Foucault.

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[2] Any number of philosophers and social theorist could be used for a discussion on morality. Durkheim's work is particularly relevant to education, because he too was working at a time when education could no longer rely on a shared moral code based on a shared religion.

Since Freire, *Critical literacy* has been extended by developments in the field of literacy. Shirley Heath's seminal ethnographic study, *Ways with Words* (1983) introduced the distinction between literacy events and literacy practices and showed that schooling favoured the practices of the middle class. Brian Street's work on cross-cultural approaches to literacy (1994) provided examples of cultural variation in literacy practices.[3] The work of these anthropologists shifted our understanding of literacy and enabled the field to conceptualise literacy as a social practice that varies. Literacy is therefore plural and the field of literacy studies has to recognize different literacies. What this work made clear is that there are dominant and subordinate literacies, that the literacies of powerful elites are dominant, and that there is unequal access to these literacies.

Gunther Kress (2003; 2009) argued that texts are fundamentally multimodal and that literacy includes the ability to read signs produced in different modes. Not only is it important for literacy education to teach learners how to make meaning from multiple semiotic modes, but also how these modes combine to make meaning. He introduced the concept of *multimodal literacies.* This approach focuses more on design, redesign and the making of meaning rather than on literacy as critique. This can be seen in an account given by Newfield (2011) on the difference between visual literacy and critical visual literacy.

Diversity is the focus of the Multiliteracies Project, initiated by the New London Group (2000). Multiplicity - multiple literacies, multiple modes, multiple student identities, multiple media including digital and social media – is the basis for a pedagogy of *multiliteracies*. This pedagogy includes social critique (critical framing), which forms the basis for transformed practice. Multiplicity and diversity entail power, as differences are structured in dominance – they become socially stratified.

The latest handbook of literacy studies (Rowsell and Pahl, 2015) sees literacy as the practice of making and consuming meaning with an expanded range of texts (artifacts, spaces, facebook narratives, videogames, testimonies, art, etc.). It includes an up-to-date overview of the field of critical literacy (Rogers and O'Daniels, 2015). In this article, and in the edited collection as a whole, there is a silence about both ethics and morals in relation to literacy.

At the centre of current approaches to critical literacy is an understanding of how power works through discourses, and through their manifestations in texts. If, as Gee (1990) says, discourses are ways of saying/writing-doing-being-believing-valuing combinations then what and how we use language and other semiotic resources is

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[3] I wish to pay tribute to Brian Street who died while I was finalizing this paper. His research played a significant part in my understanding of literacy as a social and political practice and will continue to influence the field into the future.

inextricably bound up with our practices (doings), our identities (being), and our beliefs and values (morality). The texts we, and others, produce are informed by the ways of making meaning in the discourse communities that we inhabit. They are never neutral; they are not equally valued, and they are often in conflict. Foucault recognizes discourse as 'the power which is to be seized' (1970:110) for two reasons. First,

> 'in every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures' (Foucault, 1970:109) that are linked with systems of power.

There are 'different regimes of truth tied to the types of discourse [that society] causes to function as true' (Foucault, 1976) as well as differential access to these powerful discourses.

Second, the discourses we inhabit produce us as human subjects (Foucault, 1970) with different ways of being and acting based on different regimes of truth and different moral codes.

What then is our role as critical literacy educators? How do we help our students to see discourses – abstract underlying systems that structure our use of language and other semiotic modes – at work? How do we work with students in our heterogeneous classes who come from different discourse communities, and who embody different ways of doing, being, believing and valuing? How do we do this work when truth itself is under attack in a Trumpian world of 'alternative facts' and 'fake news'. The ways in which we answer these questions affect whether or not our classrooms are critical and contribute to a more just society.

Contentious cases taken from the South African context
Although contextually specific, the critical and moral issues raised by the two cases discussed are not limited to South Africa. It is, in fact, often easier for critical literacy teachers to begin with cases outside of their own context because students' own identity investments are less likely to inhibit their engagement. Parallels between distant cases and ones closer to home can always be introduced, if the students do not themselves make the connections. What matters is that students understand the literacie**s,** the conflicting discourses, the semiotics, the identities and the relations of power at play in these case so as to interrogate the interests at work in order to take a moral stand. This first case has been chosen to take students out of their discourse comfort zones to make sense of positions flowing from different discourses and different identity positions. The second case deals with the the role of our attachment to others as necessary for establishing and maintain the moral order .

Case 1*: The Spear* – a case of discourses and rights in conflict
The text at the centre of this case is a work of art called *The Spear*. This is a a painting, ostensibly of Jacob Zuma, the president of South Africa, by Brett Murray,

which was highly controversial . Murray's painting was shown in the context of a satirical art exhibition, *Hail to the Thief*. (http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/265). The exhibition as a whole was extremely critical of both the ANC and President Zuma. It is important to know that a spear is also the central symbol in the ANC's representation of itself as political party. An image of the ANC party symbol can be seen on the web (https://seeklogo.com/images /A/ANC-logo-650D4291A7-seeklogo.com.png). *The Spear* depicts Zuma in a classic, pop-art style, Lenin-like, revolutionary pose. Given the ANC's alliance with the South African Communist Party, this is not in and of itself offensive. What is controversial is that in the painting, the President's genitals are exposed.

I included this controversy as a page in *Doing Critical Literacy,* a book of critical literacy classroom activities (Janks et al, 2014, p. 40) to provide teachers and students with material for dealing with incommensurate discourses. Figure 2 shows the page to make the layout clear. The content of Figure 2 which is unreadable is included in the article as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The layout of the page in Doing Critical Literacy on conflicting discourses
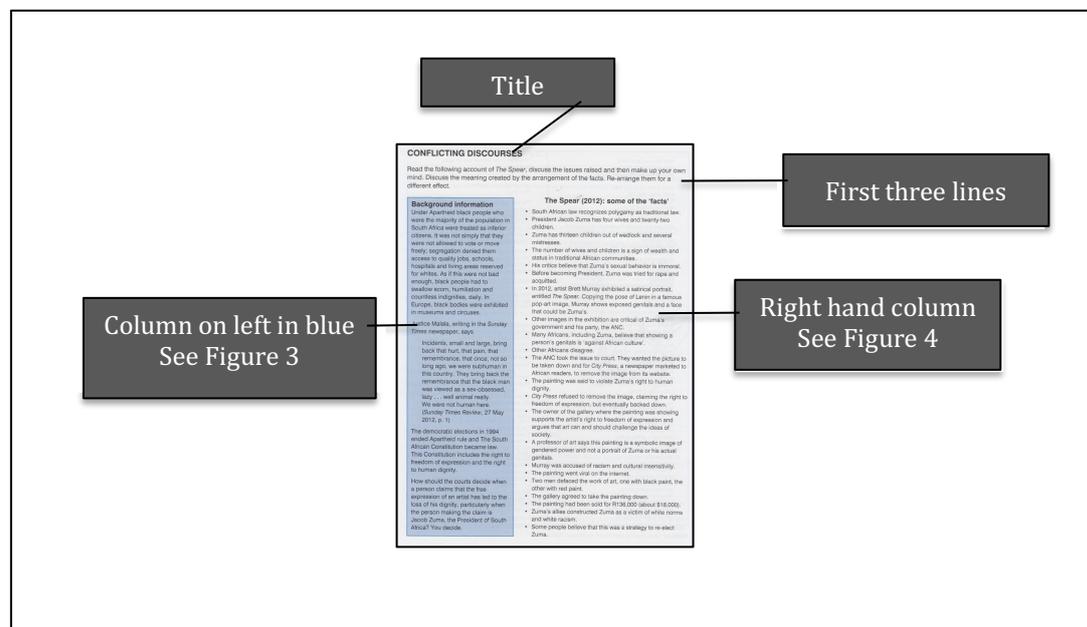
The text starts with the heading 'CONFLICTING DISCOURSES'. The three lines below the heading ask readers to

> Read the following account of *The Spear*, discuss the issues raised and then make up your own mind. Discuss the meaning created by the arrangement of the facts. Re-arrange them for a different effect.

Readers are invited to make up their own minds in relation to the conflict of rights raised by this event and to rearrange the facts that have been given. By changing how the facts are ordered, readers should learn that meaning is affected by the sequencing of information. If sequencing affects the position of a text, then no text, including this text, can be neutral.

Beneath this three-line introduction, the page is divided vertically into two. The column on the left, in blue, (Figure 3) provides background information that locates the event within the history of racial oppression in South Africa and the objectification and degradation of the black body during colonial and apartheid rule.

Figure 3: Left hand column in blue

Background information

Under apartheid black people who were the majority of the population in South Africa were treated as inferior citizens. It was not simply that they were not allowed to vote or move freely; segregation denied them access to quality jobs, schools, hospitals and living areas reserved for whites. As if this were not bad enough, black people had to swallow scorn, humiliation and countless indignities, daily. In Europe, black bodies were exhibited in museums and circuses.

   Justice Malala, writing in the *Sunday Times* newspaper says 'Incidents, small and large, bring back that hurt, that pain, that remembrance, that once, not so long ago, we were subhuman in this country. They bring back the remembrance that the black man was viewed as a sex-obsessed, lazy … well animal really. We were not human here (*Sunday Times Review*, 27 May 2012, p. 1).

   The democratic elections in 1994 ended apartheid rule and The South African Constitution became law. This Constitution includes the right to freedom of expression and the right to human dignity.

   How should the courts decide when a person claims that the free expression of an artist has led to the loss of his dignity, particularly when the person making the claim is Jacob Zuma, the President of South Africa? You decide.

The right hand column (Figure 4) offers some of the facts needed to understand the context of production and reception of the painting, the controversy it caused, and the events that transpired. I tried to write these as dispassionately and as factually as I could but any selection presupposes facts that were not selected. Both the selection of facts and the silencing of other facts affect the positioning of the text. In addition, the way this information is framed by the information in the blue column cannot but affect the way the selected 'facts' are read.

Figure 4: Right hand column

The Spear (2012): some of the 'facts'

- South African law recognizes polygamy as traditional law.
- President Jacob Zuma has four wives and 22 children.
- Zuma has 13 children out of wedlock and several mistresses.
- The number of wives and children is a sign of wealth and status in traditional African communities.
- His critics believe that Zuma's sexual behavior is immoral.
- Before becoming President, Zuma was tried for rape and acquitted.
- In 2012, artist Brett Murray exhibited a satirical portrait, entitled *The Spear.* Copying the pose of Lenin in a famous pop-art image, Murray shows exposed genitals and a face that could be Zuma's.
- Other images in the exhibition are critical of Zuma's government and his party, the ANC.
- Many Africans, including Zuma, believe that showing a person's genitals is 'against African culture'.
- Other Africans disagree.
- The ANC took the issue to court. They wanted the picture to be taken down and for *City Press*, a newspaper marketed to African readers, to remove the image from its website.
- The painting was said to violate Zuma's right to human dignity.
- *City Press* refused to remove the image claiming the right to freedom of expression but eventually backed down.
- The owner of the gallery where the painting was showing supported the artist's right to freedom of expression and argued that art can and should challenge the ideas of society.
- A professor of art says this painting is a symbolic image of gendered power not a portrait of Zuma or his actual genitals.
- Murray was accused of racism and cultural insensitivity.
- The painting went viral on the internet.
- Two men defaced the work of art, one with black paint, the other with red paint.
- The gallery agreed to take the painting down.
- The painting had been sold for R136 000 (about $10 000).
- Zuma's allies constructed Zuma as a victim of white norms and white racism.
- Some people believe that this was a re-elect Zuma strategy.

It is clear from this account that different discourse communities responded to the painting and the controversy it created, very differently. Many black South Africans defended Zuma's right to dignity and many whites defended Murray's right to freedom of expression. But the division along racial lines was not clear cut because viewers are over-determined – they belong to more than one social group and more than one discourse community. Level of education, class, gender and geography also influenced their responses. Uneducated, working class, traditional, rural Africans were most likely to find the painting offensive.

Different literacies complicated the issue. At the time, one of Zuma's wives expressed surprise at the painting because the artist had never seen her husband's genitals. From

this statement it is clear that she is reading art as a literal depiction of what is, rather than as a symbolic representation. Under apartheid education, she would not have been exposed to multimodal analysis, let alone to art education.

The issue was further complicated by the multiplicity of media used to disseminate the painting. Digital media enabled images of the painting to be posted on the internet and disseminated on social media. What does it mean to have the defaced painting 'taken down' when the original and the defaced versions remain available to anyone with access to a search engine?

Two different men defaced the painting, yet this doubly redesigned painting was bought for a fair sum of money. Why? How did the defacement affect the meaning of the painting and its worth?

In order to understand the controversy, and answer some of these questions critical literacy students could conduct an enquiry. Research would extend their knowledge (Moral element 3) and help them to decide who benefited from the controversy. It would give them access to the thinking of social groups other than those they are attached to (Moral element 2). Students could also compare this incident with similar instances in which political figures have been rendered naked. The 'Emperor has no balls', for example, was an anarchist project in the United States, in which 'five identical statues of a nude Donald Trump appeared overnight on street corners in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Seattle, and New York City'. (Downloaded 14 June, at https://www.theverge.com/2016/8/18/12538672/nude-donald-trump-statues-union-square-los-angeles-indecline). Images of these statues were also widely distributed on the internet and on social media, yet it never became an explosive issue? Why not? Research that compared and contrasted these two incidents, how they were reported, and the reactions to them, might create sufficient distance for students from their own identity investments to enable them to consider the social justice issues involved.

In the case of *The Spear*, both sides used the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to defend their positions, but they used different articles, in the Declaration, Article 1 and Article 19.

Article 1 states that

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 19 states that

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right

includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Even without a history of communities separated from one another by apartheid, it would be difficult to adjudicate between these competing rights. But in South Africa, where we continue to live in different racialised communities with different discourses because of our history, we often interact with one another across a wide discourse chasm. For example, had the artist and his supporters known that in African languages there is a taboo that prohibits even the use of words referring to sexual organs, they might have been able to predict that the graphic depiction of Zuma's genitals would be likely, from the perspective of an African sensibility, to be seen to cross the line of decency pertaining to a person's dignity. When white people describe the painting as a 'symbolic image of gendered power', they are speaking from a culturally incommensurable discourse, from a different way of being, believing and valuing. In so doing, they ignore both the history of past indignities directed at the black body and cultural sensitivities.

This case illustrates that a human rights approach to social justice is not enough to solve problems created by different moral norms The challenge for teachers is to create the conditions that enable students to learn about and respect one another by engaging in difficult conversations. The critical literacy classroom needs to be a space where learners encounter information from outside their filter bubbles, so that they can begin to understand the points of view of people who are not like-minded.

Because I am willing to support Zuma's right to dignity does not mean that I condone his behavior which is unethical. He has been accused of rape, he lies with impunity, makes offensive remarks about women, homosexuals and intellectuals, has 783 criminal charges pending, and continues to be involved in corruption. The evidence is mounting, particularly in a trove of leaked emails – the GuptaLeaks – that he has forsaken morality for personal enrichment[4]. In South Africa, where, as Brett Murray says in one of his paintings, 'A fish rots from the head down', education has a difficult job in contributing to the establishment of a moral order.

Case 2: President Zuma – a case of misdirected social attachment
Nkandla is Jacob Zuma's private residential complex. In 2014, the Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, found that Jacob Zuma and his family unduly benefited from the 'security' upgrades made to Nkandla, to the tune of 246 million Rand[5] from the public purse.

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[4] See also the report by academics (2017) *Betrayal of a promise: how South Africa is being stolen* (http://pari.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Betrayal-of-the-Promise-25052017.pdf
[5] ($18,801,763 at an exchange rate of R12,75 to the dollar).

> It is common cause that in the name of security, government built for the
> president and his family in his private [home], a visitors centre, cattle kraal
> and chicken run, swimming pool, and amphitheatre among others (Statement
> by the Public Prosecutor in her report on Nkandla, *Secure in Comfort*, March
> 2014)

Zuma refused to abide by the findings of this report and set up his own inquiry run by
his Minister of Police. This inquiry refuted the findings of the Public Prosecutor and
declared that the President was not liable to pay back any of the money as all
upgrades were bona fide security upgrades. The swimming pool, for example, was
described as a 'fire pool' needed to safeguard the thatched dwellings in the complex.

Zuma is not the only person in government to have a seat on the 'gravy train'.
Nando's, a fast food chain that sells Portuguese style grilled chicken, is known for its
satirical advertisements that invite viewers to see and question the social issues of the
time. Their video, 'Nando's poke fun at shameless ministerial gravy train' (2009) can
be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYS55SN7s9g

Nando's advertisements
> are worth investigating because they teach us how to combine critique with
> pleasure and play, how to use irreverence as a rebellion against authority and
> how to transgress the restraints of political correctness (Janks, 2010, p.213)

Together with cartoons, they help students see how to use the power of satire as
redesign.

In March 2016, the Constitutional Court found Zuma to be in breach of the
Constitution for not submitting to the findings of the Public Protector. Despite this
clear failure to uphold his oath of office, ANC members of parliament continued to
support him, thus protecting their own seats on the train of corruption.

Not only did Zuma break the law (Durkheim: moral element 1), but he failed to act
for the collective good of society. Immorality in this case is linked to Durkheim's
second moral element: attachment to a social group or groups. 'The domain of the
moral begins where the domain of the social begins' (Durkheim, 2002, 60).

Zuma's attachment to a social group, to the extent that he has attachments beyond
himself and his family, is to traditional Zulu society, rather to the nation for which he
is responsible or to humanity more broadly. From this perspective 'clever blacks' are
black people who have turned their backs on their group.

> Even some Africans, who become too clever, take a position, they become the
> most eloquent in criticizing themselves about their own traditions and
> everything. [Excerpt from Zuma's speech to the National House of Traditional
> Leaders in Parliament, 1 November 2012].

Durkheim argues that there are different layers of attachment – the family, the nation and humanity (Durkheim, 2002, 74). I have already suggested that Zuma's attachment is to his family and immediate community, not to more distant social groupings. But as president of the country, he is expected to be socially attached to the nation. His attachments are too narrow for the position he was elected to.

In response to criticism of the expenditure on Nkandla, Zuma said that he was not worried that the controversy would hurt the ANC at the elections. As he put it, 'It's not an issue with the voters'. It is only of concern to 'the media and the opposition' and only an 'issue with the clever blacks'. (Zuma, News 24, 23 November 2012). If by cleverness, he means the ability to use reason, to come to one's own conclusions, then he is correct. It is not hard to understand why Zuma would prefer to be judged according to traditions that require support for a tribal leader, than by moral norms based on the reasoning ability of clever people. It is sad that he proved to be right about uneducated voters, who shortly thereafter elected him for a second term as President. Without developed capabilities for analysis and judgment people may indeed be accepting of action that is immoral.

This case has illustrated two important conditions needed to establish and maintain a just society – attachment to others and reason. It has also suggested that students can show immoral and unjust action with the use of satire. They can also research how satire has been used in their own contexts as critique in relation to either 'big P or little P politics' (Janks, 2010). Zuma is not the only leader who privileges family over his moral responsibility to the people he governs. How people in power demonstrate their social attachments can be used as a measure of their commitment to justice for all. This case has also shown that the ability to use critical thinking for rational analysis is necessary for both deconstruction and redesign.

The next section considers how attachment can be used to frame students own ethical decision making inviting them to imagine if they have to choose between their attachment to their own group and others who have been constructed as a threat to their group.

Social justice, attachment and the other
In case one, I showed how we might help students to look at the problem of a conflict of rights. Here I raise the problem of how we make moral decisions when our own attachments are in conflict. Is our responsibility to humanity in general or to our family first? To our nation or to humanity? To our family or to our nation? These are important questions because they affect our ability to act justly as the world faces the moral question of the rights of migrants and refugees to safe haven. Millions of people across the world are risking their lives to find a better life for their families and to escape untenable situations in their own countries – war, tyranny, unemployment, poverty, hunger, disease and other forms of human suffering. In June 2015 alone, the

press reported that

> Undocumented immigrants are dying in large numbers as they try to evade
> road checkpoints in the ['searing heat and arid terrain'] in Texas counties
> north of the U.S.-Mexico border. (*Time*, 8 June 2015, pages 30 and 33).

> Europe's record numbers of migrants are dying in the Mediterranean. ... So far
> in 2015, nearly a thousand asylum seekers have drowned, including 450 this
> week in at least three separate incidents. (http://www.theguardian.com/world/
> 2015/apr/17/death-mediterranean-africans-migrant-sea-libya, downloaded 27
> June 2015).

> The nowhere people. Thousands of migrants have fled oppression in Burma
> only to meet death on the seas – or face an uncertain future in refugee camps.
> (*Time*, 15 June 2015, page 20).

The situation is no different in South Africa where there are periodic outbreaks of
violence directed against African foreigners. These outbreaks are fueled by myths that
South Africa is being 'bombarded by foreigners', that 'foreign nationals take up
scarce jobs, and business opportunities'; that they 'hoard their skills' and 'commit the
most crime' (*Mail and Guardian*, 22 May 2015)[6]. These myths take hold among the
ill-educated, unskilled, unemployed and poorest sectors of the population. But
according to research conducted in 2008 and 2014, by the Southern African Migration
Programme[7], the main cause for hostility is xenophobia.

> South Africa exhibits levels of intolerance and hostility to outsiders unlike
> virtually anything seen in other parts of the world. The majority of the
> findings are simply astonishing—including close to two-thirds support for
> deportation of those who test HIV positive or have AIDS, and migrants who
> come alone without their families, and for electrification of the country's
> borders (*Mail and Guardian*, 22 May 2015).

The Nando's Diversity Ad (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBIDkW2_FnQ)
(2012), designed to counteract xenophobia, was banned by the government-controlled
broadcasting company, giving support to the interpretation that the it suits the ANC

[6] http://mgafrica.com/article/2015-04-22-six-huge-myths-about-south-africas-
xenophobia
[7] Cush, J. (Series Ed.) The Perfect Storm: The Realities of Xenophobia in
Contemporary South Africa. Southern African Migration Project, Migration Policy
Series No. 50. (Undated)
Cush, J. and Ramachandran, S. (2014) 'Migrant entrepreneurship, collective violence
and xenophobia in South Africa. Southern African Migration Project and the
International Migration Resaerch Centre, Migration Policy Series No. 67.

for citizens to blame foreigners, as this deflects criticism that would otherwise be directed at government (*Mail and Guardian,* 22 May 2015). Klein (2017) predicts that when working class people become disillusioned with Trump's failure to bring back jobs, Trump will

> 'double down on pitting white workers against immigrant workers, do more to rile up fears about Black crime, more to whip up an absurd frenzy about transgendered people and bathrooms' (Chapter 3, Kindle edition).

In other words like Zuma, blame will be deflected from government onto the Other.

Elsewhere the perceived threat posed by migration has contributed to the rise of the far right in Europe and North America. It undoubtedly contributed to the Brexit vote in Britain and is the reason for Trump's determination to impose a travel ban on Muslems and to build a wall on the US border with Mexico. I have argued elsewhere that xenophobia should be included in critical literacy education along with other forms of Othering, (Janks and Adegoke, 2014). The point that I wish to make here is different. Decisions we make about justice are likely to depend on the extent of our social attachments. If our attachments are to our immediate social group, and not more broadly to humanity, this will influence our moral decisions. This is particularly so, if the needs of people outside of one's social group are seen as a threat to our own group's sense of safety, security, job prospects, or access to resources. Students can find examples of how they have dealt with this choice in the past. More importantly they can research local examples of injustice in the defence of 'us' against 'them' and they can research the use of discourse to construct 'them' as a threat to 'us'.

Social justice is much harder to practise when it requires us to give up something from positions of relative privilege, to limit what we have, and to share with strangers. It is hard to confront our own forms of privilege but this is necessary if we are to act to ensure that everyone has opportunities and access to a good life. As the Nando's advertisement shows, if you go far back enough in history, most of us have ancestors who were foreigners once upon a time. Where would I be if South Africa had not allowed my family entry when they were fleeing from Eastern Europe and the impending holocaust? Social justice in education has to be about developing ours and our students' sense of responsibility for others, along with the capabilities we all need to be agents of change.

Conclusion
The current surge in displaced people has more to do with religion, politics, social upheaval and war than with changes in the natural environment. But global warming is a contributing factor and in the long run threatens us all. As desertification, natural disasters, the rising sea level, water and food shortages increase, we are likely to see further waves of desperate people migrating to avoid starvation and death. We have a

moral responsibility to humanity as a whole, not just to our own narrow social groups (Durkheim: moral element 2). We also have a moral responsibility to protect the planet for future generations (Durkheim: moral element 1). Post-humanist theory requires an ethics of *worlding*. In her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway, Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Karen Barad (2007) argues that bodies like other phenomena are part of the material world and that knowing comes from material interactions with the world. Every interaction reconfigures the world and the possibilities for being as a part of it. Knowing, acting and being are 'entangled' material practices that affect matter in and across time and space – timespacematterings. Ethical, ontological and epistemological

> questions have to do with responsibility and accountability for the entanglements 'we' help to enact. … Ethics is about accounting for our part in the entangled webs we weave. (Barad, 2007, Chapter 8, Kindle edition).

The focus here shifts from discourses to material practices. Teaching for *social* justice is no longer enough. In addition to having the discipline and reason to live in harmony with our social world' (Durkehim: moral element 1), we also have responsibilities to the world in all its materiality and all its diversity. Helping our students to become autonomous subjects who freely choose (Durkheim: moral element 3) 'to meet the universe halfway, to take responsibility for the role that we play in the world's differential becoming' (Barad, 2007) is a far more complex and important commitment for critical literacy than we might have imagined.

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