Critical literacy is an approach to education that is concerned with the relationship between language and power. It recognises that power operates at the micro-level of interaction and that these interactions shape and are shaped by power relations at the macro-level, what I have called little p and big P politics.

1 This paper was originally delivered as a keynote address 5th International Conference on Multicultural Discourses: Multi-, Inter- or Trans- cultural communication: reflections, São Paulo, Brazil.
2 http://s1203.photobucket.com/user/jennlbennl23/media/Peanuts1996265.gif.html
5 http://image.cagle.com/182652/1155/182652.png?x85444
In order to understand the rhetorical force of texts one needs to make sense of them in relation to their processes and conditions of production and reception not just their form (Fairclough, 1989). This necessitates a focus on who is saying what to whom, about what, in what context, and under what social conditions. This sociocultural orientation to texts provides the basis for what Richard Andrews (1992) calls the ‘rebirth of rhetoric at the end of the 20th century’ (p. 4). Following Aristotle, he sees rhetoric as the means and art of textual persuasion and he takes it as a given that all texts are persuasive. There would be no point to communication if this were not the case.

I see texts as multimodal instantiations of discourse/ and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a way of examining texts to see how semiotic choices work to produce rhetorical effects. Gee’s definition of discourse as ‘speaking/writing-doing-being-believing-valuing combinations’ is helpful in that it binds language to both practices (way of doing) and identities (ways of being, believing and valuing). According to Foucault (1975) the discourses we inhabit produce us as different kinds of human subjects. Therefore “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault, 1970, p. 110).

This struggle over discourse is what creates difficulty in communication across difference. This is particularly true where normativity works to naturalise dominant discourses and to silence or marginalize others thus validating some identity positions and excluding others.

In the cartoon President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil calls Zuma, Zuma’s behavior is constructed as Other and reprehensible – he practices polygamy; he cannot remember the number of wives he has; he dresses in traditional Zulu attire – the antithesis of Rousseff’s conventional clothing; he addresses Rousseff, a fellow President and equal, with patriarchal condescension, as ‘Dilma my dear’. The convoluted logic of the cartoon which states that accepting Zuma’s offer of marriage is a small price to pay to avoid impeachment, requires a reader who sees Zuma as aberrant and possibly even abhorrent.

The reader is clearly not Brazilian: we are told who Rousseff is but the reader is assumed to know that Jacob Zuma is the President of South Africa. What Gado, the cartoonist, presents as abnormal, polygamy, is normal for Zuma. From a traditional African

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6 Gee derives this definition from Bourdieu, 1991.
7 The cartoonist Godfrey Mwampembwa, also known as Gado, was born in Tanzania and he lives and works in Kenya. ‘Gado is the most syndicated political cartoonist in East and Central Africa, and for over two decades a contributor to the Daily Nation (Kenya), New African (U.K.), Courier International (France), Sunday Tribune (South Africa), Le Monde, Washington Times, Des Standard, and Japan Times’. (www.gadocartoons.com)
perspective, the practice of having several wives is normal, as is the practice of paying lobola, a bride price. Not everyone can afford to have several wives and Zuma’s social standing is increased by the number of wives he has. Having many wives attests to his wealth and virility. It can be argued that denigrating these practices, which are sanctioned as part of Customary Law, and protected by the South African Constitution, is racist. The cartoon depends for its effect on orientalist constructions of the ‘primitive’ colonial other (Said, 1978).

While I can recognize and respect Zuma’s pride in his ethnic identity and traditional practices, I find it difficult to accept his essentialised and static understanding of culture. It is as if he has bought into apartheid’s fixed constructions of separate raced and ethnic identities. ‘Clever blacks’ according to Zuma, are those who have forsaken their cultural traditions. Education is seen a threat to cultural identity. From a feminist perspective, I also reject the naturalized acceptance of a traditional patriarchal system that accepts the father as the ruling authority of the family, clan, or tribe. In patriarchal societies, men hold power; they are privileged by customs and cultural norms; women are expected to defer to their authority and are denied opportunities. They often maintain their power by a system of patronage and the dispensing of favours. In my classroom research in the early 90s male high school students argued that feminism was a western concept (Janks, 2001) but the post-apartheid Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) put paid to that, by recognizing equal rights for women.

These three different discursive positions that result in different readings of this cartoon, serve to illustrate the difficulty of communication across incommensurate discourses. It becomes clear that readers bring their own beliefs and values to texts, as do writers. According to the Gado website:

Gado is the most syndicated political cartoonist in East and Central Africa, and for over two decades a contributor to the Daily Nation (Kenya), New African (U.K.), Courier International (France), Sunday Tribune (South Africa), Le Monde, Washington Times, Des Standard, and Japan Times.

That Gado, an African, allows colonial ‘orientalist’ discourses (Said, 1978) to speak through him, attests to the power of discourse to construct us, often below the level of consciousness and to speak through us. Zuma would consider him to be a ‘clever black’.

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8 http://www.dictionary.com/browse/patriarchy
9 www.gadocartoons.com
In the model that I developed for critical literacy, a pedagogical orientation to CDA, I argued for the interdependence of power, diversity, access and design/redesign. Thus far I have considered how power and diversity are implicated in the production and consumption of the Gado cartoon and I have suggested that consumption depends to a large extent on the discourses that the reader has access to. The cartoon’s rhetoric is also problematic because of the false link it creates between Zuma’s having many wives and his being unfit for office. In South Africa people want Zuma to resign because he is corrupt. He used his appointees in the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to avoid facing 743 criminal charges against him, which a court has recently reinstated. He has allowing the state to be captured by private interests for his own benefit (Public Protector South Africa, 2016a) and for his failure to uphold the Constitution as required by his oath of office (Constitutional Court, 2016) following the findings of the Public Protector in March (2016b) in relation to his undue benefit from upgrades to his personal homestead paid for by the State. The cartoon could be redesigned to show a presidential-looking Zuma giving advice based on his allegedly criminal behavior as reported by the Public Protector in November (2016a).

The redesigned version in Figure 5 does not work with either racist or sexist discourses but it is nevertheless positions Zuma as immoral, mendacious and venal – a position that his supporters would refuse.

Figure 5 Redesigned Gado cartoon

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10 NPA stands for the National Prosecuting Authority
This process of deconstructing a text, redesigning it in order to create a new text, which can in turn be deconstructed and redesigned until a morally or ethically just position is realized, is what I mean by the redesign cycle.

Figure 9 Janks’ redesign cycle

Given that my version of this cartoon is based on facts uncovered by an investigation by South Africa’s Public Protector, I have no further need to reconstruct it. Zuma’s supporters would no doubt want to challenge both it and the Public Protector’s report. This year the Oxford dictionary\(^1\) named post-truth as the word of the year and defines it as follows:

\textbf{adj.} Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief: ‘\textit{in this era of post-truth politics, it’s easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire}’ ‘\textit{some commentators have observed that we are living in a post-truth age}’.

In the post-truth age\(^2\), CDA requires more than just rhetorical analysis. Whereas before, one had to look at the selection, omission and sequencing of facts, now text analysts have to check the truth of the facts themselves. Zuma is not alone in being a liar. According to the Oxford Dictionaries editors\(^3\), the use of the word \textit{post-truth} has increased by approximately 2,000% over its usage in 2015 … Oxford Dictionaries has seen a spike in frequency this year in the context of the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United States. … Fuelled by the rise of social media as a news source and a growing distrust of facts offered up by the establishment, \textit{post-truth} as a concept has been finding its linguistic footing for some time.

\(^1\) https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/post-truth

\(^2\) A google search for ‘Donald Trump’s lies’ resulted in 45, 700, 000 hits, while ‘Hillary Clinton’s lies’ receiving a mere 9,160, 000 and ‘Zuma’s lies’ trail behind at only 509,000 hits.

\(^3\) https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/press/news/2016/11/15/WOTY-16
What is most disturbing, however, is that lies stick because of the ‘confirmation bias’ posited by the psychologist Charles Lord in 1979: ‘people tend to accept arguments that confirm their views and discount facts that challenge what they believe’ (Graves, 2015). Lies have been shown to have persuasive force. For example, ‘Graves (2015) examined ‘the puzzle of why nearly one-third of U.S. parents believe that childhood vaccines cause autism, despite overwhelming medical evidence that there’s no such link. In such cases, he noted, arguing the facts doesn’t help — in fact, it makes the situation worse’. Another example is Trump’s birther lie that maintained that Obama was not a natural born citizen of the United States.

In addition to contending with lies, we also have to be able to recognize bullshit and to understand the difference between the two. The Princeton philosopher, Harry Frankfurt, author of ‘On Bullshit’ (2005) explains that,

> The distinction between lying and bullshitting is fairly clear. The liar asserts something which he himself believes to be false. He deliberately misrepresents what he takes to be the truth. The bullshitter, on the other hand, is not constrained by any consideration of what may or may not be true. In making his assertion, he is indifferent to whether what he is says is true or false. His goal is not to report facts. It is, rather, to shape the beliefs and attitudes of his listeners in a certain way.

Frankfurt argues that Donald Trump used bullshit extensively during his campaign to win the Presidency of the U.S. What is clear is that a democracy requires citizens who are clever enough to be text analysts, who are capable of judging whose interests are served by a text, and a moral compass that reject interests that are for the good of some at the expense of others. Zuma recognized this, when he said that his behaviour is ‘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).

Zuma is right about cleverness being a threat that can affect how people vote, but by singling out clever black people, he suggests that his black supporters lack developed capabilities for analysis and judgment. Because reason is essential for critique then teaching students to think critically and to act ethically is fundamental to education for social justice. But this is no longer enough.

As early as 2002, I argued that “It is necessary to consider the territory beyond reason in order to avoid a problematic disjunction between critical deconstruction and students’ affective engagement with texts” (Janks, 2002 p. 212).

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15 In this case his spending of taxpayers’ money on Nkandla, his private residence.
I was concerned with the non-rational territory of desire and identification, pleasure and play, the taboo and the transgressive because we had noticed that where identification ‘promised’ students the fulfillment of desire, reason could not compete’ (Janks, 2002, p.10). After having studied an advertising campaign for Liquifruit, a South African pure fruit juice product, the students could see the active/passive gender binary at work, and the use of sexualized women’s bodies to sell the product yet many of the girls still had their favourite model, the one they identified with, the one they wished they could be. Despite being able to do a critical analysis of the text, they were still interpellated by it.

Donald Trump’s victory in the US elections underscores the power of the territory beyond reason. He himself said “I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters” (Trump, Iowa campaign rally, January 2016).

He aggressively focused on the taboo and the transgressive and won loyalty by addressing his white supporters’ resentments about inequality and race (Friedman, 2016). White working class wages ‘have stagnated or declined’, and white workers ‘can no longer rely on having a steady job with rising pay’. They are angry at the loss of their relative privilege and they resent ‘the rising number of immigrants and racial minorities’ that pose a threat to their power based on whiteness (Friedman, 2016).

I still do not know exactly how to take forward the idea that we need to work beyond reason as part of the critical literacy project, but now I believe that there is an even greater political imperative to do so. What seems clear is that at the very least, we need to work more with affect – we have to take our students’ feelings seriously as feelings can hold reason captive. We have to continue to work at building a moral order that can see the Other, and not just the self – a moral order that helps us decide whether the interests served by texts and the ways of doing, being, believing and valuing of our discourses serve the ends of social justice.

The discussion thus far has touched on big P, Politics in four countries, Brazil, South Africa, USA and Russia. I turn now to two examples of critical interventions that are more about small p politics, than big P Politics. The first is a language intervention and the second is concerned with the socio-political and historical exploration of objects. The third example, which examines the politics of Higher Education in South Africa, concludes the paper by showing the links between little p and big P, p/Politics.

Turning to the realm of small p politics, the African African Storybook Initiative in South Africa has made a significant contribution to redressing the power imbalances created by the for-profit publishing industry. The project has addressed the dearth of books available for children in African languages by gathering and publishing digital storybooks in local
African languages, including a range of non-standard varieties spoken as home languages, as open access online educational resources (OER)\textsuperscript{16}. (See: www.africanstorybook.org). By working with teachers and librarians in three sites in each of three countries Kenya, Uganda and South Africa and one site in Lesotho, the project had produced 657 unique stories, 2 120 translations, and 265 adaptations in 95 languages across 30 countries, by November, 2016. This includes 26 stories in Portuguese. More recently there has been independent uptake of the project in Ethiopia and Ghana. The African Storybook website enables anyone to upload a story in an African language of their choice and all stories have an English version. English serves as as a continental lingua franca that allows people to access stories from across Africa for translation into their own languages. The stories are produced digitally and are freely available online, together with tools that make translation and adaptation simple.

The OER licensing of these stories has been critical for the rapid spread of the project and the uptake by some national or provincial education authorities. There is also a spin-off project (https://global-asp.github.io), which has produced 386 translations in 26 world languages.

The ability to adapt stories online facilitates redesign. I redesigned Jenny Katz’s story \textit{Look at the Animals} in two different ways to create two different reading positions. In the first adaptation, \textit{Listen to the Animals}, I mix up the sounds that the animals make. Young children usually find it funny when a book gets something the wrong way around and they love to show their superior knowledge. This adaptation introduces humour, requires the students to read the sounds not just remember them because they do not know which animal will say what, and it makes the point that it is important to learn other people’s languages – even animals try to do this. The second adaptation, \textit{Listen to the animals speaking IsiZulu}, is similar, except that in this case the animals are learning an African language. It makes the point that the way different languages hear animal sounds results in different representations of these sounds. It provides an opening for the children to talk about animal sounds in all the languages they know.

This project can be read against my integrated model for critical literacy. This is summarized in Table 1.

\begin{table}[ht]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
  \hline
  \textbf{Power} & The project moves African languages to the centre from the margins. It \\
  \hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{ASb Initiative analysed using Janks’ integrated model for critical literacy}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{16} Open Education resources.
recognises all varieties of African languages.
It gives teachers the means and the skills to become authors.
Children become text makers, not just text users.
It provides an open access archive of traditional and new African stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>For the first time there is a body of literature that recognizes and values the linguistic diversity of African children, including children in rural contexts and is inclusive of their identities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>OER makes the stories freely available for use across the continent and elsewhere and Africans now have access to the stories of Africa in their own languages. OER also makes the resources on the ASb website available for researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>While there is an online template for the stories, story makers have the freedom to use their own words, in their own linguistic varieties to tell their own stories using their own images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign</td>
<td>Translation tools allow the stories to spread geographically and to reach different communities. Adaptation creates the possibility for critical redesign. This can happen online or in classrooms where learners have the freedom to create different endings for stories, different social positioning of characters, and to produce readings from the perspective of different characters.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The second example comes from a Masters course for Canadian teachers that I taught with colleagues from the US and Canada. We began the course with a visit to the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto. This museum is exemplary in its portrayal of the history and politics of shoes. For example, it includes shoes for Chinese women who bound their feet to make them more marriageable.

The most desirable bride possessed a three-inch foot, known as a “golden lotus.” It was respectable to have four-inch feet—a silver lotus—but feet five inches or longer were dismissed as iron lotuses. The marriage prospects for such a girl were dim indeed17.

It explains how only Pope’s has the right to wear red shoes; details the poisonous

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effects of dyes and polishes on the health of shoe makers and shoeshine boys, and in a separate exhibition looks at the the history of men in heels and shifting constructions of masculinity. We also showed the students the movie *Kinky Boots*, which examines the reengineering of a men’s shoe factory to make high-heeled boots for drag queens. This true story creates a stage for dealing with homophobia. The students worked with everyday artifacts from a critical perspective and displayed them in a final exhibition in a Critical Museum of Stuff. What I want to focus on here, is the activity developed by my colleague, Tanya Korostil, which invited each students to make a shoe out of plasticine that represented an aspect of their identities in relation to power. This design activity gave students an opportunity to reflect on their own positionality and that of their peers when the shoes were displayed. It enabled reflections on identity, diversity and power and provided a space for students to express their feelings.

The shoe project is read against my integrated model for critical literacy is summarized in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Power in relation to identity is at the heart of this project. The structured relations of power that emerged included class and gender.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Identity is explored in relation to self, and then diversity is explored in relation to the identity of others on display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>The showcase of artifacts provides the makers with access to the lives and feelings of others. The issue of who has access to shoes is considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>This is a multimodal design activity which, requires makers to represent their identities with a self-made artifact and words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign</td>
<td>There was no required redesign in this activity, but students could have been asked to consider social action in relation to what they learnt from this activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final example focuses on redesign – on transformative social action. Students at Universities in South Africa have taken part in ongoing protest action to effect changes in higher education. This began in March 2015 under the moniker #RhodesMustFall and continued into 2016 under the moniker #FeesMustFall. Both of these protests have focused on
access to higher education and the ‘decolonisation’ of higher education. The protests began with the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) students’ demand that the statue of Cecil John Rhodes on the UCT campus be removed. Rhodes, an archetypal exploitative colonizer associated with “racism, plunder, white supremacy, colonialism, pillaging, dispossession and the oppression of black people” (News24, 22 March, 2015)\textsuperscript{18} became a symbol for the lack of transformation in Higher Education institutions across the country. The demand for decolonization of the curriculum and institutional practices is tied to the understanding that ‘discourse is the power which is to be seized’ (Foucault, 1970). The students see the need to challenge the continuing power and privilege of whiteness. I agree with Everatt that

many black\textsuperscript{19} students are recognising and challenging the powers and privileges that vest in whiteness; the effects of social class on their access and success; and the consequences for their own identities of a curriculum and institutional practices that devalue or negate their cultural and linguistic capital. Many students experience the academy as an alienating space, with unfamiliar discourse norms and practices. The texts they are expected to read are mostly Eurocentric and written in dense academic English. (Everatt, 2016).

I believe that the students overt demands have been heard. My own institution has pledged ‘support for the goal of free, fully funded, quality, decolonized higher education’ and for the principle that ‘no student should be prevented from continuing and completing their studies because of a lack of finance’ (Wits, 2016).

Yet the protests have become violent and destructive. Students have used intimidation and arson to force institutional closure and at my university the police used rubber bullets, tear gas, stun grenades and water canons to quell the student uprising. We have been witness to running battles on campus as the conflict has escalated. In his analysis of the U.S. elections, Friedman argues that South Africa has also not dealt with race and inequality and that “racial division and anger remain the country’s most serious challenge, threatening its universities and obstructing its attempts to grow as an economy and a society” (Friedman, 2016).

Here we see how the small political demands for the removal of a statue, a shift in institutional practices and a more African-centric curriculum are simply a manifestation of the lack of fundamental social and economic change at the macro level of the State. Attempts by


\textsuperscript{19} I use the term black to include African students as well as students of Asian descent or of cross-race parentage. Only a very small percentage of protestors are white.
the university to submit to the small p demands of students cannot really address the need for macro social and political transformation needed to create a more equitable and just society.

The central argument of my integrated model is that power, diversity, access and design/redesign are interdependent and that a focus on one without the other creates a problematic imbalance. Our black students are telling us that the power of whiteness has not been dislodged; that their identities remain on the margins; that the cost of higher education has not enabled access for poor, mainly black students; and that post-apartheid reforms have not worked. They are calling for a radical redesign of the social order. At the centre of this piece is the sense that white power rules. Violent conflict is one kind of imbalance that is produced when power does not confront the challenges of diversity.

More than ever we need a critical literacy education that integrates questions of power, identity and diversity, access, design and redesign to produce a world that is inclusive and equitable. The African philosophy of Umuntu ngu muntu nga bantu, a person is a person through other people is something that we should value and teach to our children and our students. It is a good starting point for redesign

References


