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to ancient Greek history and legend, particularly the story of Helen and the fall of Troy. These stories are introduced, partly for their intrinsic interest and beauty, and partly because they have been constantly re-woven into the fabric of English literature.

There are introductions to each section of the anthology and there is a guide to many of the poems. It was designed to a large extent for private study.

This is also true of the second 'new text' I wish to discuss: *Julius Caesar*, abridged and modernised, the first of a projected series I have undertaken for the introduction of Shakespeare (published by Centaur, Pietermaritzburg).

THE VERY thought of altering a Shakespearean text in any way, is offensive to many devoted Shakespearean scholars, and also to many more people who have never read Shakespeare at all.

Shakespeare wrote first and foremost to give pleasure. He taught, too, and exalted the mind of his audience. But first he captivated that mind by setting the imagination on fire — the best pleasure of all.

This he did by the immediacy and colour of his lines. It was the way his lines reflected the world around him in speech and imagery and thought that gave his plays their immediacy, however remote their subject matter may have seemed.

That so much of this immediacy can still be felt nearly four centuries later is a measure of Shakespeare's genius. But with the changes of language and thought and the very *imagery* of the world around us, a great deal of that immediacy has been lost.

We attempt to find it again, by means of glossaries and footnotes and illustrations of various kinds. A large part of Shakespearean scholarship has this explicatory end in view. And the more the Shakespearean scholar can recover for himself of the original immediacy and convey it to others, the better scholar he is. But his task is an endless one. He can at best be somewhere along the way.

Yet we think of compelling young people to read a full Shakespearean text with all its difficulties, the most marked of all being those resulting from the loss

of immediacy.

To do this is to show an insensitivity, both to the young people and to Shakespeare. And, as in all things, the system gets the result it deserves: when they leave school, not one student in a thousand (or is it ten thousand?) will ever again look at a Shakespearean text.

There is a measure of failure for you! And now I am no longer referring only to second-language students, but even more particularly to first-language students, because it is their literary heritage, to which they are being denied fair access, through the system's incompetence and insensitivity.

THERE IS a growing lobby to omit the teaching of Shakespeare altogether in schools, and if there is no change in the way Shakespeare is introduced and 'taught', I side with that lobby.

But, there is a way of turning the generally negative response to Shakespeare in schools (and even tertiary institutions) into a more positive one: first, by introducing his work in abridged versions; and, second, by modernising the text.

It is more rewarding for students who are being introduced to Shakespeare to get to know several plays in abridged forms in the course of a year, than it is for them to be made to plod laboriously through one complete text.

Modernisation helps to restore the lost immediacy. It enables a fluent reading, unhampered (or far less hampered) by the constant need to refer to the glossary and other learning aids. It provides a more direct access to what Shakespeare is saying.

What is lost is much but by no means all of the poetry. This version of *Julius Caesar* may, in part, be compared to a translation of a work from another language. An inevitable loss occurs, but the gain lies in those who are unable to read the original, or who can only read it with difficulty, being able to read with relative ease. The gain is one of communication and of consequent interest. And, of course, the original text is never really lost: it is always there for students to read — not because they have been compelled to do so, but because their interest has been aroused. ●

BOOK REVIEW:

Addressing key issues relevant to change

Spiegel A.D. and McAllister P.A. **Transition and Tradition in Southern Africa**, a festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer. African Studies Fiftieth Anniversary volume. Vol. 50, Nos 1 and 2, 1991.

PHILIP and IONA MAYER were largely responsible for bringing the anthropology of the Eastern Cape out of the antiquarian rural paradigms and into the vital contemporary scene. Their reputation rests firmly on the Xhosa in Town trilogy and especially on *Townsmen or Tribesmen* which was the second volume.

From that work developed the voluminous but unpublished manuscripts of the migrant labour project which provided the editors and two other of the contributors to the present volume with important research opportunities. Some of that work appeared in *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society* edited by Mayer in 1980 (Oxford UP) with which *Tradition and Transition* invites comparison.

Tradition and Transition has no authoritative (and contentious) introduction from the editors. Rather, its tone is set by a gentle biographical piece in which William Beinart, a historian, demonstrates the skills of the anthropologist rather better than some of the other contributors. Dunbar Moodie picks up the overused idea of "resistance" in a pre-N.U.M. account of how miners integrate the ideologies of "work" at home and in compound. John Argyle casts the process of urbanisation in a much more positive light, using a comparison of dramatic performances to highlight the adaptation of individuals to their larger scale societies. Performance integrates experience and gives it both meaning and expression, subverting the tired dichotomies of the people of "two worlds". Robin Palmer subverts another tired dichotomy — that between the South African experience and all others — in a lively application of



Outlaw newspaper monopolies

AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN REAL MEDIA FREEDOM IS PLURALISM IN OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

by
Colin Legum

IT IS a remarkable fact that although Press freedom (taking in both the print and electronic media) is one of the essential bulwarks of a democratic society, virtually none of the Western democracies can claim, after centuries of practice, to have succeeded in creating a genuinely free Press. It is certainly not genuinely free in the United States or Britain, and still has important weaknesses even in the more successful examples to be found in the Scandinavian countries.

An important starting-point is to define the essentials of a genuinely free Press.

The first is that there should be a constitutional guarantee of Press freedom, underpinned by the right of appeal, to the courts in the case of infringements.

Other essentials are: a pluralism of newspapers and magazines reflecting the views of diverse political, social and economic interests; a law against monopolistic ownership of newspapers; and accountable public control over a section of television and broadcasting, as best exemplified by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

However, even when these essentials are guaranteed by law, the operation of market forces is such that it is impossible

for all but the richest interest groups to achieve genuine medium pluralism. Two examples can be cited to illustrate this failure. In Britain only one national newspaper (the popular *Daily Mirror*) supports the traditional alternative government, the Labour Party. The majority of national and provincial papers support the Conservative Party. The Liberals are in a better position because they have the support of the influential *Guardian* and general support from a few independent national papers. Even in Sweden, where the Social Democrats, have held power, on and off, for more than 30 years, the party's only support is a weak and struggling newspaper.

These two examples might be cited as evidence that the vaunted power of the Press to influence public opinion is not all that it is cracked up to be. One is reminded that when President Harry Truman won his first resounding victory he had the support of only one major newspaper, nation-wide. The countervailing force to the 'power of the Press', certainly in Britain and Sweden, has been the role of publicly-controlled television and radio. Nevertheless, even if one discounts the 'power of the Press' to influence the outcome of elections, it is surely unarguable that the climate of opinion on major issues is largely conditioned by the Press. Besides, if a pluralist Press is accepted as an essential condition for a free society, it is clearly important to make this possible and not to leave its achievement simply to the operation of market forces.

My own experience as a journalist both in this country and through my 33 years association with the *London Observer* has strengthened my view that it is not possible to achieve a genuinely free Press, as earlier defined, by leaving the ownership of newspapers and the electronic media to the workings of the market-place. This is not to argue in favour of any form of state control or

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Mayer's concept of incapsulation to the experience of Italians in London.

Beinart's account of the origins of "Indlavini", rural gangs in Pondoland, draws attention to a major third force in Xhosa society which promises to overwhelm or synthesise the old Red-School dichotomy. "Red" implied an involvement in the wider society only insofar as it was necessary to sustain the subsistence economy and culture at home. "School" people sought emancipation by acculturation, emulating the dominant whites — an aspiration rendered meaningless by legislated racism. "Indlavini" groups, like the urban comrades and youth brigades, give expression to the revolutionary consequences of landlessness (which destroys "Red" aspirations) and the failure of acculturation to deliver emancipation.

McAllister takes us into a backwater where beleaguered "Reds" survive with some help from anthropologist friends. Spiegel contributes a lively account of Basotho explanations for the prevalence of extramarital sexual liaisons — rationalising the improper with historical precedents in ways to which the AIDS activists could well pay attention.

Cecil Manona, whose contribution to Xhosa scholarship over the past two

decades as interpreter, guide and counsellor is prodigious, and Virginia v.d. Vliet give perspectives on township life in Grahamstown from the bottom (ex farm migrants) and the top (middle class wives) respectively.

The volume concludes with a beautifully constructed account of the way in which ethnicity is transacted between men and women in the region between Lake St Lucia and Delagoa Bay. In a world where ethnic labels are used as banners beneath which people kill and die, it is salutary to be reminded of how ephemeral they can be. David Webster, who wrote it, died a martyr to that insight, subversive as it is of racist orders.

Transition and Tradition is not simply an anthropologists' book, for circulation among members of an obscure club.

It addresses fundamental issues relevant to the process of change in South Africa. Despite all the misery and oppression to which it refers, its ultimate message is optimistic.

Men and women, even when the victims of multiple oppression — by race, gender, age and poverty, use the material, ideological and social resources at their disposal to make meaningful lives for themselves, transcending where they cannot overthrow their oppressors.

— PROFESSOR M.G. WHISSON

