Thinking new possibility in the 21st century: Mandela and beyond

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To map my way, I'd like to begin with two recent cultural texts or events featuring the name and biography of South Africa's first democratic president. One is an exhibition, the other a poem. Both after their fashion approach Nelson Rohihlahla Mandela as a symbol that, though built on a twentieth century base, also bears reference to twenty-first-century culture and politics. The texts allow me to ask something I have asked before, in my short 2008 biography *Nelson Mandela*, but to angle that question to the decades that lie ahead.[1] The question probes the value of Mandela's career and life's work as an ongoing object lesson or theory-in-practice. How did his way of doing politics, his almost charmed facility of interacting even-handedly with political enemies and friends alike, lay down a model for South Africa in the future? In particular, what might Mandela's story continue to teach us, further into the twenty-first century—especially when that story is re-evaluated, freshly interpreted and historically re-angled, as in this special issue?

My first 'text' is the Nelson Mandela Official Exhibition that ran at the Leake Street Gallery in London from 8 February to 2 June 2019, and then travelled internationally. It was supported by the Robben Island Museum, the Mayibuye Archives at UWC, and others, including Zelda La Grange, Mandela's long-serving personal assistant, and members of the Mandela family. The exhibition sought to represent the life of the statesman through photographs and video clips, as well as a selection of his treasured objects, ranging from handwritten letters through to his watch. But it also had an interest in calling visitors to a sense of moral action by insistently reminding them of the values of justice, peace, reconciliation and humanity for which Mandela stood. [2]

My second text is '1994: a love poem', a hard-hitting, witty lyric by the Cape Town poet-activist Koleka Putuma. In the 21-line poem, she calls for someone to love her adoringly, even abjectly, fawningly, 'the way that white people look at / and love / Mandela'.[3] She wants, she quips, 'a TRC kind of lover'. The poem threads together a series of loose couplets linking white 'love' for Mandela to 'betrayal', 'fuckery' and living in the past, culminating in an intentionally shocking charge—that white

people's love for Mandela is from the perspective of black people tantamount to a lingering 'slavery'. From Putuma's distinctly decolonial, Pan-African perspective, Mandela, or more specifically, white South Africans' tokenistic regard and affection for him, stands for a costly and humiliating cross-racial accommodation—one that was also, she heavily implies, at the expense of proper recompense for black South Africans. For Putuma, not to mince words, Mandela's reformist approach to the transition ultimately served the material interests and moral exculpation of white South Africans. He is, in short, a sell-out, an Uncle Tom who in 1994 presided over an incomplete revolution and let his people down—some might say, betrayed them utterly.

To these two 'texts' I am tempted to add a third case-study or cultural moment, writing as I do in late 2019, in the aftermath of South Africa's new appearance in the global spotlight—even though there has not yet been time to reflect properly on its implications. This resonant, Mandela-inflected moment was of course the South African Springbok victory over England at the Rugby World Cup final in Japan on Saturday 2 November 2019. Unmistakeably, when captain Siya Kolisi the first black player to lead the Springboks, lifted the trophy that evening and spoke of South Africa coming together behind the 'Boks, he invoked the reconciliatory spirit of Mandela. As he raised his eyes in thanks to the clear Yokohama sky, he recalled South African and global audiences alike to Mandela wearing then-captain Francois Pienaar's number 6 shirt at the 1995 Rugby World Cup victory in Johannesburg, and to all that that gesture signified about white and black coming together and setting aside past divisions and wrongs.[4] President Cyril Ramaphosa, joining the Springboks in their 2019 moment of victory, wore Pienaar's number six shirt itself.

Meanwhile, on the streets of South Africa, celebrating people of all races dressed in bottle-green Springbok shirts likewise spoke of singing in unison, overcoming 'pressure', working together, and re-uniting the nation.[5] There were no such scenes in 1995. It was overwhelmingly clear that the symbol of a more harmonious future that Mandela had laid down in the 1990s had made this sense of coming together possible, even conceivable, and this despite the feelings of uncertainty and doubt over the first democratic President's legacy that have marked the 2010s, as I will explore.

For anyone who has engaged with Nelson Mandela's legacy in the past fifteen or so years, especially those concerned with the resonant symbolism attached to his name, my first text, the Official Exhibition, presents a more familiar narrative than the second, Putuma's poem. Indeed, read superficially, the yellow role-model keywords emblazoned on royal blue at the exhibition's entrance were so predictable as to seem almost underwhelming. 'Icon of the struggle against oppression. Statesman. World leader. Revolutionary. Father. Political prisoner', 'All of these things and more'—the late President was presented as an unreservedly positive influence on future generations, a form of cultural soft power made flesh. Though each role and each achievement was carved in patience and pain, the phrases in the display when viewed in 2019 could come across to some readers as if picked out at random from a Mandela-related word cloud.

Putuma's approach is very different, not to say diametrically opposed. By comparison with the Official Exhibition's now rather unsurprising words and images, Putuma's angry utterance appears by contrast to be vivid, contemporary, energetic. It is also, significantly, Africanist rather than global. In this sense her poem provides a negative measure of the kinds of uncritical admiration and even adoration to which the former South African leader was in his life-time often subject. Whereas for the Official Exhibition, the name Mandela equates with heroic inspiration, for Putuma it marks betrayal and disappointment. Honouring Mandela, she writes, is like having Robben Island prison built 'in your backyard'. For the Official Exhibition, this critique would have little to no traction. In its view, Mandela is and will remain undiminished as an icon of struggle and determined anti-racism.[6] On the night of the 2019 Springbok victory in Yokohama, certainly, it was this figure who was resurrected. Yet, although the Mandela myth is nowadays as often encountered outside South Africa as within, the celebrating crowds across the country suggested that the remembrance represented more than a mere global media moment.[7]

'We know that Madiba served humanity and dedicated his life to serving humanity', said Mandla Mandela, a grandchild, introducing the Official Exhibition when it first opened in London. Yet the repetition of the word 'humanity' even in that short statement gives a telling impression of overemphasis, perhaps even of protesting too much. The effect was oddly reinforced within the exhibition itself, under those cave-like (read echoey), surprisingly poky Leake Street arches. From stepping into the first

corridor, the visitor was assailed by a cacophony of recorded sound. A repeating loop of charged words from Mandela's speeches—'justice', 'freedom', 'South Africa' etc.—clanged up against sounds from other recordings being played in other spaces within the exhibition—of historical footage, Xhosa singing, voices testifying.

With a claim to authenticity and authority buried in its very title, the Official Exhibition was evidently designed to corroborate a story, not to question or to re-adjust the lights on Mandela's history. An uncharitable commentator might have gone so far as to suggest that the curators had perhaps watched too many showings of Eastwood's *Invictus* (2009), or Bille August's *Goodbye Bafana* (2007), films that both err on the side of hero-worship. Yet it was still surprising, at least to this viewer, the extent to which the exhibition not only reproduced but underlined with a highlighter pen the already known. It seemed that the core heroic narrative needed not only continued championing, perhaps against rival exhibitions, such as the British Council's smaller 2018 exhibition, but also restating—and restating.[8] To draw a metaphor from the visitor's booming experience, the Official Exhibition clanged mechanically upon itself. It swallowed its own feedback loop.

To all this self-cancelling noise there appeared to attach, first, a surprising concern around not being heard, or not clearly enough, and, second, an anxiety, above and beyond this, about the Mandela myth running out of steam, about countervailing voices—Pan-Africanist and Fallist performances like those of Putuma—gaining ascendancy. In theorist Slavoj Žižek's characteristically controversial observation in December 2013 that Mandela's 'universal glory is … a sign that he really didn't disturb the global order of power', there may lie the beginnings of an analysis of this said-to-be-diminishing impact, one embedded in the charge of moral compromise or hollowness. Had Mandela really 'won' in 1994, Žižek contends, he would not now be considered a 'universal hero' and saint by the capitalist powers who he once criticised—and, I add, it might not be necessary so loudly to trumpet his achievements.[9] Against this, of course, we might assert that Žižek is here like so many others in these polarized times prone to the amnesia of history. His critique ignores the profound political and moral resonance of South Africa's 1990s moment, and of Mandela as its metonym, both at the time, and arguably into the present-day. Certainly in 1995, as many contributors here demonstrate, Mandela represented a

pragmatic way forwards in a violent national struggle in which other alternatives had closed or were closing down.

In the rest of this essay, I want to focus on what Mandela's achievement entails as a moral or symbolic legacy for the next decades of this century, in only thirteen years of which Mandela lived. Pitching my query in this way is to take as read, as I do in my 2008 study, and as other commentators have done since, that it is fruitful to read Mandela's example as a national or global object lesson.[10] It is also to assume, slightly differently, that he provides a fruitful subject for such a reading. But how I pivot this question in a fresh way now, as we enter the third decade of the 21st century, is to ask how and to what extent he may continue to do so in the decades to come, especially in the light of new readings of his involvements and initiatives, as well as those of his colleagues, as in this special issue.

The Nigerian-South African novelist Yewande Omotoso had this telling comment to make at the time of the Mandela birth centenary, at a literary event in Bayreuth in Germany.[11] When asked about the significance of what would have been the former President's hundredth birthday, she responded evenhandedly but respectfully that she was 'no longer concerned' about Mandela. He could have been this, or he could have been that, she continued, but 'what is of concern for me is the future'. Very simply, 'Mandela opened something, now we can carry on'. Noteworthy amongst other aspects were first the positivity and forthrightness of her asseveration, and second the determination of her turn to the Mandela-less future. It was a turn and re-emphasis that, if anything, Mandela himself would have endorsed. He was, as she tacitly acknowledged, always in some way behind such a moving on. As he used to underline, he was only 'one in a large movement of people'. Moreover, we might add, and as he also often observed, his era would pass, as he would pass, but the movement that he was part of would go on.

Any attempt to re-evaluate the triumphant tale of the long walk to freedom is self-evidently a challenging exercise, embedded as it is in official, state-sanctioned accounts of Mandela, the on-off *de facto* ANC leader from 1949 to 1999. Critically rereading the legacy means bracketing the national, global and family interests invested in such representations; therefore any such exercise is necessarily circumscribed. The Official Exhibition gave clear endorsements to both recent and

ongoing movements like Make Poverty History, Black Lives Matter, and UN-sponsored concerns over climate change—developments that Mandela supported towards the end of his life, or that he supposedly might have supported had he lived even longer. But there was at the same time an unmistakeably dated quality to the big heart-uplifting photographs of Mandela as an elderly man attending rallies, just as there was to the old-fashioned watch in its display case, and the yellowing newspaper cuttings about Mandela's pronouncements on HIV/AIDS and other pressing social issues from the 1990s and 2000s. There was also a strong contrast between the granular political detail of the first rooms, including prison blankets and passbooks, and the flat, two-dimensional aspect of the final poster display. These time-bound, mortal qualities heightened at least for this viewer the question of where his legacy goes from here, and what is at stake in retrieving it and keeping it going, especially when the very idea of a moral icon may itself be dated, de-coupled from our own deeply polarised era of Trump and team.

Part of the problem is that, in comparison to twenty years ago or so, we lack a strong global narrative—globally-accessible and globally-distributed—in relation to which to read the Mandela story. In the very early millennium, when Mandela was still alive and not quite yet 'retired from retirement', as he used to say, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and other legacy organizations that bore his name, combined with the international politicians and celebrities who had known him, made sure that his 'long walk' story and its moral lessons were widely disseminated. The Official Exhibition's references to Make Poverty History and so on were attempts to continue to connect the first democratic president of South Africa's biography with recognisable transnational discourses of human rights and justice in the present. However, we know very well that the elder statesman Mandela was never more than a well-wisher and bystander to such movements. The photographs in the Official Exhibition of the (very) elder(ly) statesman confirmed this belatedness, unintentionally portraying him as a figure from another era.

Though the 2019 Rugby World Cup celebrations might send out a different signal, at least for the present, it is true to an extent that audiences outside South Africa today, as also within the country, no longer have the same personal investment in Mandela's story as did previous generations. The meanings of any icon are tethered to its history, and Mandela's story makes sense in relation to the history of South

Africa in the twentieth century and the struggle against apartheid. International publics today do not have the same familiarity with that history, important though it was, certainly not when compared to audiences, young and old, in the heyday of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and divestment campaigns across the Anglophone world, in particular in Britain and the USA. The cultural prestige of South Africa has receded relative to its 1990s highpoint, and its cultural aura is now more in keeping with its status as a middle-ranking nation within the global south. Moreover, the apartheid struggle was one whose rights and wrongs were so much clearer-cut than they are for many popular movements at the present time. Now, that good v. bad history looks achingly comprehensible and graspable, but hence also the more naïve and over-simplified—to say nothing of the resemblance of binary stories such as this to reductive Trumpian accounts of the 'good guys' pitted against the 'bad'.

A related concern has to do with historical empathy. For international readerships (still) interested in Mandela, his story of struggle against state-sanctioned racism or even the triumphal narrative of his presidential years, invited and depended on different forms of identification: with the rights of that struggle, with the ethics of anti-racism, but also with the embodied figure of Madiba himself, his clothes, his face, his flash-bulb smile, his boxer's hands. The roles that exerted appeal were those of the self-fashioner, the celebrity archly courting other celebrities, dressing up in his colourful Madiba shirts to play the starring role in his own political roadshow. Yet, especially in relation to decolonial reassessments of Mandela's economic legacy, those forms of celebrity identification have in some quarters become suspect. How much more dubious does Mandela's already sometimes questionable predilection for hobnobbing with Hollywood stars and musical starlets not appear when it is set against the charge of his selling his black countrymen short?[12] The degree to which he became image-conscious and obsessed with his own celebrity in later years, only appears to reinforce the criticism.[13]

That said, Mandela was always intensely aware of the mortality and frangibility of his own persona. Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe take pains to emphasize the point in their closing contribution to the *Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela*, 'Mandela's Mortality'.[14] As I already noted, he collaborated in and gave his support to the need to 'move on' at least in political terms, to the importance of one generation giving way to another. He was also never inattentive to the contingencies of history.

Just as he engaged with Black Consciousness activists on Robben Island in the 1970s, he would presumably have been interested in discoursing with the Fallist generation in the 2010s. For this reason alone, his example remains salutary. He always invited the use of his biographical story to open up new spaces first in South African politics, and then in the international politics of anti-racism—spaces that were up to that time often unthinkable or unimaginable, to paraphrase Omotoso.

This links to a core question of methodology—what approach to thinking the unthinkable or revitalizing political virtue does Mandela's story lay down for the future? To address the question we might look back for a moment to the key significances that continue to attach to the figure of Mandela today. He was famously a global figure with a global vision, but he was also always a determinedly national leader, as Barack Obama joined a long row of others in acknowledging, during the 2018 centenary lecture, given in Johannesburg on 17 July.[15] Most international icons continue to bear a potent national aura, and Mandela was no exception. At the same time, for many, certainly for readers of his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), he is recognized to have lived one of the most politically high-profile stories of the past century, a story of patient onward progression towards ideals many cultures share, of justice, fairness and equality. His story of overcoming the bitterness of 27.5 years in political imprisonment was further consolidated for millions around the world with the award in 1993 of a global prize, the Nobel Peace Prize, alongside FW de Klerk.[16] This confirmed his reputation as a model of moral courage and political will-power, not only in other societies experiencing racism and ethnic oppression, but also in countries relegated to minority status of one kind or another across the global south.

Yet, even as his moral example acquired a global patina, so too his later life took a worldly aspect, in so far as the later chapters of his story to some extent unfolded in tandem with processes of intensifying globalization. The Mandela we now know is in many ways the successful creation of international communications and media technology, and his moral status and recognizability today still profoundly depend on these media. Here we might think again of the many films that have been produced about him, including *Goodbye Bafana*, *Invictus*, and *Long Walk to Freedom* (2014) itself, films in which the Mandela role was taken by equally recognizable African American and Black British actors, most notably Morgan Freeman who in other of

his films has also played God. As this suggests, Mandela's reputation does not rest on his historical or symbolic significance alone. It also is a function of global marketing and publicity.

In this, the work of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, and the other trusts and charities that carry his name and promote his legacy, once again, remains crucial, as it was for the Official Exhibition. In the later years of his life, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) worked hard both nationally and internationally to make sure that there were publications in the pipeline about Mandela almost every year, publications in many media that steered a fine line between hagiography, which it was felt he hardly needed, and independent biography.

The latest publications authorized by the NMF, *Dare not Linger* (2017), the so-called sequel to *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), and *I remember Nelson Mandela* (2018) are typical in this sense.[17] Based on ten chapters on the presidential years written by Mandela himself, *Dare not linger* has been rounded out and completed by the prominent novelist Mandla Langa. The result is a respectful but largely unrevealing account, some might say 'flat', certainly more political than personal. *I remember Nelson Mandela* by contrast is full of personal stories, yet in nearly all of them the titular character assumes an almost superhuman aspect–taller, more disciplined, more charismatic, than any of his interlocutors. Moreover, all of these stories and even the form of the book itself, based on the famous George Perec refrain, 'I remember…' (popularized in South Africa by the writer Denis Hirson), are predicated on Mandela's globally consecrated mythic status.

However, as the over-emphatic qualities of the Official Exhibition already inadvertently showed, it is not clear to what extent Mandela's mega-watt image will continue to shine forth as brightly into the future, nor how it will be seen ten or twenty years from today. Both the national and global stories of Mandela captured in recent books hark back to no more recent a time than the early years of this century, when his influence and reputation still radiated. Today, his national luminosity has guttered for some, as I began to show. The former president has been criticized and discredited for a host of reasons–for having pressed for reconciliation instead of justice, especially economic justice, in the interests of 'saving the nation'; for having made compromises with neoliberal big business; for his government's non-

redistributive Growth, Employment and Redistribution economic policy; for having tacitly participated in AIDS denialism, until his own son died of the illness. In sum, Mandela has been vilified for having supported in effect the wrong kind of new society, a rainbow nation rather than a properly just society based on greater economic equality. It is undeniably true that South Africa in 2019 remains one of the most economically divided countries in the world.

In the mid-2010s at the height of the Fallist movements, writes the critic Hedley Twidle, it was not only that young South Africans began to perceive the Mandela years as a closed-off era, as 'so last century', but also that the 1990s de-racialization project was increasingly dismissed as a folly and a dream, the negotiated settlement as a delusion.[18] Even Mandela's undying devotion to his beloved African National Congress across his lifetime, despite growing evidence of corruption and cronyism, now testified to many of something inward-facing and deeply conservative in his make-up.

A situation developed where Mandela's renown was at least in some quarters believed to be more strongly supported and sustained by his reputation for non-racial leadership outside the country than within. Žižek's point is once again telling, but is here extended to South Africa itself. The negotiated transition to democracy meant giving in to the demands of global (white) capital not only abroad but also at home. Its respectful tone regardless, the Epilogue to *Dare not Linger* interestingly concedes that when it comes to Mandela's reputation going forward, 'perceptions matter'. As the context of his consummate talent for symbolism was sometimes unclear, his message of reconciliation, such as when he had tea with Betsy Verwoerd, was read by many black South Africans as a humiliating betrayal.[19] By contrast, the fact that Winnie Mandela's message was much less ambiguous meant that her popularity among ANC voters remained untarnished despite the many scandals she faced (as April 2018's often admiring obituaries emphasize).

In short, the redeeming concepts associated with Mandela's name, forgiveness and reconciliation, and the Rainbow nation, did not survive many years beyond his presidency, at least at home. He is indeed, as Shaun Johnson, Hedley Twidle and others have written, 'the man who outgrew his country'– but in a negative sense. As did the child in the famous Ingrid Jonker poem Mandela himself liked to quote, he

now wanders 'like a ghost or a giant, throughout the world, forever'.[20] The thing about a wandering ghost or a giant however is that they have misplaced or lost their homes; they are disconnected from where they came from.

In this apparently dimming light, what lessons might we still learn from the once-shiny Mandela story, if any? His struggle-era tutorials in 'consensus decision-making' and forging a 'disciplined unity', his repeated encouragement as president to dream the non-racial dream, are these the worn-down, impractical and discredited guidelines of another era?[21] For a tentative response, I turn not to the November 2019 scenes of Rugby World Cup jubilation, compelling as they were, but to a key aspect of Mandela's political and moral vision that may well underlie the energy and belief that drove those scenes–the power of seeing politics in the round. This power relates closely to, and was made possible by, what I call his facility for juxtaposition, bricolage and imaginative border-crossing, and it is this that I want to dwell upon in closing. It is this that made him what I call a postcolonial theorist in practice. The facility also interestingly links the national and the international stories associated with his name. Jonny Steinberg describes this special power as symbolic thinking. Nuttall and Mbembe speak in terms of a process of ceaseless transfiguration across his life.[22] I would prefer to think of it in more concrete terms, as a facility for inspired piecing together; for combining two or more things not normally associated together to create a surprising but persuasive sense of new possibility.[23] A model for this process lay in how he approached his inevitably heterogeneous, not to say ill-sorted prison curriculum. Reading Nadine Gordimer, Shakespeare and G.A. Henty alongside *Huisgenoot*, Denys Reitz and property law, reflecting constantly on difference and miscellany, Mandela slowly but surely honed his capacity to think from the perspective of both his neighbour and his opponent.

As is well-known, Mandela as political prisoner on Robben Island arrived at the difficult decision to negotiate with the apartheid regime, and for nearly three decades tested and refined sophisticated techniques for achieving this reciprocity. How did he do this? I suggest that the disparate primer texts, law books, histories, plays, novels, and fragments that Mandela had to hand helped to dramatize to him, precisely through their higgledy-piggledy assemblage, different modes of interaction, different kinds of intellectual and political possibility.[24] Along with the ongoing experience of debate he shared with his fellow prisoners, these texts gestured associatively at fresh

ways of thinking, new modes of getting on and living side-by-side. In other words, Mandela came to thinking the unthinkable through the 'chemistry'—the charged relationality—between the widely differing yet juxtaposed textual materials he had at his disposal—a relationality that his imagination, in essence, had to put into play.

This model of charged relationality may point the way to Mandela's most influential and enduring legacy for the future—though others may conceive of it in different terms. He had a famously keen intuition for what we might call a dialogic field, that is, of thinking 'sharply' beyond a polarized politics. It is in this sense that he is likely to remain both at home and abroad a radical example for many years to come. His ability to enter empathetically into a political problem and view it critically from the inside and in the round, always questioning and breaking down polarities, made him a walking object lesson, a model of eidetic political thinking.

Mandela's approach in any discussion was to lay pathways open for discussion, never to shut debate down. He viewed a conflict or disagreement concretely from the other side or sides—hence my reference to eidetic thought. In this way he made the unsaid conceivable, the unspoken discussable. To him, this unspoken would always have included the evanescent and fugitive qualities of his own secular sainthood. For this reason the protectors of his reputation need not perhaps campaign so loudly for his continuing relevance.

To Edouard Glissant the Martinique theorist of creolization, a 'trembling' is perceived whenever the old order shifts, giving way to new perceptions.[25] Throughout his career Mandela listened to that trembling and made it audible, conceivable, comprehensible. His political imagination, we could say, reverberated with the sound, as if with the drumming of fresh young feet on the march. He would never have wanted to stand in the way of that energy, or for his successors to do so, even when that meant questioning his legacy, even when that meant adapting and transforming his lessons in to-date-unimaginable ways.

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[1] Elleke Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008)

[2] For an account of the Official Exhibition, see https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/arts/nelson-mandela-new-exhibition-treasured-possessions-a4059981.html. This exhibition differed from, but is comparable to, the late 2018 British Council 'Mandela and Me' exhibition, sponsored by Anglo-American and featuring ANC and Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) posters from the decades of Mandela's life, as well as inspirational videos.

See Andy Higginbotham, 'The British Council's Mandela exhibition: history or corporate whitewash?' (18 September 2018) https://theconversation.com/the-british-councils-mandela-exhibition-history-or-corporate-whitewash-103450 The former exhibition's international tour points to the regard in which it has evidently been held, if not also to the influence of its curators and organisers.

[3] Koleka Putuma, *Collective Amnesia* (Cape Town: Uhlanga, 2017), 101.

[4] The scene formed the climax of Clint Eastwood's 2007 film *Invictus*.

[5] Jason Burke, 'We've Won It', *The Observer* (3 November 2019), 2.

[6] This is the figure I am still quite often invited to speak about at business schools and on leadership courses: the unvanquished leader of 'Invictus' fame; the legend who can tell us about resilience, overcoming, persistence. 'Invictus' here refers both to his favourite inspirational poem, by late Victorian W.E. Henley, and to the Clint Eastwood film.

[7] Admittedly, of course, the countrywide jubilation was not bound up with memories of Mandela alone, but had also to do with other important factors including the 'mixed' team and the remarkable trajectory traced by Kolisi from a poor township childhood to the Springbok captaincy.

[8] See note 2 above.

[9] Slavoj Žižek, 'If Nelson Mandela really had won, he wouldn't be seen as a universal hero' (9 December 2013). https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/09/if-nelson-mandela-really-had-won.
See also Zakes Mda's obituary in the *New York Times* (6 December 2013), in which he, too, observed that an increasingly vocal segment of black South Africans now feels that Mandela sold out the liberation struggle to white interests.

[10] See, for example, Rita Barnard (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (Cambridge, CUP, 2014).

[11] Yewande Omotoso, panel statement at BIGSAS Festival of African and African-Diasporic literatures 'Space, Feminism and Resistance', Bayreuth, Germany (25 – 27 June 2018). Author's own notes.

[12] See Rekgotsofetse Chikane, *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation: The Politics behind the #Must Fall Movements* (Johannesburg, Picador, 2018).

[13] See Zelda La Grange, *Good Morning, Mr Mandela* (London: Allen Lane, 2014).

[14] Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe, 'Mandela's Mortality', *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela*, ed. Rita Barnard, pp. 267-90.

[15] Barack Obama, 'Renewing the Mandela Legacy and Promoting Active Citizenship in a Changing World' (17 July 2018). https://www.c-span.org/video/?448781-1/president-obama-delivers-2018-mandela-lecture

[16] On the international consecreation effected through the Nobel Prize, see James English, The Economy of Prestige (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[17] Nelson Mandela and Mandla Langa, *Dare Not Linger*: *The Presidential Years* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2017); Vimla Naidoo and Sahm Venter, eds., *I remember Nelson Mandela* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2018).

[18] Hedley Twidle, *Firepool* (Cape Town; Kwela, 2017), p. 266.

[19] Mandela and Langa, *Dare Not Linger*, p. 289.

[20] Twidle, *Firepool*, p. 120.

[21] Gillian Slovo, 'An impossible act to follow' review of *Dare not Linger*, *Guardian Review* (22 October 2017). https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/22/dare-not-linger-presidential-years-nelson-mandela-mandla-langa-review

[22] Jonny Steinberg, 'Cyril Ramaphosa's clear eye lacks the vision of Mandela', *BL Premium* (19 September 2019); Nuttall and Mbembe, *Cambridge Companion*, p. 285.

[23] Jonny Steinberg, 'Cyril Ramaphosa's clear eye lacks the vision of Mandela', *BL Premium* (19 September 2019); Nuttall and Mbembe, *Cambridge Companion*, p. 285.

[24] For a fuller account of Mandela and bricolage, see Elleke Boehmer, *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st-century critical readings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018), pp. 55-7.

[25] See, for example the exhibition, *Lydia Cabrera and Édouard Glissant: Trembling Thinking*, the Americas Society (October 9, 2018-January 12, 2019), curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Gabriela Rangel, and Asad Raza.