

## BLACK HAMLET: A CASE OF "PSYCHIC VIVISECTION"\*

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Wulf Sachs's *Black Hamlet* is, as the subtitle explains, an account of "The Mind of An African Negro Revealed by Psychoanalysis". First published in 1937 and republished in 1947 as *Black Anger*, it is a remarkable work (Sachs, 1937; 1947a). Judging by contemporary accounts, *Black Hamlet* had a considerable impact and enjoyed a wide readership when it was first published. I have not been able to trace more than a couple of reviews in academic journals, but there are reports of its having been translated into Swedish, German, French and Czech. Subsequently, however, it seems to have slipped from historical memory, perhaps because it does not fall conveniently within conventional disciplinary boundaries like psychology, anthropology and history. With the notable exception of Terence Ranger (1970) and, most recently, Megan Vaughan (1991), historians have made little use of its suggestive possibilities as a documentary source.

The origins of *Black Hamlet* date back to the end of 1933 when Wulf Sachs, a doctor and psychoanalyst, met "John Chavafambira" in a slum-yard in down-town Johannesburg, which he calls "Swartyard" (but which is in fact Rooiyard, New Doornfontein). Sachs does not refer to the "woman anthropologist" who introduced him to "John" by name, though it is equally clear that the individual referred to must be Ellen Hellman, a young anthropologist from the University of the Witwatersrand. Hellman was then in the process of researching an MA thesis on the slum-yard. John Chavafambira was an important informant, performing a vital mediating role between herself and the Rooiyard community. At the instigation of Max Gluckman, director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Hellman's work was finally published as *Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban native slum yard* (Hellman, 1948). This pioneering study of the process of proletarianization and the inter-war conditions of urban African life, bears the strong imprint of "culture contact" theory, an approach which came to exert a dominant influence on South African social anthropology from the mid-1930s. [1]

Hellman's *Rooiyard* contains a detailed case history of John Chavafambira in the appendix. There is also a photograph of John, closely resembling the pencil sketch of him at the beginning of *Black Hamlet*. Other material has subsequently come to hand which helps to corroborate the existence of a man whose precise identity is deliberately concealed by Sachs. Aside from the photograph, the most intriguing independent evidence comes from the private diary of Ralph Bunche, the African-American political scientist (and subsequently a leading United Nations diplomat) who visited South Africa in 1937-38 as part of his training in the methodology of anthropological field-work. Bunche met John on two occasions in Orlando township in the company of Sachs and Hellman. He was suspicious of John's credentials as a healer, and described him in his diary with evident distaste as:

A beady-eyed, sly and cunning-looking fellow, with pouting lips and a head pointed on top. Medium stature. Shows a very good memory. Probably not at his best in English because of a limited vocabulary. Very temperamental and addicted to Kaffir beer.  
(Edgar, 1992, p.166)

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Sachs's account of John tells the complex story of a Manyika healer-diviner who moves from eastern Zimbabwe to Johannesburg in 1921, living mainly in the slum-yards of Doornfontein, and in the townships of Sophiatown and Orlando. For historians of this period *Black Hamlet* offers a unique insight into the inter-war experience of black Johannesburg and the pattern of proletarianization which drove Africans from the entire southern African region to the industrial areas of the Witwatersrand. As an attempt to understand the complex pathology of South African race relations, *Black Hamlet* is greatly in advance of its time. However, it remains a document of its time. That, too, is part of its fascination.

The period covered here - the early 1930s to the Second World War - coincides with the era in which racial segregation in South Africa was entrenched both in law and fact. In 1936 prime minister J B M Hertzog's Native Bills were finally enacted, having been more or less constantly on the parliamentary agenda for a decade. The principal effect of this legislation was to abolish the residual non-racial franchise provisions in the Cape and to confirm the unequal division of land in South Africa between blacks and whites. Urban segregation was reinforced by the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act, which considerably strengthened the government's capacity to evict from urban areas those Africans who were not actively involved in "ministering to the needs" of whites. [2]

South Africa's recovery from the 1929-32 depression was stimulated by a boom in the gold mining economy which led to a large inflow of capital. This in turn stimulated the growth of manufacturing industry, whose development was further accelerated during the war. Employment for Africans in secondary industry almost doubled between 1936 and 1945, while the urban African population increased by some 50 per cent to reach 1,689,000. The war years witnessed a revival of urban political radicalism, frequently taking the form of transport boycotts, industrial strikes and squatter movements. In industry, the power of organized African labour was increasingly registered. The African National Congress, which had been largely quiescent for over a decade, was revived from the early 1940s by a group of dynamic and youthful new leaders and it began to reorient itself as a mass organization committed to the realisation of popular democracy. Buoyed up by the wartime anti-Fascist alliance, the Communist Party also came to enjoy unprecedented levels of support.

The social ferment which was unleashed by these processes was nowhere experienced so dramatically as in the Witwatersrand region, South Africa's industrial powerhouse and centre of the mining industry. It was on the Witwatersrand, too, that the rapid process of proletarianization was experienced most acutely. The social geography of Johannesburg was in constant flux as accommodation became increasingly scarce. Unrestrained urbanization, coupled with government attempts to clear slums within the centre of the city, hastened the growth of vast new squatter encampments on the periphery of the city. [3]

It was in the context of this bewildering social change that *Black Hamlet* was conceived and written. Its author, Wulf Sachs was born in Lithuania in 1893. He trained at the Psychoneurological Institute in St Petersburg (under Pavlov and Bechterev), at the University of Cologne, and at London University, where he took a degree in medicine. In 1922 Sachs emigrated to South Africa with his family and began to practise as general practitioner in Johannesburg. His interest in psychology was intensified by the experience of working with black schizophrenic patients at the Pretoria Mental Hospital from 1928. In 1929-30 Sachs travelled to Berlin where he came into contact with Freud and underwent psychoanalysis. [4] Returning to South Africa, Sachs gave a series of lectures on psychoanalysis which was organized by Professor Hoernlé of the Wits philosophy department. These lectures formed the basis of an introductory book on psychoanalysis to which Freud himself contributed a commendatory foreword. [5] Sachs pioneered psychoanalysis in South Africa in the face of considerable scepticism and hostility. In 1946 he became the first training analyst in South Africa and played a leading role in the creation of the SA Psychoanalytical Training Institute. His sudden death in 1949, at the age of 56, was unexpected and came at the height of his creative powers.

By all accounts Sachs was a highly energetic and cultivated man, who gathered an enthusiastic circle of students and followers around himself. He was also an enlivening influence in the cosmopolitan cultural life of the Johannesburg left. Sachs's naturally combative nature often brought him into opposition with established institutions. He was a member of the South African Zionist Federation, but often came into conflict with the organization and was regarded as something of a maverick. According to Ellen Hellman (1949), his "Zionism and his Socialism were inextricably linked". He supported Zionism because of his belief that Jewish nationalism should be given expression in the form of a Jewish state. But he was also an internationalist who remained committed to the maintenance of the Jewish diaspora. During the war Sachs became increasingly involved with progressive political and social issues. In 1943 he became editor and leading spirit of *The Democrat*, a politically independent, socialist-oriented review, which provided incisive analysis both of domestic and international politics, as well as the arts.

For the majority of white South Africans, then as today, black South Africa was scarcely understood outside of the master-servant relations which governed daily interaction. Wulf Sachs and Ellen Hellman were part of the small professional and academic intelligentsia who sought to understand these dynamics, and at times to influence their direction. In the case of Sachs, the process of discovery involved an exploration of self, though this is not always made explicit. Thus, *Black Hamlet* represents a psychological and anthropological engagement with "the other", but it is also an account of the way in which two very different individuals confront and attempt to understand each other and themselves.

### John's Story:

Sachs first met John after having been asked by Hellman to treat John's wife, Maggie, who was crippled by severe pain in her legs. As a trained herbalist and diviner (*nganga*) John shared with Sachs an interest in medicine and psychology. Sachs was eager to find out whether psychoanalytic tools were universally applicable across different cultures. For his part, John desired to gain a working understanding of European medicine. This congruence of interests formed the basis of an intriguing, if fraught, collaboration between the two men. Over a period of two and a half years Sachs psychoanalysed John by means of free association. During this time, Sachs claims to have visited practically every place spoken of by John and to have talked to many of the persons he mentioned. Each morning John walked the short distance between his lodgings and Sachs's consulting room. The proximity was important, because this meant that Sachs did not have to pay John's bus fare. Sachs (1937) explains:

In my case, it would have been disastrous to introduce money into our relationship. Our work had to be carried out in an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual interest: a kind of interchange of medical knowledge. For the final part of my studies, it was essential that John should become so attached to me that he would be willing to give me information and not to sell it. And even when a time came when he had to be helped financially, I never did so directly, but through a third person, usually the anthropologist who had first introduced us.

(p 14) [6]

John Chavafambira (or Chawafambira) - if that is indeed his name - was born near Umtali (now Mutare) in eastern Zimbabwe, around 1904. A "pure Manyika", he came from a long tradition of well-known diviner-herbalists. John's father died when he was about three years old. In accordance with established custom, John's mother, Nesta, subsequently married Charlie, his father's brother, who was also a diviner. After a childhood spent as a shepherd and some two years' education at mission school, John returned to his kraal (village) in 1915

(Hellman, 1948, p. 118). [7] In accordance with the wishes of his deceased father he was now given instruction in the various arts of traditional doctoring by Charlie. But he undertook to refrain from practising his medicine until he reached a more mature age. Between 1917 and 1918 John worked as a nurse in charge of small children and as a "kitchen boy" in Umтали. He returned to his kraal during the post-war influenza epidemic which killed his mother in 1918. Between 1919 and 1921 John found domestic employment in Salisbury and Bulawayo, and in 1921 he left for Johannesburg. [8]

Thus far John's story is unremarkable: he fitted into a network of labour migrancy in which many young Manyika workers travelled to South Africa, often finding employment as waiters or domestic servants (Ranger, 1989). John's particular experience, however, marked him out from the beginning, for on the journey south he underwent a spiritual encounter which was to have a profound impact on his future. Its importance is reflected in the fact that it formed the subject of the very first day of his analysis with Sachs. The dynamics which it set in train, provides the basis for an understanding of the narrative structure of the book as well. It is with this episode that we too must therefore begin.

Just over the South African border in the northern Transvaal, John encountered a small community which was suffering greatly from prolonged drought. This, together with the wretched and lifeless feel of the village, suggested that its inhabitants might be at odds with their *midzumu* (ancestral spirits). Their plight persuaded John to abandon temporarily his undertaking not to practise medicine, and he agreed to assist in "smelling out" the malevolent spirits. As the ritual progressed, John felt the presence of his father, who promised that rain would come. That night he was awoken by lightning and strong rain. The lightning occurred during a dream which he interpreted as meaning that he would become a famous and wealthy doctor and that he would replace his uncle Charlie when he became older. Next morning the unfortunate villagers surprisingly greeted him with suspicion and displayed no gratitude - despite the fact that he had brought them rain.

John soon became aware of a young, beautiful woman, whom he involuntarily spoke to in his own Manyika language. The woman disclosed that it was she who was responsible for bewitching the kraal and that she was avenging the death of her father and the poisoning of her mother and brothers. Her father had been killed for insisting that she marry a fellow Manyika rather than an elder of the kraal who wished to take her as a third wife. (In a dream which John subsequently revealed to Sachs and which has a major bearing on the story as a whole, he admitted that he had inadvertently forgotten to ask the girl her *mutopo* [clan name]. To sleep with someone sharing the same *mutopo* was tantamount to incest.) John was horrified by her story and appalled that the young woman had "got hold" of him. At this point the spirit of his mother appeared, and reassured him that the girl-witch was only obeying her *midzumu* and was therefore not to be blamed.

John repeated his ritual on the following two nights and on both occasions it rained. During one of these storms his father again came to him. He instructed John to leave the kraal immediately, without saying good-bye or taking the cattle he was owed for his services. John's father warned him that his blood was "too hot" and that it was confusing his thoughts. He therefore reiterated that John should refrain from practising medicine for the time being. At this point Sachs expresses some scepticism, remarking that it is difficult to "discern truth from fiction in this romantic story". But he relates it in considerable detail, both because of the symbolic importance which John attached to the experience, and because of the light it sheds on John's psychological make-up and future life. The beguiling image of the young Manyika witch, the spiritual dream presence of father and mother, and the misery of the bewitched villagers, were an enduring influence and remain with him to the end of the book. It also provides the point of departure for Sachs: henceforth, he adopts a narrative approach, preferring to "give the story of [John's] life in chronological order instead of in the disconnected manner in which I encouraged him to talk to me" (Sachs, 1937, p.31).

According to Sachs's account, John reached the town of "P\_\_" (Potgietersrus or Pietersburg) after leaving the bewitched village, without going on to Johannesburg as he originally intended. [9] There he found work in the kitchen of a seedy commercial hotel, owned by a Mr Kaplan. John maintained a somewhat aloof attitude from the rest of the hotel staff, though he did form a friendship with a Zulu chambermaid called Maggie whose mother lived near Pietersburg. Despite Maggie's physical disability and her plain appearance, the relationship grew. His interest in her was largely determined by a mixture of compassion and professional concern. Maggie finally won his affection by contriving to make John jealous of a rival suitor. At Maggie's suggestion they obtained leave and departed for her village, a few hours walk from the hotel. After complex negotiations and a considerable interval of time, *lobola* (bridewealth) was arranged and the two were married.[10] John was much taken by Maggie's mother Mawa, whose graciousness and beautiful hands reminded him of his own mother. But he took an immediate dislike to her husband, George, considering him to be stupid and gross.

Following the marriage, John returned to his work in the hotel. Already at this stage he felt trapped into marriage with a woman he did not love and a father-in-law he detested. Resentful at Maggie's indolence and isolated from his fellow workers as the only Manyika in the town, John became dispirited. Maggie's failure to produce a child after a year of marriage was considered a severe embarrassment, but she succeeded in becoming pregnant after going through an elaborate fertility ceremony organized by her father, George. The birth of a son was welcome, but it failed to improve John's state of mind, and he experienced various premonitions of evil.

John's resentment of the humiliations of domestic service in the hotel manifested itself in a generalized feeling of anger towards whites. One evening a middle-aged woman resident, returning from the bathroom, accused John of attempted rape when he bent to pick up her fallen gown. Since her obsessive fear (or desire - as Sachs suggests) of being attacked by men was well known by the hotel proprietor and its domestic staff alike, the woman's story was not believed. Nevertheless, the proprietor felt obliged to dismiss John without a reference, in spite of the fact that he believed in his innocence. (Notably, a very similar story is enacted in Lionel Rogosin's 1959 film *Come Back Africa* which reinforces the archetypal narrative of this very South African story.)

John took the train from Pietersburg to Johannesburg in the company of Maggie and his child. It was 1927. He described vividly his impressions at arriving amongst the throng of passengers at the station. In particular, he was horrified by the wretched appearance of a group of black prisoners, handcuffed to each other, who were being escorted by police from the court to the jail. Within a week of his arrival fellow-countrymen had organized him a job as a waiter in a boarding house, where he appears to have worked until 1930. Maggie refused to live in the (unnamed) location because of its distance from town. John therefore found her a room in a yard in Doornfontein, near the city centre. During this time Maggie gave birth to another son, but John visited her only occasionally (though he did provide financial support). He drifted into an unsatisfactory relationship with Edith, a coloured housemaid at the boarding house where he worked. John was homesick and yearned above all for his mother, Nesta. The absence of Maggie was, however, a compensation, and he was fascinated by Johannesburg, taking time to explore it in detail on foot.

Hellman (1948, p 118) records that John attended night-school during this period, attaining "considerable proficiency in reading and writing, both in his home tongue and in English". Though he found Edith unattractive, he grew to admire and respect her intelligence. She was a film enthusiast and showed him photographs of movie stars. John was particularly intrigued by a photo of Paul Robeson, whose wealth and evident acceptance by whites came as a revelation. It led him to fantasize briefly about going to America where he would sing Manyika songs and achieve success.

A visit to Edith's sick mother evoked John's sympathy and he persuaded her to see a healer he had recently met. However, he was outraged by the callous and unprofessional conduct of

the doctor. Greatly troubled by the case, John threw the bones and successfully treated her swollen legs. Thus he was forced to admit his true vocation to Edith for the first time. This event precipitated John's decision to take up medicine once more. At this stage, too, the boarding house gained a harsh new proprietor whom John greatly disliked. His decision was confirmed following a hospital visit where he was disturbed by the lack of intimate contact and knowledge between doctor and patient. In the meantime he began to prepare himself by studying medicine and making contacts amongst healers. At this point Maggie left her Doornfontein quarters in order to be closer to his work. He resented her presence and realised that becoming a *nganga* would free him from her constant attention and sexual demands. In a dream his father at long last gave him the signal to commence his work. His success at treating a sick girl gave him a tremendous feeling of confidence and he resolved to leave his employment as a waiter and to recommence work as a *nganga*.

John now moved to a room in Jeppe where he lived with Maggie and their children. For Maggie (who spoke independently to Sachs), this year was her happiest since marriage. John's practice flourished, his affection for Maggie was rekindled, and they had another child. Their room became a centre of social activity in which long discussions were held about the difficulties of life, "the cruel oppression of the white people", and the nature of religion (Sachs, 1937, p 113). Tembu, one of the new members of this social circle, exuded a sense of natural authority, and John regarded him with awe. He was particularly impressed by the fact that Tembu had refused to adopt a "white" name for the convenience of employers.

Some time during 1930 John left for Kroonstad on business. Maggie did not hear from him for three months, nor did she receive any money from him. During this period Maggie had a brief affair with a young miner, but she soon grew anxious that John would find out. Fearful of the consequences she returned to her parents' village. When John returned he found his room locked and empty. Their neighbours had also left, having been expelled by the municipal authorities in terms of the 1923 Urban Areas Act. John soon found out about his wife's infidelity but, according to Sachs, treated the affair with indifference.

In 1931, after experiencing considerable difficulty in finding living quarters, John moved to Rooiyard. According to Ellen Hellman, who describes the yard in great detail, it consisted of a total of 107 rooms arranged in a rough triangular shape, with a double line of back-to-back rooms in the centre. The whole yard, accommodating 376 inhabitants in 1933, was served by only six latrines, and was therefore both highly congested and insanitary. The alley-ways were cluttered with tins used for the illegal brewing and storage of beer, which formed an important part of the domestic economy. But, despite the crowded squalor of the common areas, Hellman (1948, pp 7 ff) remarks on the care with which the interiors of most rooms were kept. John rented a room here for 30 shillings a month. Maggie soon joined him there but, unlike most of the women and in spite of John's urging, she refused to brew beer for sale.

John first met Hellman and Sachs in 1933. At this time Rooiyard was on the municipal authorities' "insanitary" list and there were constant rumours of its impending closure. [11] The threat of imminent eviction, coupled with the widespread practice of illegal beer brewing and prostitution, meant that Hellman's constant presence and prying questioning were treated with considerable suspicion by the community. According to Hellman (1948, p 2), the white landlord was also deeply resentful of her presence and helped to fuel suspicion against her. The belief that Hellman was a spy was a source of inner turmoil for John. He informed Sachs of the community's suspicions towards

that rich young woman who comes here in her grand motor-car ... [and] asks questions all the time; silly questions about what we eat, how many children we have, what money we earn, and so on. (Sachs, 1937, p 132)

John had himself been fearful of Hellman's presence and had participated in denouncing her. But by the time he confided this to Sachs, he had already rejected the notion that Hellman was a spy. It was Tembu who was responsible for persuading John that Hellman was not a threat. Tembu had said that the woman was merely studying African life:

He told me, Doctor, that we are to the Europeans still a mysterious people, though they know us for hundreds of years. These students come to us not because they care for us, but because they want to write books about us. In the Milner Park [by which he referred to the Witwatersrand University] the white young men and women study to be doctors, lawyers. They learn about nature, about butterflies and flowers and stones, and they also study us Africans. When they want something from us, they are kind, speak to us nicely. But in their own houses they treat the blacks like slaves, not better than the others. (Sachs, 1937, pp 133-34)

Despite this cynical indictment of Johannesburg's white liberal intelligentsia, Tembu assured John that Hellman was trustworthy. Indeed, she might even be of great help. This assurance changed John's opinion of Hellman and from then on he became one of her supporters - even helping to defuse a potentially dangerous situation one Saturday night when Hellman and Sachs decided to experience Rooiyard's drunken revelries at first hand. [12] In time, Hellman came to depend more and more on John as an informant, and in return she began to help him financially. John's changing attitude to Hellman typified his ambivalence to whites in general, a feeling which extended to Sachs as well. He regarded whites with mistrust and fear, but he was also fascinated by the knowledge and power which they represented.

It was at the very moment that John's ambivalent feelings towards Hellman were being resolved in her favour that he met Sachs and commenced "analysis" with him. At first John was cautious and for a month he did not admit he was a practising *nganga*, though he stated that it was his ambition to become one. Sachs came to realise that John had agreed to enter into analysis, not in order to please him, but as a means of extracting information about "European" medicine and whites in general. Sachs was struck by the way in which John copied his own analytic technique, asking questions and listening for long periods without interruption, even when Sachs used words he could not have been familiar with. Finally, John persuaded Sachs to give him pills, tablets and mixtures with which he could experiment.

Despite the warnings of friends that he should avoid contact with whites and their medicine, Sachs (1937, p 140) felt that John was already strongly under his influence and that, "unknown to himself, civilization had penetrated into his innermost being". For John, this tension was the source of severe inner conflict which, according to Sachs, was revealed in John's dreams and in the contradictory feelings of love and hate which he manifested towards his analyst.

One Saturday night, as John was struggling to resolve these conflicting feelings, he wandered into central Johannesburg, where he was summarily arrested - with no explanation - for being in the streets at 11 p.m. without a special pass. Unable or unwilling to pay a fine, he was duly sentenced to a month's imprisonment. John regarded his trial with a mixture of horror and fascination. For most Africans, arrest was regarded as an inevitable part of life in the cities. But this knowledge did not in any way diminish John's sense of humiliation. He found it "infinitely degrading" to be publicly shackled to another man.

John spent his sentence as part of a convict road-gang. He collapsed with a recurrence of the lung complaint he had suffered as a result of the 1918 influenza epidemic and was hospitalized for six weeks. Sachs found him there by chance. The hospital and its forms of treatment aroused intense interest in John and he bombarded Sachs with detailed questions during his recovery. In particular, it brought into sharp focus different explanations of the

aetiology of disease. For instance, John expressed disbelief towards the concept of infection, holding to the idea that illness must have an identifiable source. He resolved these problems in a pragmatic fashion by accepting that African and white methods of medical treatment each had their respective place: Africans, he decided, ordinarily became ill as a result of the will of ancestors, evil-doers or bad luck, whereas whites were afflicted by diseases, the origins of which were unknown. In the cities, however, Africans were susceptible to illness from both sources. It was therefore perfectly acceptable to be eclectic in the use of different forms of treatment.

When John's health improved, Sachs took him back to Rooiyard. His practice continued to flourish, but it soon became apparent that the authorities were determined to close down the yard. This was towards the end of 1933. The residents, urged on by the white shopkeeper and landlord, sought to blame this disaster on John and his white associates. His position soon became untenable: ostracized as a result of his connections with Sachs and Hellman, John decided to leave. At one point he guiltily related a dream in which Sachs became identified with a detective who had (in reality) accused him falsely of the murder of new-born twins for the purposes of witchcraft. John repeated a warning he had often been given: "Never trust a white man. He is like a puff-adder in the dust, that strikes backwards." (Sachs, 1937, p 154).

Sachs (1937) says that he encouraged John to voice his hostility towards whites in general and himself and Hellman in particular. But the respect and confidence which, in the past, had allowed John to overcome his fear, had weakened. And he remained "obstinately silent, or answered in monosyllables" (p 154). During this near breakdown in the relationship, Sachs (1937) sought to persuade John that "hatred, like love, cannot be conquered: it must emerge in one form or another" (p 155). Ultimately, Sachs managed to regain John's confidence and the months which followed were the most successful period of their relationship.

For John, however, times were difficult. His practice deteriorated, having been interrupted by prison, illness and the hostility of the Rooiyard residents. Manyika patients suddenly remembered that he had not gone through the initiation ceremony which was necessary to be fully qualified as an *nganga*, and there were also accusations that his drugs had lost their healing power. Stories of his unsuccessful treatments began to gain currency and were seized upon and spread by his competitors. Increasing harassment by police, tax officials and health inspectors made Rooiyard more difficult than ever to live in. He was also feeling deeply estranged from Maggie. More and more, he became absorbed with the idea of escaping to Manyikaland. Sachs and Hellman's offer to pay for the costs of removing his family to Maggie's parents' kraal helped to resolve the frustrated sense of indecision from which he was suffering: "He was like a hunted animal, pinned in a corner, who is suddenly shown a way of escape" (Sachs, 1937, p 181).

Sachs did not hear from John for several months and finally decided to track him down at Maggie's village in the northern Transvaal. John and Maggie greeted Sachs warmly, though they were in the midst of considerable family difficulties. Mawa, Maggie's mother, was in a state of severe depression which Sachs diagnosed as "manic-depressive insanity", expressing itself in "cycles of excitement and melancholia". The brave and vital woman described by John had "sunk into a condition of unalleviated apathy and despair" so that "only her emaciated casket remained" (Sachs, 1937, pp 183, 186-67).

When John had first arrived, he had found Maggie's family in a state of destitution, having apparently been abandoned by George. In a relatively short time, however, John was able to establish a medical practice and the children soon began to recover from starvation. But Mawa's psychological state had not improved. John threw the bones to establish who was responsible for poisoning Mawa and how the poison had entered her body. There was talk that George and his second wife had ill-treated Mawa. This second wife was known as a witch and John and Maggie became convinced that it was she who was responsible for Mawa's insanity. But they feared her, and, without Mawa's co-operation, it was in any case impossible for John to be of assistance.



The problem came to a head about a month later when Mawa, now in a phase of aggressive "maniacal excitement", strangled her own four-year-old daughter. Arrested and found guilty of murder, Mawa was committed to an asylum (probably in Pretoria). John stayed there with one of the warders, a man named N'komo, whose handling of, and sensitivity towards the mental patients, Sachs regarded with the utmost respect. Through N'komo, John became interested in many of the patients, blaming the institution and the cruelty of whites for their predicament. He became "carried away by his fantasies of helping the suffering black humanity", desiring to lead the inmates in the destruction of the hospital and the whole white superstructure that places such bitter and intolerable burdens upon the black man" (Sachs, 1937, p 192).

Sachs was struck by John's new-found assertiveness: "Beneath the armour of servility, meekness and cowardice I saw a will to help and a readiness to sacrifice. I saw at these moments the emergence of a new John" (Sachs, 1937, p 192). In practical terms, John was only able to throw the bones for the inmates. But Sachs was none the less impressed by his capacity to gain their confidence and to extract information from them. John was far more successful in this respect than Sachs himself, and Sachs began to wonder whether "it wouldn't be advisable, from a psychological point of view, to employ *ngangas* in the treatment of insane natives" (Sachs, 1937, p 193).

John's efforts were ended, however, when one of his patients attacked him with a knife, accusing him of being in league with the white doctor - Sachs - and taking away his blood. John interpreted this incident as being an expression of his *midzumu's* anger, "a warning to refrain from betraying his own nation" (Sachs, 1937, p 194). Not only had he betrayed his profession to Sachs, he had also betrayed it to Hellman who, as a woman, was "unclean" and outside of the medical profession. Fearing that John was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, Sachs sedated him and took him back to Johannesburg.

Now living in Sophiatown, John resumed his career. He resolved to keep away from whites - including Sachs - as well as to refrain from attending the political meetings with which he had been peripherally involved. (Tembu, amongst others, had recently been imprisoned in connection with such activities). But John did not find satisfaction in the company of those whose social life revolved around drinking and carousing. He felt that he belonged neither to "these uncontrolled, stupid people", nor to educated African circles and their clubs, and not either to white people. As a *nganga* he should remain aloof, devoting himself only to his practice.

Nevertheless, John's contact with Sachs did not cease entirely. Together, they visited a *ngoma* called Emily who had gained a considerable reputation for effecting remarkable cures. At first, John was highly suspicious of her abilities, but he gradually developed a close relationship with her. Sachs also gained Emily's confidence. He diagnosed her both as suffering both from "extreme hysteria" and also from a serious disorder which caused her to be grossly overweight. John's difficult relationship with Emily had a disastrous end. In the midst of a trance while treating a patient, she was rudely awakened by two policemen raiding for illegal liquor. This caused Emily to suffer a fit, from which she collapsed and died. John was deeply disturbed by the news, and blamed her death on "the white people".

The purveyor of this sad news was a Malawian named Mdlawini who was being treated by Emily at the time of her death. John became convinced that it was this man who had been Maggie's lover when he was working in Kroonstad in 1930. He also became convinced that it was this betrayal which had caused his medicines to lose their potency and, by extension, his subsequent problems. John took revenge by telling Mdlawini his life was under threat, warning him that his enemy would probably take on the form of a ghost. He instructed Mdlawini to be on guard and to keep a weapon next to him at night.

Again, disaster struck. Greatly disturbed by John's warning and by his experience of Emily's dreadful death, the Malawian obtained an assegai and kept it next to him in his communal

quarters. That night he was suddenly awoken by a vague shape which touched him and then lay down. Panicked by the appearance of the enemy forecast by John, Mdlawini struck out at the shape with his assegai, killing him soundlessly. Mdlawini, who is described by Sachs as a "raw, illiterate native", was soon arrested. Fortunately for John (who attended the trial together with Sachs) his own involvement was not disclosed. But the four months between preliminary examination and trial caused John great anxiety. And when Mdlawini was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder, John reacted dangerously by proclaiming the injustice of white justice outside court.

That same evening John's friend and mentor, Tembu, called on Sachs to inform him that John had been arrested for intervening in an incident where a young boy was being beaten by a policeman. Sachs felt uncomfortable at the (unspoken) imputation that he was somehow responsible for John's predicament. The profound sense of inner turmoil experienced by Sachs had a cathartic effect, causing him to review his role as a psychologist and his understanding of John's personality.

I tried for the first time to see John the human being and not the subject of psychoanalytical studies. It seemed to me that in spite of my sympathy and external freedom in relationship with him, he nevertheless had remained chiefly a psycho-anthropological specimen: the main aim had been to collect his dreams, his fantasies, and find out the workings of the primitive unconscious mind. (Sachs, 1937, p 227)

Sachs concluded that John had behaved in a self-destructive fashion ever since the onset of Mawa's insanity and that this self-destructive urge might be the result of John's abrupt severance from Sachs himself. To abandon any patient "in the state of a so-called positive transference" might have serious consequences for their mental health. But Sachs realised that he had not taken appropriate precautions with John because "John had been to me only a subject of experiment, and the whole analysis nothing more than a case of psychic vivisection". As Sachs reread his voluminous notes, a "new man separated himself from the pages [he] was reading. The human: the real John" (Sachs, 1937, pp 227-28).

Early the next morning, Sachs went to Tembu, desiring to find out openly just what Tembu thought of him. At this point Sachs notes that he always found interaction with "educated natives" difficult: "they never spoke to the point, they always hinted, made indirect references, were always too polite and obliging" (Sachs, 1937, p 230). But Sachs was determined to establish whether he was held to be responsible for John's predicament, and whether he was suspected of being a spy. In the event, Tembu's welcoming attitude allowed Sachs to adopt a more circumspect approach. But he nevertheless inquired whether Tembu and his friends regarded him as being "a real friend of the Africans", honest in his relations with John, and trustworthy. After a silence and endless introductory apologies one of the men answered. He said that he had recently visited a white in order to discuss the new Native Bills which, "by abolishing the Cape franchise, are depriving us of the last vestige of human rights". [13] At this, the white host protested indignantly. After asking for the toilet, the white directed him to the servants' quarters outside and a

a dirty, foul-smelling latrine. On our way there we had to pass a similar place in the house. It was clean, well-kept, not like the other. I ask you. Doctor: What are we to think? (Sachs, 1937, p.231)

John's case was heard in the magistrate's court and he was fortunate to escape with a fine. Believing that John, in his present state, should not remain in Johannesburg, Sachs conferred with Hellman and the advocate responsible for the defence of the Malawian, Mdlawini. Together, they decided that John should leave the country, fearing that he had committed a criminal offence "by practising witchcraft with dire results" (Sachs, 1937, p 233). John

agreed with this plan and Sachs decided to drive him back home to his village in Manyikaland. Meanwhile, Maggie and their three children returned unexpectedly to Johannesburg from Pietersburg. Initially, John was pleased to see his family. But he was soon driven to despair by the anger unleashed on him by Maggie and her (justified) suspicion that John was seeking to abandon her once again.

Eventually, after much hard bargaining, John left with Sachs, accompanied by Daniel, his son. During the long trip north to Zimbabwe, John was grimly withdrawn. At the border he was even more morose, gazing malevolently at the white border officials. That night, John awoke Sachs with the startling revelation that he had killed Maggie. In a fit of rage after having accused Maggie of consistently conspiring to ruin his life, he had placed poison (which he had obtained from Sachs's room) in her tea. She had gone into a deep, motionless sleep, and he had left her for dead. But Sachs burst out laughing when John handed him the bottle labelled "poison". It emerged that the poison was merely a sleeping-draught and that no harm could have come to her. However, in spite of his relief, Sachs was stunned by the realisation that John had intended to kill his wife. At the same time, he was pleased to discover

that the old John, lacking courage and endurance, was disappearing, and that there was steadily growing within him self-assertion and the instinct to fight his own way through life. Unnoticed by himself and others, John had become ready for revolt.  
(Sachs, 1937, p 240)

John's relief engendered a new mood of optimism in him and he began to take an excited interest in the journey. A visit to the ruins of Great Zimbabwe filled him with a feeling of "possessive pride". At Rusape, the administrative centre of Makoni district, he met a number of acquaintances, including his sister Edna. Further on, close to his village, John took Sachs on a roundabout route, pointing out the steep hill topped by enormous trees where his grandfather was buried. When they eventually arrived at their destination, John was greeted by two women family members who began to cry hysterically.

Charlie was not present when they arrived, but when he did return the enmity between "the flabby, wrinkled, dirty and dissolute old man" and John became immediately clear (Sachs, 1937, p 250). John was particularly hurt that Charlie ignored his son Daniel. He felt acutely the tension between his urban and rural identity. This feeling was exacerbated by constant barbed remarks made by Charlie to the effect that John had forgotten the taboos and restrictions of the kraal. Rumours soon began to circulate that John had returned to replace Charlie, and many people came forward with complaints and stories of the old man's incompetence and maliciousness. Just as he had dreamt, John became infatuated with a beautiful young girl, a stranger to the kraal. At last he had someone to supercede the image of the Manyika witch which had obsessed his thoughts since leaving his home 15 years before.

Meanwhile, the village divided into two opposing camps, with the women solidly behind John, and a number of young men - potential rivals - who sought to strengthen Charlie against him. Eventually, John confronted his step-father, who was forced to agree to initiate him as a *nganga*. This tension was echoed by wider political stirrings, coinciding with a severe drought. Demands by a tax inspector for arrears as well as outstanding rent, raised the spectre of the inhabitants' removal to an official government reserve. There were stories of bloodshed in the Zambian copper mines to the north, and reports of a general revolt throughout Manyikaland. Controversy surrounded the activities of an old man called Johannes, who lived in the mountains and led a breakaway religious sect - one of many independent churches expressing African disillusionment with the unfulfilled promises of traditional mainstream Christianity.[14] The threatened implementation of the 1930 Land Apportionment Act, in conjunction with other forms of state intervention involving restrictions upon peasant access to land, may also have contributed to the general climate of uncertainty and fear. [15]

In Sachs's view, these circumstances had a galvanising effect on John, who was able to link his own personal desire for self-assertion with a desire to liberate his people. The village was seized by an overwhelming sense of expectancy and collectively refused to pay tax. The anger of the *midzumu* manifested itself when a 6-month old child, after failing to respond to Charlie's medicines, was secretly taken to a neighbouring *nganga* who declared that the child was doomed because his two upper teeth were cutting before his lower teeth. The child would have to be killed, otherwise disaster would befall his parents and the clan as a whole. Seizing an opportunity to deflect criticism from himself, Charlie demanded the sacrifice of the baby. The father, however, refused to countenance the sacrifice, saying that he would appeal to "the white man's law" should any harm come to his son. In response, the village ostracised them - with the brave exception of John. During a meeting (at which John was not present) Sachs himself declared that he would report any murder to the government. Charlie, realising the situation, prudently declared that the ancestors had spoken to him in the night and that it would be sufficient to rub special herbs on the child's gums. Moreover, he said that John's initiation should proceed.

The tension in the village did not abate, however, and when a fire broke out in the local school, open revolt erupted against Charlie. It was decided that John should succeed Charlie as the *nganga* in three days' time. Meanwhile, Charlie should teach John the art of poisoning in accordance with his oath to John's father. Faced with this pressure, Charlie acceded to the villagers' demands. At this point Sachs decided to leave the village, fearing that if some form of revolutionary outbreak should occur the authorities would hold him responsible. John was feeling depressed and frustrated at the continued intriguing of his enemies. Aware of rumours circulating that he was a police spy, Sachs moved to the house of a local trader, planning to return to Johannesburg as soon as the initiation ceremony was complete. The ceremony duly took place as planned, with Sachs watching events from a distance. But even as he was confirmed as the new *nganga*. John began to experience a sense of regret, wondering whether he should have returned and whether he would be happy in his new position.

At this point Sachs took his leave. Some 300 miles away, however, he suffered an accident and was forced to stay in a small village - close to where John had met the bewitched people on his first journey south - in order to wait for the arrival of spare parts from Johannesburg. After almost a week, he unexpectedly met John and Daniel on the main road, both of whom were utterly exhausted. It transpired that John had spent a wildly passionate night with his bride. After making love, he explained that their marriage would be officially ratified in the morning, and he asked what her *mutopo* (clan sign) was. When she answered "Soko" (monkey) - his own sign - he realised that he had unwittingly committed the incestuous crime he had so often been warned of in his dreams. Only witchcraft could explain his failure to ask the basic question one always asked of strange women when first meeting them.

Distraught, John sent her away. Although he could remedy matters by the sacrifice of oxen and goats, he would always be ridiculed as the *nganga* who became so civilized in the towns that he had become intimate with a girl before asking her *mutopo*. The only thing he could do was to run away again. On the road with Daniel a troop of monkeys appeared. John took this as a positive sign. But a car came by driven by three whites, one of whom picked up a stone to throw at the mother-monkey. John intervened to stop the young man from throwing the stone, but he was physically assaulted in the process. His head wound was not serious and he expressed pride at having been able to stand up for his *mutopo*.

According to Sachs, John now experienced a new kind of self-resolution. He had freed himself of the image of the Manyika woman who had bewitched the village some 15 years' ago. He had saved the monkey, and was therefore at peace with his ancestors. It was now possible to return to Maggie, to educate his son "for life as it is now, and not as it was when I was a boy", and to resume work as a waiter (Sachs, p 279). John, according to Sachs, had finally arrived at a position where he could reconcile the past with the future, kraal life with life in the town. In Sachs's (1937) view, John had finally realised that

the black and the white people must work together. Given that, the future of his son was assured. But, without it, it would be bare and purposeless indeed (p 280).

### Sachs's Interpretation:

The major analytical device which Sachs deploys in order to understand John is the syndrome he calls "Hamletism". This is described as "a universal phenomenon symbolizing indecision and hesitancy when action is required and reasonably expected" (Sachs, 1937, p 176). Following the psychoanalytic interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* offered by Freud and Ernest Jones, Sachs rejects the idea that Hamlet suffered from an inborn lack of decisiveness. Rather, his temporizing is the consequence of an unresolved Oedipus complex which is reactivated by the death of the Danish King and the marriage of Gertrude to Claudius.

In Sachs's view (1937), the tragedy of *Hamlet* is "common to all humanity" and therefore "appeals to men of all races and nations" (p 177). In the case of John Chavafambira, for example, John, though not a prince, is the son and heir of a famous *nganga*. His father dies in mysterious circumstances and there is a suspicion that Charlie, his uncle, is responsible for poisoning him. As in the Hamlet story, the position of the deceased father is usurped by the uncle. Just as Hamlet was unable to separate himself from Gertrude, so John is unable to relinquish Nesta. (For Sachs, this is confirmed by John's evident devotion to his mother as well as a dream related by John in which he sleeps with her.) Like Hamlet and Ophelia, John is unable to form a successful relationship with a woman and never falls fully in love. John's preferred explanation is that the demands of his medicine were too strong. But, according to Sachs, John's devotion to his medicine arises out of his desire to usurp Charlie. Thus, John's interest in psychoanalysis is held to be motivated by a wish to gain the knowledge necessary to overcome Charlie. Moreover, in the case of both Hamlet and John, their repressed inner desires conflict with a sense of duty to custom and tradition (Sachs, 1937, pp 179-91).

Sachs's objectives in *Black Hamlet* are twofold: to show that the structure of the "native mind" is identical to that of whites, and to demonstrate this similarity in terms of the universal applicability of Freudian analysis. In the context of prevailing views about race in the 1930s, the idea of extending the notion of Hamletism to the analysis of a black man would have seemed odd, or even perverse. Notably, Sachs (1937) is cautious about advancing the analogy between Hamlet and John, acknowledging that the reader might find the comparison unacceptable: "John's tragedy, at first glance, may seem far beneath Hamlet's, and one is justified in ridiculing at the start any comparison between John the witch-doctor and Hamlet the Danish prince" (p. 178). Thus Sachs does not attempt to ennoble John in virtue of a direct comparison with Hamlet. He merely states that both manifest a similar psychological condition.

Quite aside from the question of the universal applicability of Freudian analysis, the claim that blacks and whites shared identical mental structures, was highly contentious at this time. Many South African researchers seriously doubted that the mental capacities of blacks and whites were equivalent. [16] Endless speculations by amateur anthropologists, administrators, missionaries, etc, about the "nature of the native mind" suggested that Africans thought differently from Europeans. In South Africa, the popular writings of social Darwinists sought to prove that blacks were fundamentally irrational, that their mental capacities were "arrested" at the onset of puberty, or that they were unable to free themselves as thinking individuals from the restrictive collective representations of communal society. Within the wider colonial psychiatric community, there existed, as Megan Vaughan (1991, pp 110-11) shows, a definite belief that African insanity was different in type from white mental illness. This was considered to reflect the existence of basic differences in the mental structures of "normal" whites and blacks.

Sachs first challenged such notions in a paper he delivered to the 1933 meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. Based on his study of a hundred schizophrenic black patients at the Pretoria Mental Hospital, he concluded that "the delusions, and hallucinations of the insane native were in structure, in origin and, partly in content, similar to those of the European". From this, he surmised that "if the mind of the native in his abnormal state operates on the same principles and finds the same modes of expression as in the case of the European, then the working principles of the mind in the normal state must also be identical in both cases" (Sachs, 1933, pp 710, 713).

*Black Hamlet* sought to explore the "working fundamental principles of the mind in its normal state". If this project was not in itself entirely original, Sachs's choice of psychoanalysis as the method of investigation certainly was. He refrained from making the easy generalizations born of casual anthropological observation. And he rejected the validity of the empiricist forms of investigation undertaken by fellow-researchers (for example, conducting mental tests or attitude surveys), maintaining that these did not lead to "any appreciable understanding of the black man" or to a true "insight into the mind" (Sachs, 1937, p 11).

Allied to the Hamlet syndrome, Sachs argues that John, like many other Africans, suffers from a tragic inability to cope with the rational demands of modern western life. In this respect Sachs is less free of the conventional views on "native mentality" current at the time. In his view, John oscillates between close identification and violent rejection of himself. These conflictual feelings are heightened by the difficult role John is forced to play as an intermediary between Sachs and Hellman, on the one hand, and the suspicious residents of Rooiyard, on the other. A sense of acute conflict emerges most graphically at the point where the closure of Rooiyard appears imminent. It is introduced by a description of an uncontrolled outburst on the part of John, who rails against the impending eviction of Africans from Rooiyard - and becomes even more enraged when Sachs and Hellman suggest that the provision of alternative "location" accommodation is evidence that intentions of the authorities are essentially "humane" (Sachs, 1937, pp 173-74). John is moved to fury:

You say the white people want to help us. Who will believe it?  
Who will believe the white devils? Tembu was right. The devil  
is not black; the devil is white like all of you. The white people  
want to suck our blood, and throw us away. You say they want  
to help us, but I say they want to get rid of us! Well, let them  
give us back our land, then we will gladly go away, live by  
ourselves, away from you all. We don't want white devils.  
(Sachs, 1937, p 174)

To the modern reader this may seem an articulate and appropriate response, given the circumstances. But Sachs sees it as emblematic of John's psychological inadequacies. He is critical of John's passionate effort "to explain the reason of segregation as he had learned it from Tembu and others" and accuses John of incoherence. "Suddenly, he stammered, tried to recover himself, stopped ... But words failed him. And, with the first sign of failure, as usual, he collapsed as suddenly as he flared up" (Sachs, 1937, p 174).

Sachs goes on to interpret this incapacity in terms of a general conception of the psychological problems faced by Africans in their attempt to negotiate the gulf between rural and urban life. Like many other Africans, John's rural upbringing and education tragically failed to equip him with the will-power or perseverance necessary for achievement. "Renunciation and flight were John's choice in any situation requiring strength of will and endurance of pain." Sachs extends this analysis by arguing that John had not reached the stage of personality development achieved by healthy humans beings, who manage to avoid emotional extremes and are able to modulate their reactions in accordance with what is appropriate to a given situation. In common with most other Africans, John was hopelessly caught between "the clash of his two worlds". The conflict between rural and city life meant

that Africans were forced to live a psychological "double life", caused by the strain of reconciling competing moral codes, religious beliefs and modes of life (Sachs, 1937, pp 174-75). In John's case, this conflict was particularly severe. On the one hand, "he loved the white man's life, loved civilization, wanted to be like Tembu, the civilized African". But, on the other hand, "he was bound by his profession to his past, for he was destined to perpetuate his father, the great *nganga*" (Sachs, 1937, p. 175).

To sociologists and anthropologists of the time, this analysis would have struck a familiar chord. The developing anthropological school of "culture contact" pioneered by Malinowski - and of which Ellen Hellman was a leading exponent in the urban context - was grappling with "the changes which had occurred in a Native culture as a result of European contact influences" (Hellman, 1948, p 3). Liberals like Hellman or Sachs, who sought to establish a common society in South Africa, tended to take a sanguine view of the interaction of African and Western culture. But behind them was a weight of conservative opinion (as exemplified, for example, in the British colonial doctrine of indirect rule) which sought to avoid the perceived threat to social order posed by "detrribalization". Similar anxieties strongly informed the growth of segregationist ideology in South Africa at this time. Psychiatrists and psychologists in colonial Africa expressed these fears in terms of the so-called "deculturation thesis". This suggested that African psychopathology resulted from an inability to cope with the the breakdown of "tribal" restraints, and the strains imposed by the demands of western education and cultural values (Vaughan, 1991, chap 5).

Sachs can be seen as lending broad support to the general paradigm of "deculturation" or "detrribalization", though he cannot easily be associated with the conservative implications of that framework. Rather than using the notion of competing cultural forms as the basis of social differentiation, his real sympathies are with the creation of an integrated, common society. And, while he manages a remarkable degree of empathy with the values represented by "tradition", he does not "exoticize" John or demean the medicine he practices. On the contrary, he is highly receptive to what would be seen today as "alternative" psychological therapy. Moreover, although Sachs admits to a sense of discomfort in his relations with "educated" Africans, he does not reject them or their aspirations. Indeed, he is acutely aware that John's overpowering inner conflict and sense of frustration is greatly exacerbated by the efforts on the part of whites to "keep him down",

withholding emancipation under the pretext that two thousand years separate the African from the European. When the African strives to become Europeanized, he is told to stick to the traditions of his fathers; but when he does so, adhering to the barbarous traditions and customs of kraal life, he is pointed out as a savage. No way is open to him. He is forced to seek a compromise. Few succeed in achieving it. (Sachs, 1937, p 175)

A key question which the reader of *Black Hamlet* needs to bear in mind at all times is whose voice are we hearing. At the outset Sachs assures us that he is telling John's story "in normal, as opposed to the broken, though fluent English in which it was told to me. Nevertheless, it is John's story, unaltered in its essence" (Sachs, 1937, p 15). How far we can accept this claim, is difficult to say. Sachs once referred to *Black Hamlet* as a "literary form of psychoanalytic biography containing all the facts revealed during analysis, but without too many scientific interpretations and interpolations" (Sachs, 1947b, p 5). Sachs had originally elected to write the story in the form of a novel, and, indeed, a manuscript entitled "African Tragedy: the Life of a Native Doctor" is in existence. [17] However, Sachs decided that the fictional form would miss the true story and that it would not be believed by his readers. On the other hand, he did not want to present John's story as a psychoanalytic case history, fearing that its readership would be restricted to academics. Thus, he decided to retain the novel form by reconstructing John's life "in the way he lived it, and not in the way he told it to me" (Sachs, 1947b, p 5).

The fact that John's story is mediated by Sachs raises a host of difficult issues. In the first place, the distinction between the subject's account and the analyst's interpretation is often blurred. At a simple empirical level, the problem of verifying Sachs's claims is complicated by the fact that he deliberately obscures names and details in an effort to protect John's confidentiality. As far as the essential framework of the story is concerned, corroborating evidence is provided by Ellen Hellman's anthropological case study of John - though one should remember that she relied, by her own admission, on Sachs's notes. Sachs's references to contemporary events fit in well with the historical record. And there can be no doubt of John's existence: there is a picture of him in Hellman's monograph, Ralph Bunche records having met him, and Sachs's surviving daughter, Eileen Newfield, recalls his visits to the family home.

More problematic is the question of authorial interpretation. As an avowed pioneer of Freudian analytical techniques in South Africa, Sachs's agenda is to demonstrate the universality of psychoanalysis. In this respect John serves both as source and as receptacle for Sachs's ideas. Though the Hamlet analogy is striking, and perhaps even convincing, it also functions as a grid through which John's evidence is forced. The structure of the narrative, which begins with the death of John's father and concludes with John's challenge to his uncle and the successful resolution of his inner turmoil, is almost too neat and has a novelistic quality about it. Can we take at face value, for example, Sachs's final conclusion in *Black Hamlet* that John was at last able "to reconcile the past with the future, life in the kraal with that in the town"? Was his determination to educate his son Daniel symbolic of "this new attitude towards his life"? Did John really realise at last "that the black and the white people must work together"? (Sachs, 1937, p 280)

Answers to these questions - which would otherwise remain hanging - are suggested by the update to the story in *Black Anger*. Here we find that the rosy ending provided in *Black Hamlet* was never realised. In *Black Anger* we learn that, immediately following their return to South Africa from Manyikaland, John was arrested and imprisoned for carrying a "lethal weapon" - a bicycle-chain legitimately given to him by Sachs. He is released when Sachs pays his fine, but then Sachs becomes ill and does not see John for several months. When contact is re-established, in 1938, John is discovered living in abject poverty in "Blacktown" (probably Orlando in present-day Soweto) together with Maggie and the children. In the interval his practice has deteriorated, he is drinking heavily, and has become involved with a gang of young petty thieves. Even more shocking, as far as Sachs is concerned, is the fact that John has compromised his hitherto impeccable professional standards as a *nganga* by cynically throwing the bones in a way calculated to maximize his own financial reward.

In this dangerous situation, Sachs seeks to redeem John and to re-establish his professional status as a healer. He does so by supplying John with aspirin, vitamins and other basic medications to augment John's own forms of treatment. The collaboration between Sachs and John is evidently successful and John's reputation is soon enhanced. By the end of *Black Anger*, which takes the story up to 1945, we are presented with a new, optimistic resolution of John's life, in which he emerges as a reformed and politicized "New African".

We shall return to this presently. Meanwhile, more needs to be said about the way in which John is revealed to us through Sachs. One way of understanding this is to approach *Black Hamlet* in terms of a confrontation between two essentially unlike men who none the less have a common interest in coming to terms with each other. The relationship between the two is manifestly not the usual one of analyst and client: the unconventional analytical techniques employed by Sachs (such as his frequent interventions into the running of John's life and his interviewing of John's associates) rule this out from the start. The relationship is maintained because both men have a reciprocal interest in drawing from each other's medical knowledge. For his part, Sachs wishes to explore the universality of Freudian analysis. In the process, he becomes increasingly absorbed by the psychological techniques employed in "traditional" medicine. Conversely, John is fascinated by the tools of western medicine. He is attracted by the evident curative power of its scientific pharmacopia, but is disgusted by the



atomized and dehumanized nature of its practices. In particular, he is dismayed by the disregard shown by hospital doctors towards the complexities of their patients' life histories and relationships. John is not troubled by the logical contradictions implicit in practising both western medicine and "traditional" healing. He is content to adopt an eclectic approach and seeks to bolster his own powers by learning from Sachs, in the belief that this will enhance his powers as a *nganga* - and also provide him with a crucial advantage over his uncle.

For Sachs, the relationship with John undergoes a significant shift. We have seen how he initially approaches John in the spirit of scientific curiosity, regarding him more as a "psycho-anthropological specimen" than an individual human being. This arises from Sachs's earlier experiences at the mental hospital in Pretoria when he made the "startling discovery" that "the manifestations of insanity, in its form, content, origin, and causation, are identical in both natives in Europeans" (Sachs, 1937, p 11 ). Given standard scientific attitudes of the time towards "native mentality", one should not underrate the significance of this revelation.

As the relationship between the two men develops, Sachs experiences a further revelation, namely, the realization that John is a human being like any other, and that his psychological make-up cannot be understood in isolation from the society which has produced him. The relationship is, however, by no means an equal one. Sachs acts as a father confessor, a repository of knowledge, and as a mentor. He is manifestly a participant in John's life, but he remains an observer, sometimes condescendingly so. Where Sachs learns from John, it is as a result of observation and intervention rather than of being taught. Sachs none the less learns a great deal from the relationship. He gains insight into his own work as an analyst and doctor, and he gains entry into aspects of black social life which are precluded from all but a handful of whites.

Most notably, it is through John that Sachs's own political consciousness develops. The political dimensions of the period dealt with in *Black Hamlet* are only alluded to in passing, but there are strong hints that, as a result of his acquaintance with John, Sachs himself becomes increasingly politically aware. Part of the fascination of *Black Hamlet* is the oblique, yet penetrating, psychological insights into the relations between black and white in pre-war Johannesburg. The well-meaning, but often awkward, contacts between white liberals and their African counterparts (through mechanisms like the joint council movement, the Institute of Race Relations, the churches, and the University of the Witwatersrand) are well known to historians of this period. Sachs's acute eye provides a striking psychological dimension to what is known through other more conventional sources about such institutions. The suspicion and hostility shown by ordinary slum-dwellers towards Ellen Hellman, for example, adds flesh to her own coded comments on this score in her Rooiyard monograph. Also revealing is the outburst of Tembu and his friends against the hypocrisy of the white liberal who invites them as guests to discuss the injustice of the Native Bills - but then shows them to the latrine in the servants' quarters. [18]

Even by today's standards of "reflexive" anthropological investigation, Sachs is conscious - if not consistently so - of the unequal power relations between observer and observed. His recording of Tembu's acid remarks about the intentions of Wits academics who study Africans in the same way as they study butterflies and flowers, is a poignant example. Sachs is remarkably honest about admitting to his unease in the company of "educated natives" (like Tembu) whose anger seems to manifest itself indirectly and in tones of deference. But he is nevertheless concerned to "discover once and for all just what the civilized black man thought of me". [19] In the aftermath of John's arrest after the trial of Mdlawini, Sachs professes to having been irritated by Tembu's hint that he is somehow responsible for John's predicament. He defends himself with an air of self-righteousness, declaring,

There was no need to instruct me in my duties to my fellow-men: I, of all people, who had constantly proclaimed my deep interest in the natives. Indeed, I had even been victimized

because of this interest. I had been compelled to leave a consulting-room in a fashionable block of flats, outwardly on some trivial pretext, but actually I suspected because John and other natives came often to visit me there [20]

Like Sachs, John is also troubled by the world of the African elite symbolized by Tembu, though for different reasons. Sachs recounts how John is in awe of Tembu and desperate for his friendship, but remains critical and resentful at the same time. John is embarrassed when he meets Tembu at the guest-night of a sophisticated club where Africans speak English and dress in "European" fashion. He feels out of place and is hurt by Tembu's apparent neglect of his presence. (In *Black Anger* this ambivalence appears to be resolved, with John appearing more comfortable in the presence of the "educated" Africans to whom Sachs claims to have introduced him.)

Through John, Sachs has the opportunity to gain access to a sphere of black political activity which would normally be precluded to whites. Together, they attend a meeting protesting against such issues as the poll tax, pass laws and the Land Act. Both Sachs and John are evidently impressed by the eloquent address of a speaker (enigmatically referred to as "one of the greatest black men in Africa") who advises the meeting against feelings of bitterness and revenge, encouraging Africans instead to strive for education and "the fruits of civilization" (Sachs, 1937, pp 168-69). John's passionate response to these sentiments leads him to attend "Communist meetings in preference to others because there the speeches took on a more fiery character". But John was sceptical of the claim that in Russia all were treated alike and found it difficult to envision a society in which there was no distinction between rich and poor, black and white. Rather, he was attracted to the idea, adapted from traditional Christianity, that "All of us were born good; but the white people made us bad with their cruelty and oppression, and also through our sorcerers and poisoners" (Sachs, 1937, p 170).

In Sachs's view, John experiences a gut response to racial injustice but is unable to formulate a coherent political analysis of its causes. Sachs records John's frustration at his inability to articulate political ideas with the analytical rigour of Tembu. And, on numerous occasions he is critical of John's impulsive, undirected response to white oppression. At the same time, it is through John that Sachs's understanding of the daily humiliations suffered by black South Africans at the hands of whites, is sharpened.

John first experiences a sense of generalized anger towards whites while working at Kaplan's hotel in the northern Transvaal. He soon comes to resent his servile status and the capricious demands made upon him by the customers. The incident in which he is unfairly accused of the attempted rape of a white woman brings these, as yet unfocussed, feelings to the fore. None of the hotel staff - management included - are inclined to believe the fantasies of the woman. But John is naive enough to believe that his innocence will be vindicated. He fails to comprehend, as his fellow workers do, that whatever the rights of the situation, the mere fact that he, a black man, is accused of an assault on a white woman, entails a presumption of guilt.

On arrival in Johannesburg John is appalled to see a wretched line of handcuffed black prisoners, being publicly marched through the streets by armed white police. The injustice of this spectacle is profound, and John at last begins to understand the advice of the waiters at the hotel who warned him of being taken in chains to prison. Throughout John's time in Johannesburg it is the routine injustice and degradation of black life in a white city that he finds intolerable. His general response is to avoid conflict and to retreat within his own world. But, when confronted by brutality, he reacts impulsively and, it seems, irresponsibly. He first lands up in prison for being on the streets of Johannesburg at night without a pass. According to Sachs, John did not even realize the nature of his "crime" until he reached the police station, and he finds himself being marched along the streets in just the same sort of prison procession that had so horrified him earlier. In court he is curiously detached and,

though fearful, he retains a curiosity about the arcane proceedings of the judicial system.

John's next major brush with officialdom occurs during the trial of the Malawian who mistakenly murdered his friend, having been terrified by John's warnings that his life was under threat. Although there is a distinct danger that John's own incidental role in the tragic event will be revealed, he insists on attending the trial, albeit in a considerable state of agitation. When the Malawian is convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, John can no longer contain his outrage. Outside court, he begins to declaim hysterically against "the white man's place of justice", and it is only with difficulty that John's friend, Simon, is able to calm him down. Later that evening, however, John is arrested for intervening in an incident where a young African boy is beaten by a policeman. In the ensuing trial he is fortunate to escape with only a fine.

These incidents, taken together with numerous other examples of John's mistrust of whites, are described by Sachs in considerable detail. Sachs's own analysis is that John reacts in bouts of uncontrolled anger, alternating with helpless submission. Sachs regards John's inability to formulate a considered political response (like, for example, Tembu) or to acquiesce pragmatically (like his friend Simon) as an indication of a certain lack of maturity. He suggests that John has strongly self-destructive tendencies, which are only curbed when external agents (like Sachs himself) intervene on his behalf.

### Critical Evaluation:

Assuming that Sachs is correct in his analysis of John's unpredictable behaviour and erratic bouts of rage, the way in which this is described and interpreted remains problematic. It is dependent on Sachs's view that, through the process of therapy, John's anger is channelled into more creative directions. For example, the incident in which John attempts to poison Maggie is seen by Sachs as a positive action, to the extent that it indicates a departure from "the old John, lacking courage and endurance" and the emergence of a new spirit of "self-assertion and the instinct to fight his way through life" (Sachs, 1937, p 240). According to Sachs, this event symbolizes John's new readiness for "revolt" - which is how Sachs characterizes the final section of *Black Hamlet* in which John returns to Zimbabwe in order to confront Charlie.

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that this progressive view of John's evolution towards greater self-realization and direction, has more to do with Sachs's own perception of the therapeutic process than the reality of John's life. Related to this is the possibility that the account we are given of John's life reflects Sachs's own growing comprehension of the nature of racial oppression in South Africa. In this sense, it seems that Sachs is projecting his own political radicalization on to his interpretation of John.

There is a considerable amount of evidence to support this reading. At the start of Sachs's investigation, his purpose is motivated by a wish to discover whether the workings of the human mind are identical in blacks and whites. But, as the book progresses, Sachs becomes aware that John's life has to be "interrelated with the general condition of life in South Africa". Moreover, as Sachs becomes more closely acquainted with John, his interests broaden to encompass "the whole native community". John is no longer simply the subject of investigation, but the means towards a wider exploration. In practical terms he acts as Sachs's assistant, helping him to establish contact with other African "patients" and gaining their confidence. In this way Sachs (1937) claims - with some justification - to have arrived at a "deeper insight" into African life as a doctor and psychologist than many anthropologists (p 199).

Sachs's growing sensitivity to the social and political context in which his psychological investigations take place is indicated by a number of minor, but significant, alterations in the text of *Black Anger*. (The very change of title in the new edition is revealing). These

alterations are not major in themselves, but together they indicate a greater awareness on the part of Sachs of John both as an individual and as a social agent. They also remove some of the more patronising aspects of Sachs's narrator persona.

The first alteration occurs at the very beginning of the revised edition. It has already been noted that *Black Hamlet* begins with Sachs's account of his work with Africans at a mental institution and his discovery that the manifestations of insanity are identical in both blacks and whites. In *Black Anger* this is introduced by an unattributed quotation from a typical South African to the effect that blacks are "gentle, happy savages" who cannot possibly be treated as equals. For Sachs, the only way to get through this type of irrational white fear is "to get to know the blacks, not as blacks but as human beings". This, he now claims, is his motivation for working at the black mental institution. And, although Sachs (1947a) repeats his discovery that insanity takes an identical form in blacks and whites, he no longer refers to this as "startling" (p 3) [21] Thus, from the outset of *Black Anger* one is aware that Sachs is subtly rewriting the history of his own investigation to reflect a less condescending and politically more committed attitude.

Corroborating evidence is not difficult to find. In *Black Hamlet* the subject of the book is introduced as "an ordinary native man, a witch-doctor, whom I shall call John". He is referred to by his first name throughout, and it is only well into the account that his surname is first mentioned. *Black Anger*, however, immediately refers to John by his surname, Chavafambira. This subtle change seems to imply a greater measure of respect and acceptance accorded by the author of the book to its subject.

A number of paragraphs in the original which may be construed as patronizing on the part of Sachs are excised in the second edition. One glaring example is the section in *Black Hamlet* where Hellman and Sachs explain to an angry John that the government's motivation in removing the occupants of Rooiyard is "for the sake of the Bantu people" and that "decent quarters" were being provided in the locations. In *Black Anger*, the reference to the provision of better quarters no longer appears and the statement itself is not attributed to Sachs or Hellman (Sachs, 1937, p 173; 1947a, p 167). Another example occurs when John is quoted as telling Sachs, "I can see that you, Doctor, really love the natives. You want to know how they really live and what they think. I tell so to my patients and people. They will like you when they meet you". In *Black Anger* this is amended to: "I can see that you, Doctor, are a true friend of ours. I say so to my patients and people. They will like you when they meet you." (Sachs, 1937, p 200; 1947a, p 193).

As a final example, we may note the difference in the two accounts as to how, following John's appearance in court for interfering with a policeman, it was decided that John should leave for Zimbabwe with Sachs. In *Black Hamlet* the decision is taken on John's behalf by a self-appointed "council" consisting of Sachs, Hellman and an advocate. The process of this decision is taken entirely out of John's hands and Sachs pretentiously compares their efforts to save John with "the partisans of Dreyfus, or similar cases where the saviour of one innocent man symbolizes the integrity of the whole of society". In *Black Anger*, Sachs simply advises John to go back to Manyikaland, and there is no reference either to Dreyfus or to a collective decision taken on his behalf (Sachs, 1937, pp 232-33; 1947a, p 224).

The most important difference in the two accounts is in their endings. As was mentioned earlier, *Black Hamlet* concludes with John's realisation that Daniel should be educated, and that black and white people ought to work together. In *Black Anger*, however, there is no mention of inter-racial co-operation, and the need to educate Daniel is qualified by a statement that "decent schooling was almost unattainable for the Africans" (Sachs, 1937, p 280; 1947a, p 271). The final section of the book, entitled "Revolt", is now considerably rewritten with much additional material. It takes the narrative from their return from Manyikaland to Sachs's departure for the United States in 1945.

Sachs (1947a) begins this section with an assertion that "John had long ago ceased to be merely an object of study". He had never been regarded as a patient, and

within the limits of his grim reality John was a relatively well adjusted individual. His deficiencies were not characterological; they were the product of his whole life situation, a situation produced by the society in which he lived. John's greatest need was not to know more of his repressed unconscious, but to know the society he lived in, to recognize its ills and to learn how to fight them. (p 275)

This is a remarkable statement, indicating a significant shift from Sachs's earlier emphasis on John as an inadequate personality suffering from deep inner psychological torment, to someone who is essentially a victim of the sociological conditions in which he lives. The transition is perfectly explicable in terms of Sachs's own intellectual and political development, but it sits uneasily with the earlier analysis of John's inner conflict as a rural African inadequately prepared for life in an urban environment. My concern in pointing to some of the differences in the two versions is not to catch Sachs out, or to suggest which is more correct. Rather, it is to indicate that Sachs's account of John in both versions cannot possibly be divorced from his own conceptions as analyst and author. Sachs's understanding of South Africa changes between the writing of *Black Hamlet* and *Black Anger*, but he continues to project his own views on to John. The essentially unequal nature of the relationship between the two men does not alter significantly. And Sachs is no less ready to intervene directly in John's life. Not only does he reconstruct John's life retrospectively, he does so prospectively as well.

Upon discovering John in his piteous condition in Soweto, Sachs once again sets about restoring his confidence and direction. Significantly, the breakthrough appears to come when Sachs arrives with a copy of the newly published *Black Hamlet*. He then proceeds to read the book to John, inviting him to make comments as they go along. Sachs reports that the book made a "tremendous impression" on John. He also indicates that John was "puzzled" by some of the psychological interpretations offered in the text. But Sachs does not reveal whether this surprise was coupled with understanding born of self-recognition. Nor does he provide us with a satisfactory account of John's reaction to being the subject of a book (Sachs, 1947a, p 283).

As well as reading the printed text of *Black Hamlet* to John, Sachs provides him with various medications (such as aspirin, tonics and vitamins) for the purpose of treating patients. Sachs refers to this as "a sort of collaboration" and insists that John refers those patients with serious physical illnesses back to him. As a result of this co-operation, John's medical practice is re-established on a sound footing. Sachs does not explicitly claim that he is the instrument of John's recovery, though he does attribute it to "the analytic situation as a whole", the implication being that their discussions around the reading of *Black Hamlet*, somehow plays a cathartic role (Sachs, 1947a, p 294).

By 1940 John's life is transformed. We see him surrounded by the "educated, cultured Africans" (such as N'komo) to whom Sachs had introduced him, and acting responsibly as a community leader. John attempts to mediate (unsuccessfully) in a tense situation between Basuto and Shangaan workers in the Benoni location ("Vandi"); he intervenes in a dispute between the Sofasonke Party and the Vigilance Committee in neighbouring "Shantytown" (Orlando); and he addresses meetings and provides advice during the 1944 Alexandra ("Nandi") bus boycott. The victory of the boycotters in this epic struggle is experienced by John as "his own personal achievement" (Sachs, 1947a, p 323). [22] And when, in 1945, Sachs says goodbye to John before leaving for a period of research and teaching in the United States, he reports that John was filled with hope, and "looking beyond to a new vision - a bond with his people in America" (Sachs, 1947a, p 324). It is thus with the image of John as a motivated, politically conscious and psychically independent individual, that *Black*

*Anger* concludes.

One must surely read the final section of *Black Anger* with a measure of scepticism. It is a highly compressed, almost hurried, account of some eight years, and is written in an instructive style. (Notably, one of the most didactic speeches - Tshakdada's account of the "new African" - is closely modelled on an article written by Herbert Dhlomo in Sachs's journal, *The Democrat*.) [23] Like its earlier version, *Black Anger* ends on an upbeat note with a sense of resolution, but it is altogether less convincing. In *Black Hamlet* the nature of this resolution is psychological: John has, through the process of his analysis with Sachs, come to terms with the destructive conflicts inherent in his personality, and we are led to believe that he is prepared to return to Johannesburg, educate Daniel, and work for inter-racial understanding. *Black Anger* proves that this outcome was not realised and John instead becomes hopelessly enmeshed by his life-situation as a black person in South Africa. The suggestion at the conclusion of *Black Anger* is that John's further contact with Sachs and his discovery of himself as a political agent are more lasting forms of personal liberation with implications for society as a whole. Thus Sachs ends *Black Anger* by saying:

And thus it was that this story, which was to have been read by a limited number of scientists, became the story of John the man, written to be read by everyone. (Sachs, 1947a, p 324)

### Conclusion:

The story of *Black Hamlet* and of its update *Black Anger* is capable of sustaining multiple readings and interpretations. In this paper I have concentrated on the interaction between the two principal figures, John Chavafambira and Wulf Sachs. I have sought to explain the complexity of their relationship by counterposing their shared professional and intellectual interests against their differing motivations and objective life situations. In order to contextualize their relationship I have located the story in terms of the history of migration of rural Africans to South Africa's mining and industrial heartland in the first decades of this century; the dynamic social, cultural, and intellectual milieu of urban Johannesburg in the 1930s and 1940s; and the broad political processes which conditioned the uneasy and tentative nature of black-white contact at this time. An understanding of this context significantly enhances our appreciation of the circumstances under which the protagonists of our story engage with each other. But the individuality of both is never wholly subsumed by the structural forces which operate upon them.

*Black Hamlet* and *Black Anger* may perhaps be read most appropriately as a political parable or allegory. The books tell, in novelistic form, the story of John's awakening through Sachs - i.e. both via the author's narrative voice and as a consequence of his active agency. This contradiction lies at the heart of our interpretive difficulties. It sets up a series of ambiguities, the essence of which was captured in the unwitting remark by a reviewer who claimed that Sachs "found John a simple native, and he left him a man":

For John Chavafambira, whose story this is, is transformed in the course of it from an abused and ignorant native into a militant leader of his people (Dunham, 1947).

This gloss is perhaps a telling indication of how contemporary audiences might have understood the message of the story. As readers today, however, we are left with a number of unanswered and possibly unanswerable questions: in particular, whose story is this? Who is transformed, and by whom?

*Black Hamlet* can perhaps most usefully be understood as an expression of a deep ambivalence within Sachs himself. This highly imaginative and creative figure was unable to resolve the tension between his passionate advocacy of psychoanalysis, and his growing

awareness that South Africa's problems were rooted in structural inequalities which could only be addressed politically. One consequence of this tension is that *Black Hamlet* is inadequate as a purely psychoanalytic study - a point nicely captured by Sybille Yates (1938), who reviewed the book for the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. She argued that Sachs had not succeeded from the psychoanalytic point of view:

[C]ertainly he has used the method of free association, but from what can be gathered, the transference situation was hardly dealt with. In fact the writer reproaches himself that he has not been concerned over 'John' as a patient, but only as a subject of research. No true psycho-analysis can be done under these conditions. (p 251)

Yates was undoubtedly correct about the technical deficiencies of the work from the psychoanalytic point of view. She was also justified in arguing that the book was mainly of interest "as a sociological study of the Negro problem in South Africa" (p 252). What Yates did not appreciate, however, is that even if the "transference" is not demonstrated, a form of "counter-transference" is more clearly evident. It is demonstrated in relation to Sachs's political and intellectual development, and to the extent that John becomes the vehicle for Sachs' own changing conceptions of South African society. Sachs himself is inscribed in the "John" of *Black Hamlet*, a figure who is both an individual in his own right, as well as a collective or composite symbol of hope for the future.

These complexities underline a fundamental ambivalence within Sachs himself, which blunted his effectiveness both as a pioneer of psychoanalysis in South Africa and as a political activist. This contradiction was incisively brought out in the obituary to Sachs carried by the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*:

The conflict in himself between the thoughtful investigator and the revolutionary, though it may have enriched his personality, weakened his fervour as a revolutionary and blunted his perceptions as a scientist. But he who was so energetic was not in haste to make big social changes: he was an educator of the free, not a guide for slaves. [24]

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### Notes

- 1 Earlier versions of this study were published in article form in *Africa*, VIII, 1, 1935, and *Bantu Studies*, XIX, 3, 1935. Hellman's work was intended to parallel, in the urban context, the research then being undertaken by Monica Hunter (Wilson) in the Eastern Cape. For Hunter's work, see M Hunter, "The Study of Culture Contact", *Africa*, VII, 1936, pp 335-50; M Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (London, 1936).
- 2 These points are dealt with at length in S Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apatheid in South Africa 1919-36* (London, 1989).

- 3 There is a large historical literature on this period. A useful way into the area is B Hirson, *Yours for the Union: class and community struggles in South Africa, 1930-1947* (London, 1949).
- 4 Although there are suggestions that Freud himself might have analysed Sachs, it seems more likely that he received analysis from Abraham Brill, the Austrian-born American psychoanalyst and long-time associate of Freud's. According to Ernest Jones, Brill visited Freud in 1929 and Sachs's analysis might have taken place at this time. It should be remembered that clinical psychoanalysis was in that period usually brief and, by today's standards, quite superficial. On Brill's movements at the time, see E Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work. Volume Three* (London, 1957), pp 155, 320.
- 5 W Sachs, *Psycho-Analysis. Its Meaning and Practical Applications* (London, 1934).
- 6 It is striking that Sachs was so consciously intent on keeping their relationship free of financial complications. My own feeling is that John must nevertheless have been aware of Sachs's potential as a benefactor. As the account shows, at certain critical moments Sachs came to John's aid with material help.
- 7 There is a discrepancy between Hellman and Sachs on this point, the latter claiming that Charlie forced John to leave School in 1917 and that his training as a healer occurred while he was at school.
- 8 Hellman (1948, p 118) says he "entrained" for Johannesburg; Sachs (1937, p 17) maintains he had no money for the train fare and walked from Manyikalanda to the South African border.
- 9 In *Black Anger* (1947), Sachs names the town as Pietersburg. Hellman (1948, p 118), on the other hand, says he arrived at Johannesburg and went to the Registry Office, which arranged work for him in a Potgietersrus hotel.
- 10 The marriage was neither solemnized in church nor registered in church. *Lobola* was fixed at four cows and eight goats. In view of the difficulties of getting stock from Manyikalanda, John was persuaded - much against his will - to pay £25 with an initial instalment of £12. John was disturbed by the idea of paying cash because this did not seem to be in the spirit of marriage. He also claimed that Maggie's father was a constant drain on his resources and that he actually paid more than the full *lobola* price.
- 11 Rooiyard was finally demolished in 1934.
- 12 For a discussion of the vibrant slum-yard culture of which this was a part, see E Koch, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence: slumyard culture in Johannesburg 1918-1940", in B Bozzoli (ed), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*, (Johannesburg, 1983), pp 151-75.
- 13 The reference to the "new native bills" refers to the remodelled segregationist legislation which emerged from a secret parliamentary select committee in 1935.
- 14 This may well have been Johana Masowe, founder of the Apostolic Sabbath Church of God. According to Daneel, he preached a radical and apocalyptic message from the early 1930s, proclaiming the imminence of the day of judgement and that government and established churches were of the devil. His main influence was in the area between Rusape and Umtali. See M L Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches Vol. 1* (The Hague, 1971), pp 339-40. Professor Terence Ranger has pointed out to me that Masowe fits the description of Johannes but that Masowe was not an old man in the 1930s. He suggests that Johana Maranke, a leading Manyika preacher and dissident, might also be the model for Johannes. For an important



- discussion of the independent African churches in rural Mashonaland, see Ranger (1970) chap 9.
- 15 T O Ranger (1985), *Peasant Consciousness and the Guerilla War in Zimbabwe*. (London, 1985), chap 2.
  - 16 My current research project is on the history of the scientific idea of race in twentieth century South Africa. For a discussion of the concept of relative intelligence between different races, see, for example, S Dubow, "Mental Testing and the Understanding of Race in Twentieth-Century South Africa", in T Meade and M Walker (eds) *Science, Medicine, and Cultural Imperialism* (New York, 1991) pp 148-77.
  - 17 W Sachs, "African Tragedy: the life of a native 'doctor'" (ms; n.d.), University of the Witwatersrand Manuscripts Department, Cullen Library, A2120.
  - 18 Note that Sachs informs us in *Black Hamlet* (1937, p 231) that these words are uttered by a "coloured" associate of Tembu's, whereas in *Black Anper* (1947a, p 233) they are attributed to Tembu himself.
  - 19 Sachs, 1937, p 230. Cf Sachs, 1947a, p 222, which drops the reference to Tembu as a "civilized black man".
  - 20 Sachs, 1937, p 224. Note that in *Black Anger* (1947a, p 218), Sachs amends this to: "There was no need to instruct me in my duties to my fellow-men. I had been fulfilling them as well as I knew how for a long time. I had even been victimized ..."
  - 21 Note that the term "African" in *Black Hamlet* is replaced by the politically more resonant "black" in *Black Anger*.
  - 22 For more on the Alexandra bus boycotts see articles by Stadler and Lodge in P Bonner (ed), *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, Vol 2 (Johannesburg, 1981), pp 228-57, 258-303.
  - 23 H I E Dhlomo, "Racial Attitudes: an African view-point", in *The Democrat*, 17 November, 1945.
  - 24 Obituary in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, XXXI, 4, 1950, pp 288-89. See also *The Democrat Monthly*, July 1949, pp 13-16.

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