

from: Liepollo Rantekoa
to: Zahra Patterson
date: Jan 7 2011
subject: ...

titbit to say hello...
from the mountain kingdom. (echo)

love,
the self employed unemployable liepollo

p.s. the last statement in sesotho 'means'
one cannot buy a greeting...
also get a sesotho/english dictionary

from: Zahra Patterson
to: Liepollo Rantekoa
date: Dec 3 2014
subject: ...

I'm sorry I never replied to this my friend.

I'm going to read your work at an event¹ today.

miss you always.

Liepollo's "titbit" was an attached document. It was a commentary she'd recently written called "The Uncomfortable Gaze." (See Attachment I)²

I have also recently tried to get a dictionary, as you've instructed.

When I first searched Sesotho-English dictionaries, Northern Sotho-English dictionaries appeared in my search engine. So I did some research and quickly learned that there are three Sotho linguistic groups³: Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, and Western Sotho, which is Setswana. Southern Sotho is the Sesotho of Lesotho, so I set off to find that dictionary.

“In 1841 [a missionary from France], one of the three pioneers, Arbousset, Casalis, and Gosselin, of the Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris, who reached Thaba Bosiu, Basutoland on 28th June, 1833, published in Paris his *Etudes sur la Langue Séchuana*. [A different missionary from France] considers this work to be a grammar of Southern Sotho and not Tswana, but of this [yet another French missionary] says, ‘As a matter of fact, it is not easy to tell, on account of the spelling and the mixture of forms. Evidently it represents the dialect of the people round Thaba Nthšo, who were then, as they are now, BaTswana (BaRolong), but whose language is much interspersed with Southern Sotho elements.’”⁴

I knew Sesotho and Setswana were close because I remember my Motswana cousin saying something along those lines to my Mosotho friend—even though they never met. Memory, like history, can be imaginary.

I went to South Africa to attend a wedding in Johannesburg. Then I traveled to Cape Town, where I met Liepollo. After a spell at Victoria Falls via Windhoek, the desert city where I was caught in an incredible, torrential downpour, I went to Gaborone, Botswana, to see my Motswana cousin. That was toward the end of my trip. Thus my memory is impossible, and the missionaries recklessly merged tongues.⁵

I haven't bought a Southern Sotho-English dictionary because the prices are prohibitive. I searched the NYPL and access is limited to on-site at research locations. I've decided that the libraries are my parameters—the control group—in my language acquisition experiment. I won't use the internet.

“The SOUTHERN SOTHO Bible is the result of the labours of many men, no one name seeming to stand out ... After publishing a little catechism at the Cape in 1837, Casalis translated Mark and S. Rolland (who established Beer-séba Mission) John, which gospels were printed in 1839, as well as Seyo sa lipelu (Nourishment for the heart) a selection of fifty chapters from the Old and New Testaments, from the pen of Arbousset.”⁶

In retrospect, there is something religious about the laws I laid. My heroic martyrdom for scholarship, like a missionary.

Liepollo,

I'm learning your language with dictionaries at the library:
bukantswe—dictionary.

Pronouns: Maemedi:

| | | |
|--------|---|-------------|
| I | - | nna |
| you | - | wena |
| he/she | - | yena / yena |
| it | - | yona |
| we | - | re |
| you | - | o |
| they | - | ba |
| me | - | nna |
| you | - | wena |

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Glossary⁸

khetheli (lereho/noun)

Lerato la lapeng, le ikhethileng.
A special love for one's home.

kh'onaisa (lereho/noun)

Motho ea nang le tsebo e batsi le tatso e ikhethileng
ka ntho e itseng.
An expert in a particular subject.

'mopuoa (lereho/noun)

Mong ea tsoang lefats'eng le leng ntle le leo re phelang
ho lona.
A being from beyond planet Earth. An extraterrestrial.

maqakonako (lereho/noun)

Ketso kapa kabelo ea ho etela nako efeng kapa efeng
lipakeng tsa bokhale le bokamoso.
*The act/ability to travel to any time in the past and
the future.*

repolla (leetsi/verb)

Ho qholotsa botsmaisa u ithalosa ka mokhoa
o nonofetseng.
To challenge power through creative expression.

tlhacho-nko (lereho/noun)

Monko o u busetsang nakong tse fetileng tse hlabosang.
A smell that incites a sense of nostalgia.

10 December 2009—En route to Cape Town
Reading Zakes Mda. *The Whale Caller* (2005)

"Hair. It is a blight they must carry on their heads, exposing the position each head occupied in the statutory hierarchies of the past. The troubles of humanity are locked in their hair. Yet the people have managed to disguise their shame by painting it in the colors that designate them all people of the rainbow. Without exception. Without a past. Without rancour. Without hierarchies. Only their eyes betray the big lie. In these eyes you can see a people living in a daze. Rainbow people walking in a precarious dream that may explode into a nightmare without much warning."

It was in Johannesburg, in Melville, "a real neighborhood" I declared in my notebook—having spent my first two days in Jozi in high-security luxury estates. Bafana, the Zimbabwean driver who told stories about teasing crocodiles in the Zambezi as a boy and always carried change in his dashboard to give away, had dropped me off. I walked down a block to a couple of bookshops that faced each other. I chose the old-school-looking shop. A black woman, not the owner, stood behind the counter, and I was her only customer. After a few confused minutes, I approached her and asked for black writers. She frowned slightly and said there were none in the shop. She offered me a collection of shorts by Nadine Gordimer and a novel by Alan Paton. I purchased the stories, and crossed the street to find black South African writers in the other shop that I determined was owned by gay white men. This is where I bought Mda's *The Whale Caller*, which I read on a 28-hour economy-class train ride.

I'd been in Cape Town for a little over a week when we met.

She entered to use the waiter's mobile. Then asked to put her bags at my table for safekeeping while she ran down the block to buy him minutes. She didn't know him. She didn't know me. She commanded the space with her tiny presence.

Upon her return, she noticed a book on my table and demanded to know why I was—who indeed I was to be—reading Dambudzo Marechera's *Black Sunlight*. She then gave me a list of her favorite titles on a piece of notepaper, along with her email address.

Our first encounter was brief, but I emailed her the next day or so.

from: Zahra Patterson
to: Liepollo Rantekoa
date: Dec 19 2009
subject: Black Sunlight at Lola's

Hi Liepollo,

I don't have a phone number or anything, so I'm hard to contact. Will be in town until mid-January ... i think ... the hostel is expensive ... know anyone looking for an extra thousand-ish rand for a couch until Jan 15th? ...this is a different country from the US, sublets are a way of life there. But yes, I'm not looking for a travel agent. Would love to meet up sometime this week. I have no plans, so you name a time and a place and that's perfect.

see you later,
Zahra

from: Liepollo Rantekoa
to: Zahra Patterson
date: Dec 21 2009
subject: Black Sunlight at Lola's

Hey Zahra,

i knew there was a reason why i was all up in your face (my apologies but when I marachera is being read then i see stars)! i am actually currently looking for someone to rent my room (and sleep on a couch) ... PLUS the way my bills are, i am definitely looking for an extra thousand-ish.

umm, i guess email is the communicate way e.g. when or if you would like to see the place...

i live in 4B Bedford Road, Observatory....ssooo if you get this email before 5pm, you can view it today (as i am home until then) or we can plan for tomorrow....we can discuss figas when we meet.

hetep,
Liepollo

from: Liepollo Rantekoa
to: Zahra Patterson
date: Dec 21 2009
subject: Black Sunlight at Lola's

today, being (21 december)...

from: Liepollo Rantekoa
to: Zahra Patterson
date: Dec 22 2009
subject: Black Sunlight at Lola's

ola, congrats on finding the place!
great news! I am at home the whole day today (words are not coming as fast as i had hoped, so now i have to sweet talk my pen ... found so much to do in the house in lieu of getting a eureka moment).
so pop by and we will take it from there—you can supply the money later today when you move in.

i am getting a friends mattress on wednesday, so you can take my room for tonite and i will sleep in my house mates room.

till then is now, black light
liep
p.s. thanx!!!

from: Zahra Patterson
to: Liepollo Rantekoa
date: Dec 24 2009
subject: Black Sunlight at Lola's

oh i should have left a note to say i won't be back tonight.
hope you're feeling better.
the key works great, i'm so happy.
see you later roomie.

from: Liepollo Rantekoa
to: Zahra Patterson
date: Dec 24 2009
subject: Black Sunlight at Lola's

a few hours later and i is a-l-i-v-e ... till then is know,
greatness
sharp,
liep