

In Memoriam

Professor Christian Johan Barnard (17 Maart 1923 – 6 Maart 2009)

Vriendskap staan heelbo – sonder leerstuk, sonder leraar, sonder getuie, sonder handtekening, sonder wet, sonder belofte, sonder onderneming, sonder afwagting, sonder vooruitskouing. Al wat hy vra, is twee vriende. Christian Johan Barnard was my vriend; hy het baie vriende gehad, en hy was lojaal aan almal.

Johan was volmens – eggenoot vir Helmien (gebore Malherbe), pa, oupa, vriend en kindervriend, maar g'n almanskêrel; sportman met 'n kennersoog by tennis en tafeltennis, swem, rugby, krieket, en 'n geheue vir name, datums, uitslae; akademikus en taalkunstenaar, Afrikaans én Engels; historikus, boekmaker, versamelaar – en 'n man wat vir die lewe lag. Johan was 'n boorling van Calitzdorp en het dit breed geniet toe ek hom op 'n dag 'n gebottelde soeding van sy geboortedorp gee – “Nektar van die Gode!” het hy gesê – sy eienaam vir elke, liefse soeterige, drinkding van die wingerstok.

As Matie-student was hy vaste lid van hulle eerste tennisspan. Op 'n foto van 1943 is hy, Christof Muller en Willem Joubert 'n drietial in 'n span van ses wat die Westelike Provinsie se Groot Uitdaagbeker gewen het. Dekades later was dié drie hoogleraars by die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika (Unisa), hy en Muller in Geskiedenis, met Muller departementshoof, en Joubert in Regte.

In die vroeë 1940's word hy redaksielid van *Die Burger* onder doktor Phil Weeber en het sy lewe lank 'n vriend van Naspers gebly. Dekades later in Pretoria was hy, indien nie die enigste nie, jare lank een van min intekenare per pos op sy ou koerant. Hy het in hierdie tyd ook met navorsing begin, en sy MA-skripsie, “Robert Jacob Gordon se loopbaan aan die Kaap” onder doktor P.J. van der Merwe, met aanmoediging deur doktor H.B. Thom en professor J.A. Wiid, het in die *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, 1950, 1, verskyn. Dié eerste studiestuk, soos dié wat volg, is 'n model van navorsing, noukeurigheid en beheerste taalgebruik. Hy het nie baie geskryf nie, maar wat hy op skrif gesit het, was deeglik nagevors en in mooi Afrikaans deurdink, wat hy gebruik het om sy karakters te woordskets, soos Gordon hier:

[Hy's] vriendelik, opgeruimd en gesellig, soms selfs joviaal ... nie gierig en baatsugtig nie – hoewel darem ook nie vrygewig nie ... in baie opsigte eksentriek, dikwels koppig en eiewys

Toe ek hom in 2003 en daarna uitgevra het na mense wat hy as joernalis in die 1940's leer ken het, kon hy elkeen vir my sonder aarseling woordteken. Sy uitbeelding het jou laat glo hy het van elk van sy vriende 'n skets in sy kop gehad.

In die jaar wat sy MA in druk verskyn het, het hy as hoofgeskiedskrywer (Landmagte) in die Afdeling Oorlogsgeskiedenis van die eerste minister se kantoor in Pretoria begin. Hier het hy gewerk tot hy kulturele attaché in Londen geword het (1959-1961), waarna hy in 1962 by Unisa se Departement Geskiedenis ingeval het.

Hy het vroeg in sy loopbaan 'n kenner van die Anglo-Boereoorlog geword en in 1969 onder professor C.F.J. Muller by Unisa sy doktorsale proefskrif voltooi. Laasgenoemde het die volgende jaar by Balkema onder dieselfde titel, *Genl. Louis Botha op die Natalse front 1899-1900*, verskyn. In die voorwoord van die boek het hy genoem dat dit die eerste van twee bande oor Botha se oorlogloopbaan was, maar 'n tweede band het nooit verskyn nie. Die boek, met pragtige kaarte deur A. Reynolds van Pretoria, word baie hoog deur 'n jonger tydgenoot en ook 'n Anglo-Boereoorlogkenner, professor Fransjohan Pretorius, aangeslaan.

Toe hy in 1971 sy intrede by Unisa gelewer het, het hy afgewyk van die gebruik om oor Geskiedenis as vak te praat en met militêre presisie en skyfietoeligting grepe uit die krygskunde van Boeregeneraals soos by Colenso, Roodewal en Nootgedacht gelewer. Só vertel professor Johan Bergh van die Universiteit van Pretoria met Barnard se begrafnis amper 40-jaar later. Hy het verskeie sulke voordragte gelewer, en 'n ander jong tydgenoot, professor Paul Zietsman, onthou die een oor die Slag van Colenso, Natal, op 15 Desember 1899, as 'n juweel. Sy kennis van en geskrifte oor die Anglo-Boereoorlog het gemaak dat hy stigterslid van die Suid-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Kygsgeskiedenis geword het, waarvan hy van 1979 tot 1981 die voorsitter was. Toe die twee Russiese historici, Apollon Davidson en Irina Filatova, Suid-Afrika besoek het om hulle navorsing vir hulle boek, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, wat in 1998 verskyn het, af te handel, is Barnard gereeld deur veral professor Davidson besoek.

Hy het gereeld as gids van groepe wat die toneel van veldslae besoek het, opgetree. Sy familie sê hy het daaraan gedink om die tien belangrikste veldslae in 'n boek saam te vat, maar hy het nooit sover gekom nie.

As jy aanvaar dat hy hom by Boere-oorwinnings sou bepaal, kan jy tien kies wat hy in die oog sou gehad het: Modderspruit en Nicholsonstek, 30 Oktober 1899; Magersfontein, 12 Desember 1899; Colenso, 15 Desember 1899; Spioenkop, 23-24 Januarie 1900; Vaalkrans, 5-7 Februarie 1900; Bergendal, 21-27 Augustus 1900; Nootgedacht, 13 Desember 1900; Roodewal, 7 Junie 1900; Groenkop (of Krismiskop), 25 Desember 1910; en Tweebosch, 7 Maart 1902. As hy aan só 'n boek gewerk het, kan die liasseerkabinette in sy biblioteek dalk die geheim opklaar – en hopelik ook verskeie ander. Hy was 'n baie netjiese en sistematiese werker en talle lêers, elk met sy biljet, hang dwars in die kabinette. Sy vrou Helmiën en die kinders sal dit moet deursoek, en, sê sy, hulle kan genoodsaak word om buitehulp van historici in te roep.

Hy het sy voordragte met groot gemak teen 'n normale pas gelewer, maar in sy omgang met jou as vriend, het hy stadig gepraat. “Ou A-a-a-a-a-t,” sal ek hom tot op my end hoor sê. Dan het hy jou, veral met die Anglo-Boereoorlogherdenking rondom die eeuwending, die een waar verhaal na die ander vertel, met name, datums en gebeure. Soms het hy 'n lêer uit 'n kabinet gehaal om jou 'n foto, kaart of iets te wys – en dit is hoe jy geleer het dat daardie kabinette mooi diamante bevat, die gruis moet net gesif word.

Ná sy uittrede in 1985, het hy sy laaste boek, *Die vyf swemmers*, gelewer – 'n ware verhaal van vyf Boere-krygsgevangenes wat uit Ceylon (Sri Lanka) op 'n Russiese skip ontsnap het, deur Rusland en Europa gereis en oral op die hande gedra is tot hulle terugvaart om weer by die kommando te gaan aansluit. Dit is 'n fyn

nagevorste en heerlike leesboek. En boeke was sy lus – om hom 'n boek te sien hanteer, was 'n aanskouingsles, soos die swart gordyne voor die rakke om skerp lig uit te hou. Tot nou, ná sy dood, wil ek nie aan sy boeke en skrifte raak nie, en vra ek liefes vir Mien of Mientjie om iets vir my uit te haal, want sy pragboekery bevat kosbaarhede met feitlik elke boek in 'n perfekte toestand. Daar is twee stelle van die amptelike Britse weergawe van die Anglo-Boereoorlog, met as titel *History of the war in South Africa* – agt bande, met die eerste vier oor die oorlogsverloop en die ander oorlogskaarte.

Sy sewedelige *The Times history of the war in South Africa* is die mooiste wat jy kan sien; en só ook is Wilh. Vallentin se *Der Burenkrieg* en die *German official account of the war in South Africa*, albei tweedelig. As krygshistorikus met Britse skakeling kry jy pragboeke soos G.F. Gibson se *The story of the Imperial Light Horse* en sir George Arthur se tweedelige *The story of the Household Cavalry*. Nog 'n uitsonderlike stel vir Suid-Afrikaners is generaal C.R. de Wet se *De stryd tussen Boer en Brit* in agt tale, waaronder Russies, Frans, Deens en Sweeds. Ek wil my herinner dat die Russiese vertaling aan hom geskenk is deur professor Apollon Davidson en doktor Irina Filatova op hulle eerste besoek aan Suid-Afrika in 1989. Boeke wat nie in 'n goeie toestand was toe hy hulle gekry het nie, het hy in leer laat oortrek om te lyk soos hulle nuut gelyk het. Vir ander het hy houe laat maak wat soos boeke in die rakke gepak word. Só kry jy die *Illustrated London News* se *The Transvaal War* van plakkaatgrootte netjies verpak in 'n toeslaanhouer. Jy wil dit graag hê, maar hy is te groot vir 'n rak en moet plat lê. En asof daar nie 'n end aan die kosbare stukke is nie, is daar die dagboek van N.J. de Wet, oorlogsekretaris van generaal Louis Botha tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog; en Deneys Reitz se handgeskrewe manuskrip van 1 200 bladsye in Hollands vir sy verwerkte en vertaalde *Commando*, 'n klassieke werk oor die oorlog. Elk hiervan hang netjies in lêer in 'n staalkabinet. Hierdie en nog goed 1 500 ander stukke se lot moet in die dae vorentoe beslis word, maar niemand weet nog wat nie. Wat ookal, jy hoop dit bly in Suid-Afrika.

Ek en Johan het etlike jare lank bus gery werk toe en terug. Looptyd smiddags het ek die deur van my deurmekaar en pypberookte kantoor in die Theo van Wijk-gebou toegetrek, na sy kantoor gegaan en aangeklop. Wanneer ek ingestap het, was hy besig om sy blink lessenaar af te stof en sy skryfgoed reg te sit vir môre. Ons het uitgestap en hy het die deur gesluit. Teen dié tyd het hy dalk reeds begin om 'n verhaal te vertel. Ons het in die gang afgeloop, met drie stelle nou trappe af tot in nog 'n gang, en met 'n oop onderdakgang na wat vandag die Oliver Tambo-gebou is, met die trap af na die vooruitgang en tot by die busterminus. Tussendeur het hy sy verhaal vertel. Wanneer ons ons sit in die bus gekry het, het hy verder vertel, later met die kronkels af tot in Parkstraat en ooswaarts uit. Naby Orientstraat net bokant Loftus sou ek sê: “Skuus, Johan, jy moet maar môre ...” Dan was ek uit, en vorentoe êrens is die verhaal voltooi. Op 'n keer het hy vir my kom kuier volgens afspraak. Hy het by my voorhek ingery en ek het afgestap om hom in te wag, maar hy het nie uitgeklim nie. “Johan, wat ...?” Maar hy beduie hy soek iets. Klim later uit en ek wou hom groet. “Ou, A-a-a-a-a-t, nee wag ...” Hy soek, by die oorkantste deur om, dan by die agterdeur in. “Johan ...?” Maar hy beduie my stil, klim weer voor in en soek tussen die sitplekke. “A, hier's hy!” Sy kam. “Ek kan nie met ongekamde hare by my maat kom kuier nie.” Hy het toe nog net drie hare oor sy voorkop gehad.

At van Wyk

**Professor Johan Barnard and the Columbian Exchange Honours Course,
Unisa 1974: An Appreciation**

It is unusual for undergraduate students to be fully aware of the internal politics in the teaching departments in which they study. This applies particularly to distance education where there is little face-to-face contact with lecturers and an absence of exposure to daily corridor gossip about particular teachers, their foibles, strengths and personality traits that students at residential universities are more likely to overhear. When I began my Honours Degree in History at Unisa in 1973, the people who taught me were merely names and I was ignorant of their places in the hierarchy and their roles in the minutiae of office and university politics. Moreover, I had no background about which people in the Unisa Department of History were considered by students to be “good lecturers” and who should be avoided – issues that would be discussed among learners at residential universities and appropriate action taken. I mention this by way of background, because had I been made aware of prevailing opinion, particularly among younger members of the Department in the 1970s, I would probably not have taken the course – Paper 3(b) – offered by Professor Johan Barnard entitled “The era of discovery to the establishment of the Cape settlement, with a documentary study of the Van Riebeeck period”. However, I am extremely glad that I did, because it turned out to be the most interesting and rewarding of all the Honours courses I studied at Unisa.

My choice of which papers to take for my Honours Degree was based solely on what was printed in the Unisa Calendar – which grabbed my attention and which not? At that time, I had no ambition to proceed to a MA degree, so my decisions were made on the basis of which would be exciting and entertaining, which would introduce me to historically important characters and different parts of the world, which would broaden my mind and introduce me to new literature. Having survived (just) the tedium of Professors Liebenberg, Zietsman, and Van Jaarsveld’s “Method Technique and Theory” (the footnote section was vintage P.J. van der Merwe), and their dense and Germanically-biased “Philosophy of History” – both of which were compulsory at first-year Honours level – Professor Barnard’s paper came as a great relief. It was, at last, “real history”. I suspect that part of the attraction was that some of the subject matter was related to the Portuguese material that Professor Eric Axelson had presented so well in History II in 1965 at the University of Cape Town, where I had studied a decade earlier.

Although Professor Barnard was the lecturer for Paper 3(b), I do not recall ever having met him in person during 1974. At that time, one’s sole interaction with Unisa lecturers was through comments on one’s essays or during brief meetings of what were then called “vacation schools”, and these were only convened if there was a sufficiently large number of students to warrant them, which Paper 3(b) did not. Barnard evidently enjoyed my essays, and he made it plain through writing encouraging comments and giving high marks. Another form of interaction, however, was more important than personal contact for me, and this was through the extensive reading lists that were provided in the study guide. Students were expected to work as individuals, to make their own scholarly discoveries and to read sufficient material to appreciate different points of view. There was little active guidance or detailed prescriptive advice, and one was not “taught”, as is often the case with Unisa modules today, but presented with sufficient ideas and books to enable one to make the critical

journey on one's own. This suited me perfectly and I am grateful to Professor Barnard for his hands-off approach to postgraduate study.

The content of Professor Barnard's course was divided into two. The first part was extremely broad, embracing the entire period then known Eurocentrically as "the era of discovery", but which today would be called "world history". The study material was brief and introductory (29 pages), but students doing the course were expected to read widely and to be able to compare the maritime and land empires of Portugal, Spain, Britain, France, and the Netherlands, and to be familiar with the geography, local politics, people and natural resources of North and South America, Africa, India and the Far East. Moreover, the effect of expansion on European history and lifestyles was also part of the course, as was an understanding of the technological, economic, environmental, cartographical and scientific developments that either facilitated these voyages and conquests or resulted from them. In addition, students were expected to be familiar with the life histories and characters of Columbus, Magellan, Vespucci, El Cano, Columbus, the Cabots, Willoughby, Hudson, Drake, Cartier, Van Heemskerck, Van Linschoten, Frobisher, Houtman, Tasman, and many others. I observe from my essay of 12 August 1974 that discussed Cortés as both criminal and hero, that we were encouraged to consult contemporary eye-witness accounts. In the case of Cortés, for example, I quoted Bernal Diaz, Francisco Rópez de Gómara and Cortés's own dispatches to Spain. There was a reading list of about 50 books and I consulted them all; they are ticked off in my study guide and I still have the notes that I made from them.

While one half of Professor Barnard's course was an overview of world history in the 1500s and 1600s, the other was a micro-study of the period. This I found equally interesting and consider that the contrast between the wide and the narrow perspectives was beneficial to my historical training. For the first time in my career as a student, I was presented with a substantial primary source and required to evaluate critically its content and – more importantly – its authorship and, by using it, to raise and try to answer a number of research questions.

Having first had the broad-brush accounts of conquest and exploration, the course then homed in on the Cape of Good Hope. Using the *Remonstrantie* of Janszen and Proot and the journals of Jan van Riebeeck, Barnard's students were introduced to the realities of conquest, daily life in the new European outpost, the stark cultural disjunctures between colonised and colonisers, a clash of knowledges and expectations, how mercantilism as an economic system was experienced on the ground, and the difficulties of inter-personal relations that are part of being human. I very much enjoyed having to read through Van Riebeeck's journal in its entirety and from time to time I consult it still, particularly, in terms of my current research interests, for evidence of the evolution or absence of environmental understanding. Not all students would have found the following details fascinating, but I did. Anna Rudolphus, a woman who arrived at the Cape disguised as a male soldier, died on 7 January 1660 – what was her story, I wondered? Money was borrowed from the Orphans Fund to pay salaries (12 July 1661), but was it ever repaid? In August 1661, clothes, put onto the beach to dry, were stolen by fellow Dutchmen, "not only" by local Khoekhoen. The role of "Herrie" and relationships with the subaltern Khoekhoen emerge daily and hold one's attention, while discussion on the relative benefits of introducing slavery, which so soured our later national history, is aired.

Day by day, through the journals one follows the tentative expeditions around the Cape peninsula and into the interior, learns where the best dagga comes from, what species of wildlife are abundant, the usefulness of seal oil and seal skins (600 of them in December 1663) and salted penguins from Robben Island, the difficulties of European-style farming, and the first planting of tobacco and also of maize, referred to as “Turkish wheat”.

When I joined Unisa in 1980, Professor Barnard, unlike a number of other senior staff, was kind and supportive and made me feel welcome. He was also very complimentary about my performance as his student. I learnt then that his “discovery” course was not popular. For all I know, I may have been his only student in 1974 and this may have been the reason he enjoyed my essays so much and marked them so generously, but whatever the case, I have very happy academic memories of the books that he directed me to read and the essay and examination topics he set.

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1 I am grateful to Alex Mouton for suggesting that I write this brief account