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A Field Diary, Zambezi Valley, 1984–1985

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Pamela Reynolds

Edited by TODD MEYERS

THE UNCARING, INTRICATE WORLD

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CRITICAL GLOBAL HEALTH Evidence, Efficacy, Ethnography

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# THE UNCARING, INTRICATE WORLD

A Field Diary, Zambezi Valley, 1984–1985

### Pamela Reynolds

Edited with a foreword by TODD MEYERS
AFTERWORDS BY Jane I. Guyer and Julie Livingston

Duke University Press Durham and London 2019

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For Anderson Mangisi



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#### **FOREWORD**. The Unsubstantial Territory

William Kentridge, in his lectures *Six Drawing Lessons*, describes a sheet of paper as "the membrane between us and the world." There is a confidence, an expectation that lines and scratches will find the page, a wager that a blank page is there to receive marks. In this image of drawing I find an image of fieldwork for the anthropologist. Where do the hours of recording, thinking, doubting, and being eventually land—and in what form? If fieldwork is an action of making marks in service of a form perhaps not fully apprehended but nevertheless present, then what is the record of this formulation, this realization? There is an unobserved work between the field and the final text that tells us something more than either can—a thin velum that separates the world and us, filled (endlessly filling) with hashes and wild strokes, that holds its own form of signification.

This is how I first read Pamela Reynolds's diary from her years in the Zambezi Valley with the Tonga people, their homes and lands covered by Lake Kariba after the creation of a hydroelectric dam between Zambia and Zimbabwe twenty years earlier. Pamela handed me a stack of marked-up pages and handwritten notes at the end of a late evening of wine, fondue, and entertainment provided by two of her grandchildren. I read the diary through the night in the tiny attic bedroom of Elizabeth Goodenough's colonial home in Marblehead, Massachusetts. I knew the context of the diary from the two works that would eventually flow from this time in the field, Dance Civet Cat: Child Labour in the Zambezi Valley and Lwaano Lwanyika: Tonga Book of the Earth—two very different works that share



an insistence upon the visibility of children's lives, works that etch deeply a register where the political realities of children's lives can be made visible—but nothing prepared me for scenes that would present the context of those works in a wholly new way. The diary was filled with thoughts and observations before the words in *Dance Civet Cat* and *Lwaano Lwanyika* were organized and crafted for readers. The diary was drawn passage to passage through lines that worked to find as much as to describe the forms of living she met.

Pamela Reynolds has by now filled many pages in the annals of the anthropology of children—of children's labor, of care, of suffering and war and the steady cadence of living and sometimes, often, dying—inside and outside southern Africa. Hers is a form of scholarship that does not advertise itself, but her commitments are clear. What I hope will not go unnoticed by readers are her theoretical stakes, the ethical and critical commitments that derive from the worlds in which she navigates, unapologetically, unheroically, and altogether aware. It should also be said from the outset that the political and psychical divisions that hold African scholars apart from other parts of the world remain active in the postcolony. Perhaps this diary bridges those gulfs a bit, but that was surely never its intent. What should become evident in the pages that follow are the contours and strokes that Pamela employs to make herself see and in turn to make us as readers see: the quality of looking that bares the character of the geography and imagination of the place and the person, kneading together the anthropological and the personal.

Pamela Reynolds has done work in her introduction that might otherwise have been left to an editor. What could I add that would not reduce the diary to a few bullet points? There were villages. A dam displaced those who lived there, and these people found themselves in a new, less hospitable place. Political turmoil, food and other forms of insecurity, tribal and interpersonal conflict, loss (along with joy, humor, beauty) shaped the lives of the people there. There was death and life, and in between these things the details that make living *living*. And an anthropologist entered, intrepid and foolish and inspired, who encountered these people and recorded parts of their worlds and experiences, revealing the lived unevenness of life in the Zambezi Valley.

The approach to reading the diary is the same as the approach to anything in which someone has exposed her craft and her self. This exposure was surely not Pamela's aim in writing the diary, but it makes its lesson



that much more instructive (a lesson for anthropologists just entering or already in the field, naturally, but also for anyone who makes it their profession to sit, listen, and observe)—this is not exposure for exposure's sake, but, echoing Michel Foucault, a diary to make visible that which is already visible (a diary at play between confession and concealment necessary for the care of the self).<sup>3</sup> To this end, the choice to include afterwords by two renowned scholars was not to give the final word on the diary but to show how they, too, read it, to report on their readings after readers had finished their own.

The diary is not inert. It is not a snapshot or a photograph, but recognizes the inherent problem of a photographic subject *to hold still*. The diary is the point of contact between Kentridge and his blank sheet; its leaves are the points of contact between Pamela and her subjects, and for readers, her subjects and their worlds through her. The diary is the ground where that contact takes place, a membrane between us and the world, or, as Virginia Woolf writes in a quote found in the pages that follow, a point of contact between others where others become known to us, edged with mist: "But when we sit together, close,' said Bernard, 'we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory."

#### NOTES

- 1. William Kentridge, *Six Drawing Lessons* (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 19.
  - 2. Kentridge, Six Drawing Lessons, 20.
  - 3. Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, *Tome 1*, 1954–1975 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 540–41.
  - 4. Virginia Woolf, The Waves (1931; New York: Harvest, 1978), 16.



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THE UNSUBSTANTIAL TERRITORY XIII

..., and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
—PHILIP LARKIN, "Aubade" (1977)

INTRODUCTION

#### **Abandonment**

The arc of the story is a line of work in a strange place; arrivals and departures; a form of exploration in late twentieth-century guise, undertaken alone out of choice and necessity. The place is the Zambezi Valley. I first went there in 1956, when I was twelve years old, on a visit to the construction site at Kariba Gorge where the great Zambezi River was being dammed to form a lake for the creation of hydroelectric power to serve Zimbabwe and Zambia (then named Southern and Northern Rhodesia). I remember standing on a wide retaining wall looking down at the churning waters of the river caught in a cofferdam and spilling over to flow on toward the sea. Twice the river flooded and broke the cofferdam.

The story unfolds a generation after Lake Kariba drowned the homes of 57,000 Tonga people living on the banks of the Zambezi River. Between 1958 and 1963 the lake filled. When the waters began to inundate Chief Dumbura Mola's lands on the south bank of the Zambezi River, he and his people were moved twenty-five kilometers from the edge of Lake Kariba into the dry hinterland of the Nyaminyami District in Southern Rhodesia. It is the story of a year I lived in Chitenge village with Chief Mola and his people. It is a tale told in a diary written by a timid woman grubbing away in the field, hoarding details. The voice is mine, speaking in the light tone of self-parody to amuse myself: "I had a *busanza* in Africa . . ." (A busanza is one of the Tonga house forms; the sleeping platform is lifted some three





meters off the ground, and it is usually built beside fields so that crops may be guarded.) In its pages I laugh at my timidity and my attempt to counteract it in being intrepid; I reflect on the challenges that the field presented and the loneliness of being there without my four daughters. I consciously embodied the cliché of a white woman living in the bush even as I yielded to the fascination of being an anthropologist.

I worked periodically for six years and fairly consistently in the valley for the first two years. The diary covers the first year, August 1984 to September 1985. The Department of Agriculture at the University of Zimbabwe sent me to study children's labor on subsistence farms within the context of family and community. There were 104 households or household clusters (masuwa) and some 700 people living in the village. With the help of my wonderful coworker, Anderson Mangisi, and, later, his brother Costain, I accumulated minute details using a whole slew of techniques to track and record the labor of twelve children aged between ten and sixteen and the labor of every family member living in the same household complex (101 persons). There were 187 people sheltered in these homes, including the migrants and others who did not work on the twenty-five fields—about one-quarter of the people in the village. Two children from the twelve sample families elected to join the study; formal measures included them, though they were left out of the final computations. On the basis of the data gathered I published Dance Civet Cat: Child Labour in the Zambezi Valley and wrote and compiled, with Colleen Crawford Cousins, Lwaano Lwanyika: Tonga Book of the Earth, which gives a portrait of Tonga culture and society. The two books serve as companion volumes to this one.

Anderson Mangisi was recommended to me by Peter Mackay, who was living at Bumi Hills. I traveled to Chitenge, and he agreed to work alongside of me. Later his brother Costain worked with us. Anderson, his two wives, Cecilia and Feriza, and their children lived on the edge of the village near the Masawu Stream. He invited me to establish a home on a hillock near the stream and about two hundred meters from his household. Costain and his wife lived not far away. Anderson and I conducted all of the data collection together. If he was ill or away, Costain accompanied me. Both were extraordinarily fine men. Sadly Costain died not long after the end of our project.

IN WRITING A DIARY I had intended to keep track of my thoughts while doing fieldwork in order to identify obstacles to understanding and con-

2 INTRODUCTION

tradictions in the data, so that I could overcome the former and smooth out the latter. In fact, the diary does little more than record the "messiness and inconsequence of everyday life" partly because I was too tired or too engrossed in recording observations and data to fill the original brief.<sup>2</sup> The entries are, oddly, almost evenly spaced across the days: about 30 percent from 5:00 a.m. to noon, 32 percent from noon to 5:00 p.m., and 42 percent from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. There are some anomalies in the dates and times given the entries. Sometimes records of two days merge, sometimes no time is marked for the entry, sometimes the dates are slightly out of kilter, and once a day is left out. The cause may lie in my light editing. None of it matters much, as the diary was not part of the formal accumulation of data.

The diary records a time in the life of the Tonga of Nyaminyami a generation after their dislocation from the water's edge. It records my observations of the young, whose lives were the focus of my research, making choices as they traversed time, their comments on it, how the passing of time in that place shaped their experiences, the ways in which they sought opportunities and handled flux, and, finally, the manner in which they stepped out of childhood. It traces the pattern of the days and puzzles over the social as "the scene of mazes of meaning," to use Stanley Cavell's words. The diary has humble pretentions. It offers no high theory, no sustained account of method, and nor does it resemble Bronislaw Malinowski's self-interrogation or his confident reach for academic dominion in his *Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term.* What it does is trace the effects of indigenous dispossession on the lives of children after their families had experienced dislocation from the place of their birthright.

#### On the Building of Kariba Dam

- ... negative social impacts notwithstanding.
- —Stakeholder meeting for the Kariba Case Study, 2000

Kariba Dam was constructed between 1955 and 1959 at a gorge on the Zambezi River where it flows between Zimbabwe and Zambia. In August 1953 the British government combined the two countries with Malawi, three of the colonies of their empire, into a federation; in 1964 Northern Rhodesia attained independence, as did Malawi, but only in 1980, after a devastating war, did Southern Rhodesia become independent. The following data are taken from the final report for the Kariba Dam Case Study (November 2000) that





#### Legend

- `. District boundary
- Communal land boundary
- Town/Village
- $\sim$  Road
- River



MAP 1. Map of the Zambezi Valley.

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was established to examine the "effective development" of the dam on behalf of the World Commission on Dams.<sup>5</sup>

Kariba Dam extends over a length of about 300 kilometers and covers a surface area of 5,500 kilometers at full supply level. The water storage volume of the Kariba reservoir translates into a mass of 180 billion metric tons. One of the biggest dams in the world, it was constructed largely to provide hydroelectric power to Zimbabwe and Zambia. The two countries own the dam and draw power from two power stations with a combined generation capacity of 1,320 megawatts. The dam was commissioned in 1976–77 at a final cost of about \$480 million (converted to constant 1998 US dollars); over one hundred people died during its construction. It is located at a tectonically active area at the southern end of the African Rift Valley. Since the dam's construction, numerous earthquakes have occurred at the site, twenty of which measured over 5 on the Richter scale. No environmental impact study was conducted prior to or soon after the construction. "Operation Noah," to save and relocate animals, is viewed as a success by the world.

The drowned land was known as the Gwembe Valley. Most of the people who were dislocated lived in large villages that lined the river. Before the construction, it was estimated that 29,000 Tonga people would have to be "resettled" once the land was flooded, but in fact 57,000 lost their homes and their fields and were forced to move. The Kariba 1955 project document (as referred to in the Case Study report) provided no detail on the resettlement program except for a budget allocation of 4 million British pounds. The governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, then vassal states of the United Kingdom, assumed responsibility for the resettlement of people in their own domains. Approximately 34,000 were resettled from the Northern Rhodesia side of the river, and 23,000 from the Southern Rhodesia riverbank. The total population of the Gwembe Valley estimated in the mid-1950s was 86,000, comprising about 55,000 on the northern side and 31,000 on the southern side.<sup>6</sup> In effect, some 66 and 74 percent, respectively, of the Valley Tonga lost their land. Two-thirds of a people had their particular form of life rubbed out after perhaps two thousand years as the People of the River.

The Case Study report states, "The 1955 Kariba project report, the 1956 World Bank [International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)] appraisal report and the annual reports of the Central African Power Corporation (CAPCO) include a one-line cost estimate for resettlement, and offer no further discussion. The racist attitude of the time did



not consider the resettlement of Africans as a problem." The budget allocation of about 4 million pounds for resettlement was not adjusted when it was realized that the number of people to be moved was double the original estimate. The World Bank helped to finance the project. In Southern Rhodesia the resettlement conditions were pitiful. "It was reported that the people to be resettled 'were treated like animals or things rounded up and packed in lorries'" to be moved to the barren hills away from the water. Most of the new land was of poor quality and susceptible to erosion; the amount of land available was too small for reasonable distribution to the number of people dislocated. Famine followed. The networks of kinship and friendship across the river that had existed before the flooding of the land were foreclosed. The Case Study report names organizations that have since given aid to the Tonga, including the World Bank; the amounts given and the cost of the aid are not documented.

The Case Study report describes a life on the banks of the river before the flooding that included the harvesting of crops twice a year on rich alluvial soils and concludes that the Tonga were "seldom victims of hunger and famine." Hunting was a source of protein, and fishing was possible. The authors claim that, besides the improvement of health, the people now have access by road and safety from animals. In Mola none of that improvement, such as it is, compensates for the loss suffered. The report details the exclusion of the Tonga from information about their fate and from consultation prior to the construction of the dam. The authors describe resistance to the relocation, and the killing of eight persons who protested in the chiefdom of Chipepo. Many villages do not have electricity or irrigation, and the fisheries industry has not benefited the local people. The authors of the report conclude that for the Tonga, the "resettlement was a traumatic event, in which they lost access to their ancestral grounds, areas suitable for recession agriculture and easy access to their friends and relatives across the river. Losses were all encompassing: monetary, psychological, cultural and social."10

The resources gained by people outside the valley seem to be too great to measure (there are no figures given in the section on resources in the Case Study report). However, the authors note that beneficiaries include millions of electricity consumers, the copper mines and other industries, employees of the national parks created as a result, fishermen, and employees of the tourist industry. Those displaced by the dam were unable to compete for the economic benefits, it is said; "thus, although the Tonga bore most of the social costs associated with Kariba Dam, people from outside the dam basin



took up most of the benefits." The epigraph to this section comes from the Case Study report. At a final meeting the stakeholders were asked if the development resulting from Kariba Dam was "effective." The answer was yes, to which the authors add as a caution "negative social impacts notwith-standing," because, they say, the conclusion should be considered with care as the stakeholders who attended the meeting did not statistically reflect the population affected by or interested in the Kariba Dam. A famous philosopher warns us to attend equally to the question as to the answer. Why ask?

#### A Diary

A diary is about nothing yet still you want to read it.

—KARL OVE KNAUSGAARD, Some Rain Must Fall: My Struggle, Book Five (2016)

The diary is an accompaniment to an ethnographic account. It resembles a flip-book that with a flick of the thumb makes drawings take flight. A flip-book is a series of drawings that vary gradually from one page to the next so that when the pages are flicked, they simulate motion relying on persistence of vision to create an illusion. By analogy I mean that the observations recorded in the diary about the lives of children tell a story that cannot be conceived of in its fullness unless projected in some fashion. My argument is that it is only the description of children's lives in detail, across time and in context, that renders the corporeal visible so that the form becomes tangible. The projection reveals how precarious children's lives are in that place—the place to which the architects of colonialism consigned the Tonga having taken them from their ancestral land, having stripped them of all rights except to scrape fields in the sandy soil of the hinterland, having denied them real compensation for the loss of huge resources. Full disclosure: I am a product of that system.

I shall make some suggestions as to what can be seen as you flip the diary. The ethnography of childhood, the frame within which I work, offers the opportunity to engage a persistence of vision on the experiences of the young on the basis of which to create an illusion. By illusion I do not mean deception or delusion (although anthropologists sometimes stand accused of producing those). Instead I take up two other meanings given by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: illusion is "the misapprehension of the true state of affairs" or "the faulty perception of an external object." I have come to understand that the situation of children is frequently misapprehended



and that faulty perceptions of their predicaments are often held. That is to say, in a place like the Zambezi Valley, unless the experiences of the young are observed across time, the composite character of the fragility of some children's lives is unlikely to be detected and, therefore, is easier for governments and international institutions like the World Bank to ignore.

There are instances in the diary that show how difficult it can be for a child to negotiate the everyday. The instances include the following: a child, alone beside a field, throws stones at elephants trying to prevent them from raiding the family's crops; a child walks eight kilometers home after school through the bush having eaten nothing all day apart from cold sadza (grain porridge) in the morning; a child suffering from burns has no access to relief from pain, for the clinic is closed because no nurse stays long in Mola and the small shops do not stock medicines; a child has an epileptic fit on the ground alone near a fire; a child experiences a visitation at night from his guardian, who threatens to kill him (is it a nightmare? he says it is real); a child walks home in the early evening and is tossed by an elephant; a child stones two young kinsmen because he is crazy or wild or just furious; a child's activities are hampered because he is unable to breathe easily until a doctor visits from London and prescribes medicine for his asthma; a child aged thirteen dies because endemic diseases have damaged his liver and his mother could not or would not afford the cost of sending him to hospital as the doctor had recommended; and a child steals a pair of panties because there is no other way to clothe herself. The instances are only part of the story, of course. Other aspects are recorded showing the grace of children's bearing, manners, and kindness and the character of kin relationships. There are descriptions of their friendships and their enjoyment of riddles, proverbs, songs, play, and laughter. Like sight lines, moments of the children's lives are perceptible on the pages of the diary. The project demonstrates the significance of children's labor in contributing to family survival.

#### Nyaminyami

But where you are, the land is brown as an earthenware pot, baked dry as a straw and brushed over with a gilding of pale grass.

—PEGGY TRACY, The Lost Valley (1975)

The research area is a village called Chitenge. It is one of four wards in Mola headed by Chief Dumbura Mola, and it falls within the Omay Communal Land that encompasses 2,866 square kilometers of the southern



bank of Lake Kariba. It is part of the Nyaminyami District of the Zimbabwean portion of Lake Kariba that was designated as a Recreational Park within the Zimbabwean Parks and Wildlife Estate. All of it lies in the Sebungwe Region, which extends over 40,000 square kilometers and is the least populated region in the country, with the least agriculture and the most unreliable rainfall. In 1984 the population estimate for Omay was 10,923. In 1898 an administration was established and taxation imposed on the region by British colonial rulers. The majority of the people in Omay are Tonga. In 1969 there were 60,260 Tonga speakers living in Zimbabwe among a population of some seven million.

The whole shoreline of the lake is 2,000 kilometers, and the people moved from the river on the Zimbabwean side in Omay are not allowed to live on the shore. It is kept pristine for tourism and commercial fishing. The summers are hot and dry, and the winters are cold. Mola is 440 kilometers from Harare, the state capital; 237 kilometers from the nearest business center in Karoi; and 150 kilometers by boat on the lake from Kariba. The bus journey from Harare takes fourteen hours.

In the 1980s Chitenge had no post office, no bank, no library, no market, no public means of transport apart from an intermittent bus that ceased service while I was there because the road was so bad that repairs were too costly. The clinic was often closed; two valiant doctors, Dr. Sam Makanza from Kariba District Hospital and Dr. McClain from Binga, visited when they could, which was not often. The chief conducted the local court. There was access to the regional court in Kariba for those who could pay for the journey and spare two days or more away from their duties. The police station was in Bumi. Order in Mola was largely kept by dispensing fines in accord with government guidelines: officers of the police, National Game Parks, the regional court, and the chief's court all dispensed fines. There was one radiotelephone, but the battery was frequently flat. There were six small shops and a school that led up to school-leaving certification for the few scholars who remained that long. A variety of services were provided, and a range of administrative advisers and supporters visited from centers in the district and farther afield. It is not my intention to undermine the valuable work undertaken by civil servants, private individuals, game wardens, nearby business and tourist centers, medical personnel, and development organizations.<sup>15</sup> However, given the value of the resources taken from the people of Omay, their assets and infrastructure were invisible, risible, dismal.



There is evidence of the precariousness that surrounds children's lives in the diary. Sometimes they live in peril. As Elaine Scarry says, "Live things always have an acute fragility." It is visible in the degree of poverty that exists. There is a season of hunger before the annual crop is grown when the granaries are empty. In the year covered by the diary, government food subsidies were sent in for young children because there had been three years of drought. Under summer's harsh heat and with unpredictable rainfall, subsistence agriculture is difficult. Crops can fail because of drought, pest devastation, or animal and bird damage. Fields, frequently those allotted to single women, may yield sparse crops because of overuse. The labor is hard, and children are expected to assist.

There is danger in living in an area where wild animals roam and where snakes abound. Mola lies across the Umi River, which forms the boundary between the Matusadona National Park and people's fields. Apart from the tributary, there is no barrier to keep animals away. Two girls were killed by animals during my spell of research. Wild animals contribute to the difficulty of keeping livestock. There are no cattle because of tsetse fly and sparse grazing. Jobs in the area are scarce, and those who earn salaries live away from home, usually within Omay. Spare cash to pay for expenses, including those related to ill-health, is seldom at hand.

Illness is compounded by the great distance from medical care, especially when there is no nurse to run the clinic in Chitenge, and the difficulty in making or affording the journey across land and water to a hospital in either Kariba or Karoi. A woman whose labor was obstructed was wheeled in a barrow for three hours to reach the lake at Bumi Hills, a lodge on the lakeshore, to await transfer by boat to Kariba hospital. After many hours the boat arrived; she died as the boat entered the harbor at Kariba, and her twins did not survive. The excellent doctor Sam Makanza listed the ten main illnesses in the area, to which he added trauma caused by animals and snakebites.

Witchcraft pulsed through the beliefs of some of the people. It was not a central trope, but its expression came to my attention on two specific occasions. One was at a ritual following the death of a young boy, son of a chief, and the other was in the fear of two young men whose guardian threatened them with evil. I heard of very few incidents of violence against or among the young. There was one tragic killing of a man and his children that I was told about.



In this introduction I emphasize the harshness of life because I believe it is unwonted given the history of the Tonga and the profit made from their loss. But my tale is not one of misery, for there is joy among the people, and enterprise, and creativity, and a resilient social structure. The book *Lwaano Lwanyika*, based on collaboration with many of the adults and children of Chitenge, testifies to all that. The wonderful anthropologist Elizabeth Colson wrote in the introduction to that book that there was much to make Tonga life beside the river creative and satisfying. She refers to the valley as the Gwembe:

Of course, in the old days they often knew hunger because the rains might fail or the Zambezi might flood at the wrong time. But they were clever in developing ways to survive the bad times and when they had good harvests there was happiness. People loved their valley, where they said they could live as they liked, and they were proud to call themselves "People of the River."

They were also proud of their skills in song making and drumming, and the intricate tunes they played using the one-note antelope flutes (*nyeli*). They displayed their quickness of wit in story telling and in punning contests when joking partners confronted one another. A master of the art of joking may have all around choking with laughter. They also had other skills. They made fine drums and stools, good pots and baskets. Canoe-making was a major skill known only to a few. The beadwork was beautiful. And each boy and girl grew up trained in skills they needed to provide for themselves and their children. Even tiny children had their own small fields on which they were expected to be able to demonstrate their ability and willingness to work. . . . They were expected to think for themselves and be able to take part in the public discussions through which communities governed themselves. 17

There is much that has been lost with the move from the river, but the character of their way of life is still tangible. There are many incidents of children at work and play in the diary—their songs, games, riddles, house building, and childcare as well as the warmth of family relationships. In Tonga land I was treated as a guest and I trusted my hosts. I derived great pleasure from living beneath the thatch of my pole-and-*dagga* rooms. Many inhabitants of Mola and many people in the triangle from Siakobvu to



Bumi Hills to Kariba assisted me. I am indebted. As a gesture of reciprocation, Colleen Crawford Cousins and I compiled a book to return to the People of the River, in an accessible form, the knowledge that experts had gathered about life there. With the collaboration of locals and others we published Lwaano Lwanyika: Tonga Book of the Earth in English and ciTonga—we distributed two thousand copies to centers in the valley and we created a charity, Childhood Action, Research and Documentation Institution [CARD], having received for both projects generous funding from the Ford Foundation, the Save the Children Fund, and the Oak Foundation and paper for printing from the Canadian Organisation for Development Through Education. Almost all of the money was spent in the valley. Our collaborators included the children of Chitenge, and among other projects, we built a grinding mill in the village and established scholarships; one went to Evelina Kapandula, who completed a fine study of children under the age of six who cared for younger siblings, to enable her to obtain a school-leaver's certificate. The Ford Foundation donated money to fund libraries at Siakobvu and Binga. I left two clusters of buildings for Anderson's family.

DEATH WAS ABROAD. I recorded twenty-five deaths in the one year covered by the diary. Three women, five men, and seventeen children died (six infants, two toddlers, and nine under the age of sixteen). Of the twenty-five deaths in Omay that came to my attention, fourteen were from Mola, of whom eleven were from Chitenge village and nine from the twelve families with whom I worked closely. Two of the men worked for the regional administration. Eleven deaths among 700 people in the 104 households in Chitenge is surely rather a lot in a year, as is nine among the 187 people living in the family clusters that I visited. During the war to end white rule in Rhodesia seven young men left Mola to join the Liberation forces in Zambia, and only three returned after 1980 when the war ended.

The language of the people is ciTonga, and it is distinct within the Bantu group; the Tonga (baTonga) of Zimbabwe and Zambia share a basically common culture. Many of the inhabitants of Chitenge spoke English, including the children who were schooled in English. We used a mixture of the two languages; I learnt ciTonga but not expertly, not having had time allocated to me by the Department of Agriculture in which to learn



the language. I could not find a teacher in Harare, but I imported tapes from Zambia of a teaching course. I acquired a basic vocabulary before arriving in the valley and increased it slowly until I could follow the gist of conversation. The children with whom I worked closely spoke English with me and wrote diaries in English. Anderson is a fine linguist.

When they lived on the banks of the Zambezi River, groups of villages were organized into neighborhoods called *cisi* (plural *zisi*) with populations between 300 and 1,500. They formed the basic communities for communal religious rituals and social functions. Each neighborhood was predominantly endogamous, but all Tonga belong to exogamous matrilineal clans. In the especially harsh conditions of the valley and escarpment, settlements were isolated with a minimum contact with regions up- or downstream, but there were close connections across the river. In the 1980s Elizabeth Colson, who has worked with the Tonga for over forty years, found that the Tonga kinship system had been malleable and that new notions of equity had been incorporated into the rules of the existing system without major dislocation or transformation of the matrilineal base. The kinship system combines matrilineal descent with an emphasis on a man's control over his marital family. 20

It is not uncommon for a child to live in a household without a mother or a father or even without either for a variety of reasons, including the death of one or both parents or divorce. A man can claim and wield the right to control the immediate destiny of his children if he has paid full *lobola* (bride wealth) and damages for his wife should she divorce him or commit adultery. He has the right to take the children away from their mother even if she is willing and able to care for them. He can take them to live in his household or send them to reside in a kinsman's household. The chief told me that three of his many wives had left him (he said that they had divorced him) and that he claims the children when they are seven years old. He admitted that it is hard for a child to leave his or her mother. Marriage is acknowledged under customary law and is seldom registered under civil law.

The local court grants divorce with seeming ease. The chief heads the court, and his clerk, who generously gave me records of court proceedings, had spent some years in prison for having killed his wife with an ax. Few women appear before the court, and it is preferred practice that a kinsman represents a woman. To some extent her fate depends on her



kinsman's repute, wisdom, inclination, and legal facility. A father may refuse to support his children, as did some of the fathers of children with whom I worked; I saw no effective sanction against that. A woman's husband may refuse to accept responsibility for her children born in an earlier marriage.

However, there is security in the matrilineal system that accepts women and children beneath its shade. Many men assume with great generosity and care the full support of their own children and those formally placed under their guardianship in accord with the rules of ritual cleansing and inheritance, and many care for children who are attached to their households through means other than those decreed by kin obligations. There are safety nets to catch children in need within the structure of Tonga kinship, but some children fall through holes in the net, perhaps because forms of care and control devised for the support of children in earlier times no longer hold and because the range of choice in a village of seven hundred people may be more limited now compared with the form of life experienced beside the river before the lake was formed. There were signs in the 1980s that the structure of inheritance was changing and fresh alignments were being forged.

In the diary there are three examples of the insecure position in which a woman (in one case, a young girl) is placed if the transfer of lobola or damages is not carried out smoothly or a husband's behavior is unpredictable. There are accounts of the control men within the family can wield, for example, in refusing to allow a wife or a child to be sent to hospital. There is a recognition of a child's right to make decisions, including with whom he or she may live within the kinship structure and whether to change his or her name. On the other hand, a child may have little say if it is decided that he or she should live with a relative because, for example, the relative needs a goatherd or cannot conceive her own child.

From the study of children's labor, I learned to appreciate the tautness of ties binding kin relations forged in a harsh environment; while kinship rules are flexible, a tie between a child and another can snap. I learned that there is work involved in securing ties within wider kin groups, especially for boys. Intergenerational links for the old as for girls and boys call for conscious nurturance, whereas links between parent and child can usually be taken for granted (as long as contingencies like divorce and death do not intervene); yet the reach for attention can be competitive in polygamous families, and access often has to be negotiated.



#### Who's I? Whose Eye?

I called myself *Incertus*, uncertain, a shy soul fretting and all that.
—SEAMUS HEANEY, "Feelings into Words" (1974)

The scaffolding of my childhood was one of privilege and prejudice. The privilege arrived with the accident of birth as one of the last of the British Empire's colonial progeny. I was born as the realm splintered. Privilege was ensured by my father's enterprise and hard work. I was born in the belly of the middle class, my mother from the upper reaches and my father from the lower. It was a layer in Rhodesia characterized by a sense of justification founded on assumed racial superiority and shellacked by a thin veneer of civilization.

The diary is, in part, an autobiography of timidity. Where simply arriving in the world is too much. Where living calls for an act. Where choice is not seen as within reach or as a right. Being a stranger in life, it is natural to be an anthropologist. A paradox winds through this story. Timidity brought me to a position in which I controlled feelings of fear to avoid drawing attention to myself or exposing emotions—I obscured them from others' view and, it would seem, from myself. When I was six I cut my chin on the side of the school swimming pool and I kept still, clinging to the side hoping not to be noticed. A boy said to my brother, aged eleven, "Isn't that your sister, bleeding there?" My brother looked at me, shook his head, and said, "No." The paradox lies in my becoming an observer of strangers in alien places in self-protection from others' observation of me. To be an anthropologist is, in part, to assume a distance. Over three decades I worked in a number of dangerous places, yet I was not afraid. Is there a difference between timidity and fear? Why did I not want to draw the attention of others? Why hide pain or tears or fear?

As synonyms for timid the Oxford thesaurus gives afraid, apprehensive, bashful, chicken-hearted, cowardly, coy, diffident, faint-hearted, fearful, modest. And the informal synonyms it proffers are a sorry tale: spineless, tentative, timorous, unadventurous, unheroic, wimpish, mousy, nervous, pusillanimous, reserved, retiring, scared, sheepish, shrinking, shy. The opposite is bold.

Who will read the diary of such a character? In sum, *shy* is more social than anything else, and turned inward; *timid* says what one is; and *fear* emphasizes feelings and their unpleasantness. Anthropology is a cover for my timidity: I went undercover to cover my timidity. This is close to

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surreptitious, on the edge of spying. No sense of realism seems to enter these definitions. It is realistic to be afraid of life, family, school.... Did I challenge myself in the field in demanding entry to strange societies, dangerous places, dubious dwellings undercover? I am paradoxical: timid and intrepid. Fernando Pessoa says, "It's noble to be timid, distinctive to be unable to act, illustrious to be inept at living." In the field I am often amused at my predicament and not worried. Because I have practiced suppression of feelings? Yet a cocktail party renders me tongue-tied.

For the books I have written there has always been material that must be shaped into a form that allows a story to emerge: how I went somewhere, why, when, to do what; how I slotted into the daily rounds, watched and wrote, left and compiled a story. However, on reading the diary, I see how its form shapes my memory, giving it a particular angle and rhythm that reveals the rough ingredients of an ethnography, a background story. There is a particularity that the diary gives to this fieldwork that cannot be found in the ethnography, *Dance Civet Cat*, that details why (I went to the field), when (during an adulthood spent fielding), to do what (discover how children live in society—get born, are raised, raise themselves, labor, abandon childhood, and in turn shape society). I write now having left the field.

A diary is, of necessity, about the diarist, even if only glancingly. There are tricks to use in writing about oneself. Graham Greene said that "it is a disadvantage to have an 'I' who is not a fictional figure, and the only way to deal with 'I' was to make him an abstraction" and "to trust the divagations of the mind" and receive "aid from the unconscious" that he calls the "nègre we keep in the cellar."22 Pascal Mercier traces a quest through the telling of another writer's life; John Coetzee writes about self in the third person, shuffling the real and the fictional, or so it seems. Patrick Kavanagh writes about himself to tell the story of his wife and her death. And Nicholson Baker writes about himself in writing in admiration, competition, and celebration of John Updike. For Baker, an autobiography should make "some attempt at a novelistically inclusive response." <sup>23</sup> Updike feels "no obligation to the remembered past" and is tender toward his past selves;<sup>24</sup> while holding a touch of disdain toward himself, he sets out to write with scientific dispassion and curiosity. Ways to skin a genet—I saw one in the garden last week.

For an anthropologist in southern Africa, distance from the self in writing about the other is de rigeur, for skepticism is embedded in our



attitude to heroism, liberalism, academia, race. Perhaps "I" has become another cover or disguise. A limitation.

The diary was written a generation after the land beside the Zambezi River was flooded to form Lake Kariba. The introduction is being written a generation after the first year of fieldwork was completed. The voice of the diary is that of a younger person. I have not interfered with what I had to say then or with how I said it. I lightly edited it for ease of reading and removed a few pieces peripheral to the subject matter. The number of sunsets described is both funny and annoying. Perhaps I fell under the influence of the sunset itself, for Samuel Beckett said, "True that light distorts. Particularly sunset." Or perhaps Emily Dickinson is right:

An ignorance a Sunset Confer upon the Eye—<sup>26</sup>

It was the evening's entertainment. My fascination was twice rewarded on seeing the green ray—"a seldom-seen streak of light that rises from the sun like a spurting fountain at the moment of sunset; it throbs in the sky for two seconds and disappears." Words to do with food litter the descriptions, reflecting hunger for my usual fare rather than sadza, okra, crocodile tails, flying ants, even mice (offered to me by children).

The nature of the journey from Harare to Chitenge dictated the amount of goods, including food, I could bring from home except for the few times I traveled by car. I had four young daughters at home and traveled to and fro more than an anthropologist ought. The first leg of the trip began at a small airport north of Harare from which a Viscount plane (shortly after I completed the research it was donated to a museum) took me to Kariba airport, where I would wait hoping to hitch a lift in a small plane, a two- or four-seater, across the waters to Bumi Hills airport. Sometimes the plane belonged to the District Development Office, other times to a safari lodge. I valued the pilots' generosity and was shamed by their remonstrance at the weight of my rucksack stuffed with goods for Anderson's family, with whom I lived. (I bought food for the family and I was fed by them. Once the stock was depleted, I followed the local diet of sadza and relish—often made from leaves picked in the bush.) On arrival at Bumi I would wait, often at Bumi Hills Safari Lodge, for a lift inland to Chitenge village. Local policemen sometimes made special trips to drive me there. Occasionally I crossed the lake by ferry, but the wait was always long and the journey took hours. Once, on a return flight, I carried a plastic bag of elephant



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dung to give to the healers with whom I had recently worked in Musami, northeast of Harare.

One of my daughters says, in retrospect, that I was irresponsible in the way I lived in the valley. In 1914, preparing in Australia for his first field trip to New Guinea, Bronislaw Malinowski wrote in his diary, "On Saturday morning (election day) I went to the museum to present a book to the director; then bought medicines (cocaine, morphine, and emetics) plus arsenic." Before traveling to Omay, I bought adhesive bandages and an antiseptic solution. Which of us was more irresponsible?

On my first flight from Kariba to Bumi Hills, a smart tourist resort on the edge of the lake, I sat next to an older man who had been a district commissioner in the 1930s based in the area that encompassed what is now the town of Kariba. He told me that one of the very few cars that traveled that way had run out of fuel. He sent a plea to a senior administrator many miles away for petrol to be delivered to him. A few days later an African man was seen running toward the camp with a tin full of petrol balanced on his head. Pinned to the man's clothing was a note: "Do not feed him. He is being punished." He was fed.

Of most interest to readers of the diary will be, I presume, scenes from the field. My life is of interest because it is a life set in a time lost (a country collapsed and an empire in decline) and something of a parody; a tale of timidity and escape, and a fresh field explored. In contemplating the diary, I ask: Does it dodge the trained folly of academics? Which of the "two thousand and fifty-two" selves we possess, according to Virginia Woolf, did I select?<sup>28</sup>

For Seamus Heaney there are different mind-fields and language-bodies.<sup>29</sup> One has to find the breath for one's own exploration and expression. Anthropology gave me what he said he required, "pressure and density" that I found nowhere else and a chute down which to escape family, the times (1960s), school teaching. The field in anthropology is where one works with people. Initially it was far from home and among preliterate people. Now it is anywhere with anyone. I worked with children and youths in Africa. At its core my research was steered by a fascination with forms of life and the difficulties they entail. Mine, too. Memories rekindled by the diary invite reflection on aging, the disappointment with achievement, its insufficiency and lack of purchase.

I walked across "fields" in eleven sites partly, I imagine, to explain my anomalous position in the situation into which I was born. White woman trespassing. Anthropologists as trespassers.



The ethnographies I have written sketch different ways of being in the field. Gradually I turned timidity from cautious watching into intentional observation, and I grew interested in the drama of living alone among strangers in tumultuous times. I had the good fortune to share with a group of international scholars at annual conferences in the early exploration of the ethnography of childhood. For, as Stanley Cavell says, "the dream of civilization requires an openness to childhood." The ethnographic task (commonly portrayed as observation and participation) is impossible to realize satisfactorily; the catching of another's life, especially a child's, in action, in words, in gestures, in intellectual engagement with the world, can only ever be fragmentary. It requires the talent and understanding of the playwright, the philosopher, the artist, the poet, the novelist, the psychologist. The child, certainly as an individual, was, until recently, seldom a figure in ethnography. My work affirms Cavell's view "that childhood events, early and late, are already irreducibly intellectual, and that events are already adventures." It

While conducting research on a variety of issues and in many places, I learned about the burden of conviction and the accumulation of detail in the process of seeking to know, and I marveled at the extraordinary in the ordinary.

#### How Is Telling Done?

- . . . the most loving attention to the whatness of seemingly trivial things.
- -W. G. SEBALD, Unrecounted (2005)

A grandmother's bemoaning my incessant questioning is on record in the diary. It brings to mind Samuel Beckett's words, "Was it ever over and done with questions?"<sup>32</sup> The systematic pursuit of minute details relating to labor is barely evident in the diary. Instead, there is an array of particulars snapped in the context of village life. The diary gives an account of the dailiness of observing the experiences of children in the world and their placement within it. It represents one of the ways that telling is done. On pondering Wittgenstein's question "How is telling done?" Cavell asks, "What, again, is the story of a life? And where is the place and what is the form to tell it?"<sup>33</sup>

The telling here is in a different voice from *Dance Civet Cat*. The diary allows space for the simplicity of observation. Earlier I said that in my research I set out to "track and record" the labor of children. The diary walks anew on the track, and it becomes a circling back. The view is different at



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every turn. I offer a proviso as to how the diary can be read; it is rough staccato, not an organized flow as in the ethnographic monograph. I present moments in time, therefore, the choppiness. The suggestion is to ignore the staccato. The text is not comparable to a movie, unless one by Robert Altman. The diary needs someone to flip the pages to give something like the breath of movement. The arc is not a story; it follows the personal narratives of my relationships with the people with whom I interacted. The interchanges tracked can be compared with skipping stones on water. One throw has two beats, another four, a third only one; similarly, one way to read the text is as offering an interaction as something in itself, like the visit to a household where a child sat naked in the ash of the fireplace, or the chance meeting with a game warden (from whom I learned whose father had been imprisoned for poaching), or a conversation that links up with one of the children studied (when two young men visited me to tell of another boy's illness). There is no demand to trace each name, only to see the one named as a person with whom I interacted as I pursued the work. There are threads, of course, that unspool down time and weave through the text tying certain children and their family members into the social fabric. Their names are in the text.

The people with whom one interacts are the chorus of fieldwork. As in Greek tragedy, no chorister is the focus. The encounters shape one's sensibility but do not necessarily find their way into the form that the monograph takes. They may hint at the structure of that work. Ethnographic monographs, in their selectivity, represent a limitation in that they are drawn from a myriad of social relationships. These are shown in the diary as split across the days, not yet condensed into a form. Fieldwork is filled with minutiae, and ethnographies of this nature require involvement with a set of relationships in order to find out something. Anthropology's shadow life lurks in the relationships behind the scenes that hold the monograph in place.

#### Manhattan

Manhattan is the most densely populated of New York City's five boroughs.

I lived in a house on stilts (busanza) that I named "Manhattan" for its elevation. Anderson Mangisi generously allowed me to build at the edge of his property near a stream that flowed from a valley leading into the hills where wild animals roam and where I walked, often at 5:00 a.m. Be-



fore I arrived to stay, some villagers warned him, saying, "She will stay on your land and gradually ease you out and claim everything that is yours." After almost one hundred years of British imperial rule, they knew what to expect. The busanza was my bedroom; it was built on six sturdy, tall poles cut from the surrounding woods, and of reeds from the stream and mud plaster. The poles held a platform made of thinner poles and plastered with mud; there were skimpy walls of reed reaching halfway up to a thatch roof, and there was a crooked ladder that led from the ground to the narrow balcony, from which I surveyed the stream, the fields, and, to the south, across the plains, the mountains. Beside the room on stilts, on the same patch of swept earth, was a round, thatched room of pole and mud that housed my goods and chattels. There is a Tonga riddle about the cleared ground that surrounds homesteads: "I sweep my yard and then the ones with long legs come to play." The answer is rain.

The ground beneath my bedroom became a meeting place and an arena where children gathered. Once it acted as a courthouse when I was on trial.

#### The Angel of the House

Occasionally I would sip my tot of whiskey in a crystal glass as I watched the sunset and imagine my teacher Monica Wilson as an ancestor at my side. The ancestors, the locals told me, had sent snakes to check me out, so they could just as well have sent Monica. Sometimes she accompanied me in the field, only once as a tangible being. In spirit she would comment on what was before us, asking why my interest was focused on this and not that, or why I had failed to pursue a lead. How different we were, yet we shared a number of characteristics. We were stalwart; presumptuous; confident in the existence of a moral direction, a compass, although one of us was unsure of the meaning of the wavering pointer. We were each unforgiving of self, and we both continued to work until late in life.

I took to heart her instructions to gather minute details and corroborate insights. Monica pursued the grand picture, the completed puzzle of a thousand pieces. I, too, focused on detail and sought patterns in its accumulation; I leaned over with a magnifying glass to look at this child here, in this context now. The following is an account I wrote of her appearance in Chitenge as I sat on the platform of my house on stilts. Monica sat beside me; her slightly thick ankles, like mine, hung down from the platform.



"Thank you, I'll have a whiskey," she said.

"There is only one crystal glass."

"As if the container determines the quality."

"Oh, but it does," I said petulantly.

We watched the day resign.

"You worked well," she granted, "but you failed to follow so many leads."

"On forests, on poaching, on men dominating courts?" I suggested.

"Yes, certainly, yes."

"I'm studying child labor."

"It is just a mask, an excuse. Follow every lead."

"I'm tired, I'm hungry because I hate okra," I whined.

Monica shrugged and dissolved.

Monica as the Angel of the House pursued me from house to house and across the fields that lie between them.

Once I said, "It is kind of you to come, but Angels of the House are supposed to stay in the house and not follow the woman out into the field."

"Nonsense. You lived in a tin shack, then a servant's quarters, and now a busanza. Each one is a house. You live where you move and settle at night. The field is your ground; where you lay your head down to sleep is your house."

"Give over on the religious symbolism," I grumbled.

ANDERSON AND I WALKED each day from Manhattan to the homesteads and fields of the villagers. In summer, when households moved to live beside their fields, in order to find those to whom we wished to speak we often walked twenty-five kilometers in the heat as the fields stretched for twelve kilometers alongside the road, branching out on either side. I did not always remember to carry water to drink, and we frequently had nothing to eat until we returned home in the evening. Perhaps I came to earn the names given me: Kanense ("the thin one") and Matempa ("the one with the flat stomach"). I am not thin. I lived at the foot of a hill known as "the one with a fat stomach." The names could have derived from people's wonder that I—an urban, educated mother of four—should have failed to attain the stature appropriate to a matriarch. Most people, especially the children, called me Chipo (gift), the name given to me by isiZezuru healers.



Chief Dumbura Mola did me the honor of visiting the site of my house before it was built to hammer a stake into the ground informing the ancestors that I had been invited to build a home in Mola. He assigned me to his clan, Mashonga, a bird—probably the red-billed quelea that flies in flocks that are chased from the fields of ripening grain; they, like me, land then fly and land again. Or it could be the beautiful cardinal quelea.

Labor was my subject, and I aimed to set it in its "larger representational context"; the phrase is Elaine Scarry's, taken from her fine book on work as described in Thomas Hardy's novels in which she highlights his fascination with labor.<sup>34</sup> She says that work is a subject that in some fundamental way is very difficult to represent partly because it's essential nature is action—perpetual, repetitive, habitual. It requires a richness of elaboration, attention to the physical continuity of the worker and his or her materials. "Out of something modest," she says, "comes something immodest (survival, self-recreation, and recreation of activity and new parts of the world)." She asks how to represent it and suggests one way—to see work where it lapses or tears, for example, as garlic infects milk. (In Omay an example might be when the woman of the household who has young children and who is responsible for the domestic and agricultural production falls ill at a crucial time in the growth cycle.)

The diary begins at the point of looking and seeing but not knowing about child labor. It begins with having to find out how to come to know the actual time a child labors; in what actual place, and where that place is situated with regard to others and as mapped in relation to the hearth, the water source, the field; whether the child works in company or in isolation; with what motivation the child works—her or his own (for food, to earn, to build his house), or parents' instruction, or to strategize in relation to future kin support; how to measure labor—energy, persistence, efficiency. A child works in relation to others' work, therefore that has to be measured, too: the value placed on varieties of work (washing, childcare, planting); the distribution of tasks; the difference in gender expectations; the control of land and its allocation; the effects of family unity or disruption; the part played by health and illness; and the rules that govern kin duties, obligation, and choice and that determine inclusion or exclusion in regard to work.

Apart from recording labor in fields, I traced the history of fields to discover their use, ownership, inheritance, and extension each year. It became clear which farmers could afford to let them lie fallow, which owners gave low-yielding land to dependent kin; and which spread their risks and



experimented with new crops. Early apprenticeship was seen in the gift of plots of land to children to farm.

In finding out about children's labor contribution to the households in Chitenge village, I organized and conducted the collection of data on many facets of life in the community and the twelve households. I implemented four systematic measures of work done by children and every member of their families. I had frequent interaction with individual children, with small groups, and with all of them together. My days were spent in formal and informal engagement with people.

The diary exists apart from, though in step with, the formal gathering and analysis of data over the first of two years that culminated in the ethnography *Dance Civet Cat*. The ethnography presents an anchor in details. It gives the results of an intricate examination of the labor of twelve children aged ten to sixteen and every member of their families in the context of subsistence agricultural production in Chitenge village, Mola. The diary is the shadow story of the work accomplished in the sun (often literally). It gives the results of the detective efforts of exploring labor in the full complex of people's lives. It challenges techniques that are most often used to gather data on labor, especially of women and children.

IT IS IMPORTANT that the diary is read in cognizance of the serious research that was undertaken while it was being written. Anderson Mangisi, Costain Mangisi, and I documented in elaborate detail a year's cycle in the labor of domestic, agricultural, and auxiliary activities including, for some men, wage labor in the district. The focus on twelve children spiraled outward. I used a slew of techniques and collected data on a wide range of matters including household composition, income and expenditure, genealogies, health, diet, marital situations, customs, riddles, songs, and proverbs, as well as information about sales at stores, use of water and wood, court cases, and inheritance. Careful attention was paid to every aspect of farming: the history of each field farmed, the details of acquisition, their sizes and annual extensions, their use across time and the comparison of use and yields, the sources of seeds, and animal and bird damage. I could say more, but enough. The diary refers to "forms"; I use that word to describe any research instrument that draws on a variety of means to collect data, including direct questions, partly because my informants disliked responding to questionnaires and because I found them unsatisfactory. In



Dance Civet Cat there are many formal tracings of the place, relationships, and labor: there are three maps, twenty diagrams, and fifty-five tables. I filled twelve notebooks, and more were filled by Anderson, Costain, and the children. Over the next five years much more material was collected and compiled in Lwaano Lwanyika: Tonga Book of the Earth.

Meticulous recordings of labor were made over seven months that included the growing season using four measures: peak labor records, instant records, twenty-four-hour recall, and observations, noting activities minute by minute for two hours. In summary, I found that in the Mola labor economy, children are an adjustable input, with girls more adjustable than boys. Children's labor time, in aggregate, is greater than women's. In activities devoted to work as recorded in two of the measures, on average women are seen to spend almost 80 percent of their time working, girls about 67 percent, men 53 percent, and boys 15 percent. Those are just two of the measures, but each measure shows remarkable consistency in the patterns revealed that is, the relationships between the amount of work done by women, girls, men, and boys are similar. Inevitably records, no matter how thorough, fail to reflect the complexity of reality (to plagiarize myself). However, the data unequivocally show that children contribute substantially to the economy of their families. The data further show that girls work hard; in Africa, that is an oft-repeated observation, but the material in the book demonstrates how hard and from what a young age girls work. Boys often work in different ways for different ends, and these are documented in the ethnography.

The diary allowed for free-form recollection of that which had caught my attention during the day. On reading it now, I notice how paying attention to the ordinary brings out the extraordinary; how knowing and not knowing rises and falls; how time, space, and contingency shape events; and how contradictions can persist in people's accounts of their lives.

#### Knowing and Not Knowing

With not being able not to want to know.
—SAMUEL BECKETT, *Ill Seen Ill Said* (1982)

Dispossession has profound effects over time, especially on children who are "insufficiently self-announcing." There is, too often, an obdurate refusal to know the consequences. Given the need to know, the task is how to come to know clearly. Returning to the shadow of anthropological work, it



is worth considering the right to know. One view, naturally Pessoa's, is that "all outside interest in us is a flagrant disrespect," or, as Marilyn Strathern puts it, fieldwork can be equated with "intrusive extraction."<sup>37</sup> Yet, following drastic dispossession, we cannot just not know. For the aggression of colonialism and of large schemes like the building of Kariba Dam that fail to ensure social equity for those whose livelihoods are disrupted, there should be an accounting that includes the interests of children born of those who have been indelibly harmed by both the loss and the denial of a just share of the resources accrued from the stolen territory. A child in Chitenge, Canaan, quoted an apt proverb, "Long ago can't be far away."

In his autobiography, Cavell raises the following issues. To take the child seriously as a category of thought requires an examination of the child's shared commonality, particularity, and inexpressiveness. The call is to bring childhood to philosophical pertinence and political obligation, and to do so requires a clarification of what our interest in childhood is and what conditions make it possible.<sup>38</sup> The precariousness of the child, he says, relates to "the organization of the body politic," which includes who produces food and how food is distributed and paid for.<sup>39</sup> It is the isolation and deprivation of the body politic in Omay relative to the theft of their resources and the use to which subsequent earnings have been put that needs telling and action. For Joseph E. Stiglitz, inequality among children is "a special moral disgrace."

There is a story about Nyaminyami, a creature of the Zambezi River, who was separated from his wife by the dam wall, and it has long been predicted that he will force the wall to collapse. The irony is that Lake Kariba is in danger of breaking its walls, partly because of neglect in making repairs. The devastation and loss of life downstream would be terrible. Efforts are being made to prevent the catastrophe. Should the wall be rebuilt utilizing international funds, there will be a chance to make amends. Blowing in the wind?

#### The End of Childhood

We didn't know the precariousness of our young powers.

—PATTI SMITH, Banga (2012)

The diary gives an account across a year of children's lives unfolding toward their arrival at the end of childhood. This end is often elected by a child as a consequence of scant opportunities and in response to the



material determination of everyday experience and obligation. It comes early for many of the young, especially for girls, in part because by the age of fifteen they usually carry a full load of domestic work and a fair load of agricultural labor and may as well take adulthood on board. Incidents that mark the end of childhood include elopement, marriage, abortion, employment (for some boys), and death.

In studying the young who live on the margins of society in difficult terrain, we can come to understand more clearly the fragility of institutions, the flexibility of sociocultural frames, the complexity of the micromechanics of political and economic existence, the close weave of the threads that tie global sites to microsites in terms of decision-making, the tenacity of some beliefs, and the velocity of change. In order to describe the situation of children accurately, the focus should be on the mobile trajectories of their experiences, especially under conditions of poverty and neglect.

While I was puzzling over the writing of this introduction, I dreamed that I was standing with my eldest and youngest daughters at a tall gate through which we wanted to pass. It was a magic gate. It was unyielding yet seemed to be flimsy, and I felt around its edges for an opening. It gave me a teaspoon and said, "Find the meaning with the teaspoon." The dream informed me, I thought, that by attending to the daily spooning out of commonplaces I would discover magical meanings in the diary as well as the magic of having been in the Zambezi Valley then. T. S. Eliot must have triggered the dream: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons."

P.S. DESPITE MY HAVING been assured that the snakes who lived with me for three months had been sent by the ancestors to check me out and were not poisonous, it turned out that they were deadly back-fanged boomslang. I later learned that their skin is used in a Harry Potter recipe for making Polyjuice Potion, which allows a human drinker to temporarily assume the form of another person.<sup>42</sup> Myths and magic continue.

#### **NOTES**

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