

# LYING AND THIEVING

The fraudulent scholarship of

Ronald Suresh Roberts in

*Fit to Govern:*

*The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki*

with reference to chapters 8 and 9 on AIDS:

‘A clash of fundamentalisms 1: medical politics’ and

‘A clash of fundamentalisms 2: racial politics’

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Anthony Brink

**Open books**

*Lying and Thieving: The fraudulent scholarship of Ronald Suresh Roberts in 'Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki' with reference to chapters 8 and 9 on AIDS: 'A clash of fundamentalisms 1: medical politics' and 'A clash of fundamentalisms 2: racial politics' by Anthony Brink was published by **Open books** in Cape Town on 10 November 2007.*

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It was reprinted after re-formatting on 10 November 2008, the first anniversary of its release, with a new Endnote comprising five updates.

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## **The author**

Anthony Brink is an advocate of the High Court of South Africa, and the convener and chairman of the Treatment Information Group ([www.tig.org.za](http://www.tig.org.za)). He is also the author of *Debating AZT: Mbeki and the AIDS drug controversy* (Open books, 2001) and *The trouble with nevirapine* (2008). *RUDE LETTERS*, *Poisoning our Children: AZT in pregnancy*, and *Introducing AZT: 'A world of antiretroviral experience'* are in press. He is an honorary co-author of a scientific monograph by Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos et al., *Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and its Prevention with AZT and Nevirapine: A Critical Analysis of the Evidence* (Perth, 2001). His major work in progress, *Just say yes, Mr President: Mbeki and AIDS*, is a comprehensive history of the AIDS treatment and causation controversies in South Africa, and a multi-disciplinary interrogation and deconstruction of their medical and ideological foundations. His work has been translated into Spanish, French, Russian, Italian, German, and Dutch.

## Introduction to the expanded edition

On 7 November 2007, two days after *Lying and Thieving* was completed, Mark Gevisser's biography *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* was released, reporting how in June, the month in which *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki* came out, Mbeki himself moved to repudiate Roberts's basic opening lie that 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been an AIDS dissident.' A fortnight later an independent audit confirmed Roberts's plagiarism of my work and turned up more evidence of it – and the following month *Fit to Govern's* editor Dr James Sanders agreed. In the weeks thereafter, a number of documents were made available to me affording further evidence of Roberts's fraud in the writing of his book, in relation to his lying defamation of me, and to the secret instructions he was taking from his political patron Dr Essop Pahad concerning the content of the book, all the while claiming that he'd written it with a free hand. Rather than revising the text to incorporate this new material, I decided to cover it in an addendum in five parts. This includes a review of Roberts's responses to the charges in this book in several newspaper articles and on his *Mail&Guardian* ThoughtLeader internet blog. Some nips, tucks and minor corrections aside, the original text otherwise stands as it was published on 10 November 2007.

AB

15 January 2008

## A note on the second impression of the expanded edition

A new Endnote records further developments, and updates this book to 10 November 2008, one year after the book's original release. Most importantly, it reports that Mbeki wrote to Gevisser shortly after the publication of his biography specifically to confirm that he'd correctly described him as an AIDS dissident – and it tells how, despite this, Roberts has shamelessly persisted in selling his lying case in the media that he isn't. It notes the Press Ombudsman's Panel's finding that the *Weekender* was right to report that Roberts had plagiarized my work. And it mentions Noam Chomsky's supportive interest in the affair.

AB

10 November 2008

To the memory of my friend Sam Mhlongo

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‘[President Thabo Mbeki’s] continuing personal musings [have provided] a year-long Christmas present to [the government’s] detractors, both here and abroad. Much of this has been, frankly, Mbeki’s fault.

But as the dust settles now and his government continues its multibillion rand assault on Aids, we must not forget that this ordeal was not only – or even principally – a story of presidential error. Aids – an opportunistic disease – has attracted its fair share of opportunistic commentators.’

**Ronald Suresh Roberts: ‘Beware those intent on undermining Mbeki’, letter in the *Sunday Independent*, 8 October 2000<sup>1</sup>**

‘I found the plaintiff to be evasive, argumentative and an opportunistic witness ... He was unconvincing, and his evidence was shown to be contradictory.’

**Weinkove AJ, in *Ronald Suresh Roberts v Johncom Media Investments Limited*, Cape High Court, 8 January 2007**

‘... what I want to address tonight is ... the public protocols that properly bind healthy democratic discourse in a liberal democracy ... Solid facts. Coherent logic. Accurate quotation. ... Respect the intelligence of the public: therefore do not seek to censor or obstruct or re-write the opposing view. Be happy for both views to be aired, so that the public can decide. Try to stay awake during the events that you intend to report upon. Do not plagiarise the work of others. These seem to me to be not only some good rules for journalism or intellectualism or scholarship, but also of common sense in any collective endeavor [*sic*]. ...

In a properly functioning literary culture, plagiarism is the cardinal sin, for obvious reasons. It is a theft from another writer and it is a fraud upon readers. It defeats the orderly circulation of ideas. It spells a lack of integrity. ...

I also remind you that in the context of the HIV/AIDS debate, President Mbeki asked: What do you do when senior academics and journalists refuse to read? This points to a systematic and deliberate degradation of public discourse.

... the discourse of Mbeki has been corrupted by ... a lazy, functionally illiterate dull drone of unexamined truisms.

... The regurgitation of hearsay becomes an acceptable substitute for the investigation of facts.

... John Matshikiza ... has published almost compulsively harsh and personalised attacks on me in the *Mail & Guardian*. He has a right to attack me. I was given adequate opportunities to reply.'

**Ronald Suresh Roberts: 'Notes on a Theme: Functional Illiteracy in the Media: Responses to *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki*', public address at Wits Business School, Donald Gordon Auditorium, 6 August 2007<sup>2</sup>**

## Preface

In his book *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki* (Johannesburg: STE, 2007) Ronald Suresh Roberts determinedly sinks an ice-pick in my head, over and over again. He does this by making a number of colourful and entertaining claims about me to portray me as ludicrous, hysterical, stupid, dishonest, hypocritical, cowardly, delusional, manipulative, unscrupulous, exploitative, publicity-seeking, irrelevant, and all told, a certifiable nutcase who should be put away. Much more importantly, he seeks to discredit my work over the past decade as the distracting, empty propaganda of a deranged fanatic.

The important thing with murder, of course, is to do it properly. It's obviously a huge mistake to botch the job and allow your target to recuperate from his grievous wounds and come back talking. He'll be annoyed as hell, and he'll be highly motivated to testify.

And if, as in 1941, you treacherously attack your ally in the dead of night with ruthless force, and commit terrible atrocities of all kinds on his own territory, which territory he knows better than anyone, you must expect a firm response in consequence, and possibly even complete obliteration.

As a researcher and writer I obviously have every personal and professional interest in cleaning Roberts's shit from my shoe; but a focussed examination of his writing where it hits me, preliminary to a critical analysis of his scholarship on Mbeki's thinking about AIDS, will serve a broader purpose: it will provide an illustrative case study as a basis for assessing Roberts's method, professionalism and good faith, and therefore his reliability generally as a contemporary historian and the author of a work headed for the annals of scholarship on Mbeki and his time.

This book is accordingly structured as follows: Commencing with some relevant personal history, it proceeds to inspect and test Roberts's claims about me; it then critically examines and shows up his repeated historical falsifications and fabrications, having regard to the historical record, in which he fraudulently misrepresents Mbeki's standpoint on AIDS and antiretroviral (ARV) drugs; and in the course of exposing all Roberts's lying as aforesaid it points out all his thieving from me, and identifies and reclaims what he's stolen.

Finally: I've ruminated over Roberts's motives at length, and in my dismay over his personal duplicity, his political treachery, his theft of my work, his assault on my reputation, and his fraud in misrepresenting Mbeki's opinions of the cause and treatment of AIDS for what this might mean for future discourse and policy, I've taken the counsel of my friends. Our various and several speculations are folded into an allegory

under the title 'Motive', in which I dismantle the complex of motives that appear to me to have inspired Roberts to write the junk he did. The chapter ends with a hard look at two letters in the media written by Roberts's political patron, Minister in the Presidency Dr Essop Pahad.

In the appendices I critique an article Roberts wrote plugging his book in the *Mail&Guardian* on 24 August, the whole of which is based on an idea of mine he's stolen, and includes another one; it looks at an article he wrote in the *Star* on the 28<sup>th</sup> regurgitating some of what he's thieved; it examines his false claims made in a talk given on 6 August at Wits Business School; it deals with more lies told after it during an interview recorded on video by an SABC reporter; and it deals with a talk a three weeks later on the 30<sup>th</sup> at the University of the Witwatersrand in which he tells lots more lies, taking a few more pot-shots at me on the way.

I suggest you pause here to view the short video clip of the television interview (linked at this book's website), because it will give you a very good sense of the man behind the writing under discussion, and will make it come to life. The content of the interview we'll scrutinize at the end.

If you're less interested in Roberts's lying than in his thieving, you'll find the plagiarism charges made throughout this book concentrated in the second half.

I regret that this critique is so long, but when a rogue's crimes are manifold and their list is long, they take numerous pages to particularize and indict.

Also, the trouble with chopping a mamba with a panga after he's bitten you is that he's clever, and he has this way of slithering quickly and smoothly across the floor, so that as soon as you think you've got him you find him coming from a diametrically different angle, because of his ability to slither quickly and smoothly across the floor and cleverly take up the best angle to suit the moment. It's because these snakes are like this that it takes some time to sort them out.

In his book, besides attacking me and discounting my work in an abjectly dishonest manner, Roberts has perpetrated a literary fraud of Goldhagen and Dershowitz scale; and it's in view of the possibility that his AIDS chapters may in future be cited in accordance with their pretensions as an exposition of Mbeki's views on AIDS and ARVs, and their potential policy implications, that I consider it imperative that they be exposed.

Following the publication of William Mervin Gumede's abysmal *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005), Roberts has pursued him relentlessly (e.g. at the Cape Town Book Fair in June 2006; in his book published in June 2007; during an SABC

radio interview on 4 August; and at the Wits Business School two days later) as a ‘plagiarist’ who ‘had stolen whole phrases, paragraphs, facts and concepts from a whites-only panel of journalists’.

I agree; no doubt about it<sup>3</sup>. In this book I’ll enumerate Roberts’s own multiple crimes on all counts (for ‘whites-only panel of journalists’, substitute ‘white lawyer writing’), right down to stealing my work with his copy and paste buttons.

Distinguishing this from other recent plagiarism cases in South Africa, established or alleged, is that Roberts has plagiarized mostly from unpublished work in progress. This complicates things a bit, because my unpublished work isn’t yet out for ready comparison. So we’ll do it like this. For the most part, but with plenty of exceptions, I’ll simply be listing and pointing out each and every instance of Roberts’s plagiarism of my work, my ideas, my prose, or my research. If Roberts raises any disputes, I’ll produce relevant excerpts of my unpublished work for the purpose of comparison and resolution, either in the High Court or in any other suitable forum.

I would appeal to anyone so minded not to jump the gun and put about any stale manuscript of the book that they might have. I’ve done an enormous amount of work on it, and the massively revised, cut and amplified version bears little resemblance to the coarse draft that got out a few years ago. And I still have much to do, with a huge folder of materials to work in before it will be ready.

But in any event I doubt the proof will be necessary. As a trial lawyer with twenty years in the courts behind me, and seasoned in preparing, presenting and deciding cases, often on the finest points, I’m meticulously careful with fact. This is not because I’m an infallible saint; it’s because I find accuracy expedient. All litigation lawyers have seen cases disappear through the slenderest cracks, and we learn to be careful the hard way. I do not level charges I cannot clearly support and there’s not one in this book. And let me tell you this. My late father, two of whose best friends were judges, once reported to me that I had a particular reputation at the Bar for quickly abandoning hopeless and doubtful towns in argument and for digging in and fighting around only those I could confidently hold. It’s true; that’s how I am, and I don’t mouth nonsense, not for money, nor for any other purpose. Roberts himself has acknowledged this rigorous habit of mind, remarking in Pretoria in early 2006, ‘When Brink writes, you can’t answer.’

Consequently Roberts will have no honest defence on any count in the detailed charges that I make against him. So presaged by this passage from a letter Mbeki wrote to him (including Roberts’s paraphrase), which

Roberts quotes in the book's 'Acknowledgements' to daunt possible critics,

'As you know, the representatives of the colonial "mother" will be waiting to do everything possible to discredit the book.' He held out the hope that 'such notoriety as it may gain because of the most vituperative assessments ... would encourage some people to find out for themselves why your book is an object of what will surely be the most negative criticism.'

Roberts may think of quoting Mbeki against me, to avoid facing the unanswerable, capital case I make (he rather presciently foresaw his 'head ... may roll'; and if you've no stomach for a drawn-out hanging, drawing and quartering, it would be better if you discontinued reading).

Although this critique amounts to 'the most negative criticism' of the book imaginable, and is certain to give it 'notoriety' like never before, it is not 'to discredit the book' in defence of the colonial/liberal intellectual territory that Roberts attacks, because there I'm in the same campaign, albeit on a different front, as my major work in progress will show and its preface online<sup>4</sup> already does. I find that what makes the study of AIDS so fruitful is that like a diamond knife it splits open and lays bare the deeply piled racist thinking of South African white liberals about Africans, at the level where it matters most as fellow South Africans: our common humanity in the way we connect with each other, or a different, lesser humanity for Africans on their version. AIDS brightly bears out Frantz Fanon's observation in *The Wretched of the Earth* that 'the Western bourgeoisie [is] fundamentally racist' (I'll show that in his thinking on AIDS, Roberts is with the white liberals, both South African and American).

Any rejoinder from Roberts that I'm just another barking neo-con white critic won't stick for the personal and political reasons coming up in the 'Background' section below; but also because, although a lot of Roberts's book is appallingly badly analyzed and written, there are many major elements of it with which I agree – among them the reactionary role and conduct of the bourgeois press in South Africa (in fact I agree even more than he does, so to speak; about which more below).

Except for getting it wrong on AIDS, as many Western-educated Africans who believe slavishly in Western knowledge generated by capitalist Western medical science do, attorney Christine Qunta wrote a good account of the problem<sup>5</sup> in the *Daily News* on 15 August. (She acts for me as well as for Roberts in different matters: in what American lawyers call a SLAPP case (Strategic Litigation to Prevent Public Participation), illegal in many states, the Treatment Action Campaign is currently trying to

shut me down and shut me up<sup>6</sup> in the Cape High Court. As Roberts tried to do in his book.)

My critique goes to the quality of Roberts's scholarship in his AIDS chapters. I will not address the rest of his book, save to say that in quoting Mbeki and other great revolutionary intellectuals speaking to the other topics he canvasses, Roberts has many very important things to say. And I hope that this strike doesn't result in too much collateral damage, because Roberts and I agree about much, and as we lawyers say, the good part of the book is severable from the bad.

'President Mbeki gave me the cooperation without which this book would have carried little intellectual authority,' Roberts writes, and we see his game pronto; he's straining after Mbeki's 'intellectual authority' in the form of his imprimatur. But before you're deceived into thinking *Fit to Govern* is an authorized work, which it isn't, Roberts himself disabuses you of this misapprehension that he's just created, by watering it right down: 'In the end, however, these are my thoughts, informed by the President's suggestions and reactions'; 'The views in this book are mine alone'; and 'The views expressed in this book remain solely that [sic] of the author.' That, we'll see, they certainly are.

The 'President's suggestions and reactions' that 'informed' Roberts's 'thoughts' and 'views' were conveyed in the just-mentioned letter to him, which I was fortunate to read in the second week of February 2006 in the circumstances recited below. In his letter Mbeki commented on an early draft of Roberts's book manuscript, and talked about a variety of topics relevant to the book project – including AIDS, the subject of my own specific political interest.

Mbeki did not vet the final book manuscript. As Roberts records, Mbeki provided 'his considered and thought-provoking comments as my early notes took shape for this book', not the finished product. I've read both those 'early notes' on AIDS (or a similar antique) as well as Mbeki's comments on them, and I record that nothing in the latter supports Roberts on any matter of contention raised in this book.

Roberts repeatedly exclaimed to me with justifiable delight that Mbeki's letter had given him a conceptual backbone for his writing, and I agreed; indeed it had. I also found the letter a thrilling read. Unfortunately for Roberts, however, Mbeki's statements about AIDS, later quoted in the book, were both few and elliptical. If you were listening, they were highly suggestive, but as evinced by his book, Roberts was deaf to them.

There's a pointer to why Mbeki wrote in the guarded way he did in *ANC Today* on 28 January 2005:

In the course of the HIV and AIDS debate, a demand was made that President Mbeki should subtract himself from the debate, partly on the grounds that he was making comments about issues of medical science on which he was not scientifically qualified to comment. He responded positively to this demand a few years ago. Since then, he has not commented on this subject, except to explain and support the government's comprehensive programme of action against HIV and AIDS.

After the letter, that was it. Roberts was on his own, writing his own 'thoughts' and 'views' of what Mbeki thinks about AIDS. There was no interview during which Mbeki told Roberts anything more.

This occasioned him some difficulty. Although he presumed to write a book that 'casts fresh light on Mbeki's logic', as if 'Mbeki's logic' had hitherto been inscrutable to logical people, or formerly misunderstood because Mbeki can't speak clearly and needs a splendidly educated foreigner to help him get his message across, in fact Mbeki is an electrifying communicator, capable of the most withering, cutting directness or remote but super-charged circumlocution, as needs be. Roberts unconsciously registered his own perplexity over this sometimes:

Even when he writes in English, Mbeki's utterances get caught up within a clash of cultural, historical, and political preconceptions between speaker and audience that all too often result in mistranslation. I want to undo some of that confusion.

It's to be regretted that as a relative newcomer to our shores, barely acquainted with the 'cultural' and 'historical' landscape over which Mbeki has journeyed, in his own 'mistranslation' of 'Mbeki's utterances' on AIDS Roberts has caused immeasurably more 'confusion' than he wished to 'undo' for the President in the minds of the 'audience' he has in mind. The 'audience' to which Roberts is referring is obviously not African, for there can be no clash of 'cultural, historical, and political preconceptions' between Mbeki and such an African 'audience', and therefore no possible 'confusion' for Roberts from overseas to help clear up with the benefit of his Harvard and Oxford erudition. By 'audience' he doesn't seem to be referring to the South African white English liberal establishment either, because in his book he's knocking it on the head, not wooing it; nor is there anything in his book to suggest that Roberts is seeking to explain Mbeki to Afrikaners, to coloureds or to Indians. The 'audience' to which Roberts is referring is the American East Coast liberal establishment, his intellectual kith and kin. And they're all big into AIDS. It's for American liberals Roberts writes, and it's to

American liberals he wants to sell his book. To do this, however, one thing's certain: he cannot present Mbeki as having rejected the progressive American liberal solution to the health problems of the African poor in South Africa, namely with American ARV drugs and lessons in Judeo-Christian chastity and monogamy. He needs to sell Mbeki in terms acceptable to the New York literati of the sort he quotes repeatedly and whom he openly courts in his book.

As far as I'm aware, nearly every single thing Mbeki writes is in English, and I must reassure Roberts that even though I'm a white English-speaking person, I experience no comprehension difficulties 'even when he writes in English'. I've never thought to ask any of my African friends about this, but I don't think they have any trouble understanding Mbeki 'even when he writes in English', because 'even when he writes in English' Mbeki's English has the richness, depth and art of his mother tongue Xhosa (I majored in and speak similar Zulu). As we'll see from the analysis to follow, however, I think Roberts has provided here a good account of the reasons for his own serious misunderstanding.

Although it's alleged on the back cover of the book that Roberts 'had unprecedented access to the President himself', for which reason 'Roberts is uniquely placed to write with authority about the President' and 'the intellectual traditions that inform the President's actions', on AIDS none of this is true. Allister Sparks, for instance, quizzed Mbeki on AIDS for *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2003):

Mbeki himself confirmed that the first person to draw his attention to [dissident criticism of AIDS causation and treatment orthodoxy] was a lawyer and part-time jazz musician named Anthony Brink, then practising in the provincial city of Pietermaritzburg. ... 'That was the first time that I became aware of this alternative viewpoint,' Mbeki told me.

And Mbeki biographer Mark Gevisser records in *The Dream Deferred* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2007), excerpted in the *Sunday Times* on 4 November, that in

August 2000 ... in a downstairs reception room of Mahlamba Ndlopfu, his official residence in Pretoria ... we talked, for over two hours, about Aids. I was impressed at his grasp of detail: his recall of information is almost as astonishing as his stamina.

Not Roberts. On AIDS Roberts did not have 'unprecedented access to the President himself', and the claim that 'Roberts is uniquely placed to

write with authority about the President' and 'the intellectual traditions that inform the President's actions' on AIDS, are as true as if you buy and smoke these cigarettes women will think you irresistibly virile. Consequently the book that Roberts later produced was his 'alone', and it was unfair and insupportable to charge 'Stalinis[t] ... airbrush[ing]', as Nickie Natrass screeched smiling cutely in the *Mail&Guardian* on 20 July<sup>7</sup>, as if Mbeki was complicit in Roberts's falsification of the history of his intellectual and political engagement with AIDS, and in Roberts's defamation of me and of others.

Going by what many commentators reckon<sup>8</sup>, Mbeki's views on AIDS have been the single most puzzling feature of his Presidency. That the newspaper-reading public generally also thinks so is suggested by the fact that it was from Roberts's first AIDS chapter that the *Sunday Independent* published an excerpt on 17 June, the first excerpt published in any of the papers. But if you bought Roberts's book on the strength of his back cover puff that he 'casts fresh light on Mbeki's logic' and 'elaborates on [Mbeki's] central ideas' in regard to the one of the most 'difficult issues (... HIV/AIDS ...) that have faced President Thabo Mbeki', expecting some elucidation on this score, you'd be entitled to demand your money back, because these representations are a crooked car salesman's, a false inducement to buy. As I'll detail in this book, they are quite false.

Roberts's writing on AIDS, on the other hand, 'casts fresh light on' Roberts's own 'logic' and on the way he plagiarises and generally abuses his sources, and it revealingly 'elaborates on' his own imported American ideas in regard to one of the 'difficult issues (... HIV/AIDS ...) that have faced' him since his arrival in South Africa in 1994 to seek his fortune. On the subject of AIDS, while purporting to portray Mbeki's thinking in his book, Roberts has produced a photographic self-portrait of his own.

If Roberts's AIDS chapters were a minor part of the book, and unlikely to have any bearing on public opinion and AIDS policy formulation, I wouldn't have bothered with this project, and would just have drawn a short note pointing out and proving where Roberts lied about me and ripped off my work, and called it quits. But Roberts claims to elucidate Mbeki's thinking on AIDS, and what Mbeki thinks about the American AIDS construct is tremendously significant, because African people most vulnerable to the lies of the Western medical industrial complex about AIDS and ARVs – being literally on the deadly receiving end – respect him and listen to him, listen to his every nuance. So I've gathered from innumerable conversations.

By cherry-picking from Mbeki's many statements about AIDS – citing them out of time sequence, and skating over those disconfirming his

thesis (that Mbeki still subscribes to the same American myths about AIDS as he does) – Roberts has endeavoured to paint Mbeki’s independent thinking on AIDS in the image of his own unexamined convictions about how dangerous lovemaking is nowadays, particularly if you’re African, and how sensible it is to swallow a handful of exceptionally toxic ARV drugs every single day without fail until you die on them because a white doctor tells you to (being clever because he’s white).

It is not my purpose here to get into an argument with Roberts about whether Mbeki is still a believer or not. Consequently I will not in this book be systematically marshalling and stacking all the evidence that Mbeki is an AIDS apostate, and has been for years, as his hateful, reactionary white liberal critics and other malicious enemies such as the two-man coloured and white junta running the Treatment Action Campaign love to do, carrying on like religious inquisitors. It is not for me to say what Mbeki privately thinks about AIDS, nor is it necessary, because what he thinks he long ago made clear, and anyone still in doubt has Google.

I trust and hope that this book will serve as a basis for ongoing critical discussion, both of Roberts’s professional incompetence and amazing dishonesty as a writer, and, much more importantly from a public interest perspective, of the issues that Mbeki has raised – and Roberts obfuscated – regarding the American sexual infection theory of AIDS and its treatment with ARVs. Lives literally depend on it.

I regret very much any embarrassment that my exposé of this fiasco might cause President Mbeki, because my personal respect for him is boundless, and my political loyalty complete. Considering that he signed copies of the book at its launch at the Presidential Guesthouse, I’ve carefully contemplated doing nothing about it – being all in favour of a hundred flowers too – but I’ve concluded that I cannot proceed with the work I do while Roberts’s allegations stand unanswered. And I don’t want anyone thinking I’ve plagiarized Roberts’s ideas when my work comes out either. It’s the other way round completely. He’s given me nothing. If Minister in the Presidency Dr Essop Pahad is put out by my revelations about Roberts’s assorted frauds, I’m less concerned. As I understand it, the book was basically his project, and I’m aggrieved that he did nothing to deter Roberts from knifing me as he did, often on the basis of manifest lies. Whatever Roberts’s contract with ABSA bank might have said about his independence to write what he liked (and did you know that in terms of the contract, in a schlenker on the Receiver of Revenue, Roberts was not a grantee but actually a salaried bank employee?), Dr Pahad had the personal pull to check the publication of defamatory lies about me, damaging further what little reputation I have

left in this country thanks to persistent attacks by TAC-supporting, ARV-promoting, AIDS in Africa propagandizing, pharmaceutical industry serving white and Indian newspaper journalists, and making it even harder for me to get heard on the shocking ARV toxicity research literature<sup>2</sup> that I work to ventilate – at a critical time when, under threat by the TAC to litigate to force the issue, the Health Department has recently announced, on 10 September, that ‘dual therapy’ for pregnant women and their newborn babies, practically nearly all African, is due for ‘imminent approval’; and the AIDS Law Project has just sent, on 1 October, on precisely the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of thalidomide, a demand from the TAC addressed to Dr Tshabalala-Msimang putting her on terms for the provision of AZT in pregnancy, the sort of demand that usually precedes TAC litigation. This is to say that in addition to the nevirapine it’s been forced by the courts to provide, the government is close to approving the supply and administration of AZT and similar nucleoside analogue drugs to pregnant African women and their babies in public hospitals, thereby causing them brain damage and every other kind of terrible harm<sup>10</sup>, which the TAC’s coloured and white leaders couldn’t care less about, because the children maimed and sometimes killed are only African, and when your proclaimed high purpose is noble and you’re pious and famous, the practical harm you do doesn’t matter in the least, particularly when journalists and newspaper readers support you and adore you as human rights crusaders.

Roberts flew to Pretoria from time to time to give Dr Pahad drafts of his book to read, and given the importance of the book, and Dr Pahad’s unusual role in securing magnificent funding for it, I find it difficult to credit that he lost interest in it and didn’t read the final or close to final draft. This seems particularly unlikely considering that he quoted from it ‘extensively’ in Parliament on 12 June<sup>11</sup>, a few days before its release. I speculate over Dr Pahad’s intentions at the end. I think he owes me an apology.

You’ll understand if this analysis is not entirely dispassionate. I’m only human, and when you’re stabbed deep in the back you can still feel the hole gashed through everything long after the bleeding has stopped.

AB

Cape Town

5 November 2007

## Background

Unless

- you'd read in the Democratic Alliance's 'SOUTH AFRICA'S TOP TWELVE AIDS DISSIDENTS' press release in October 2005 that Roberts (erroneously included) 'came to [my] defence' (I was rated No. 1 on the list) in making a 'threatening and aggressive phone call' to 'Health-e general manager Kerry Cullinan', in which he said 'he had been struck by the personalized "*medieval*" level of attacks in the Aids debate and intended including Cullinan in a chapter on "*vendetta journalism*" [in 'the authorized biography of **President Mbeki** ... he stated he was writing'] as she appeared to have a vendetta against **Anthony Brink**';
- you'd seen a report in the *Sunday Times* on 3 December 2006 that 'Anthony Brink, the outspoken Aids dissident, was also there to support Roberts' during his defamation case against that newspaper (emphasized in a dedicated paragraph for its scandalous news value); and
- you'd noted *Mail&Guardian* editor Ferial Haffajee's remark on 24 March 2007 in the *M&G* online, justifying her occasional publication of Roberts's writing, 'He also keeps strange friends such as the AIDS denialist Anthony Brink';

you'd never have imagined, reading his book, that Roberts and I been good friends for the best part of two years.

You might have appreciated, though, that we were at least well known to each other, because it appears from the footnotes of his book that he had my work 'Just say yes, Mr President (unpublished manuscript)' to quote from; I'd sent him at least one article to read; I'd told him about a near-fatal scrape I'd had when I was a child; and I'd shared my views in various subjects.

But you wouldn't have understood that Roberts got any 'support, friendship or assistance at various stages of this project' from me – certainly none worth mentioning – because you don't find me in his 'Acknowledgements' among the list of people he thanks for 'support, friendship or assistance at various stages of this project'.

This is quite understandable: Roberts could hardly be expected to acknowledge my 'support, friendship or assistance' during the writing of his book in one section of it, which is to say mention that I had been a friend of his who'd supported and assisted him during most of the writ-

ing of his book, and then go on in another part to announce that his friend who'd supported and assisted him in his work was actually an insane person, just as all the newspapers said. This would look funny for him. People would naturally wonder why he kept company with insane persons, and whether this didn't possibly mean he was a bit wonky too.

You might have shivered at the augury of what was to come in the book seeing Roberts thanking 'Armen Merjian, of Housing Works in Manhattan, the leading public interest AIDS law litigator in the United States', on discovering that this bloke is the loose equivalent of Johannesburg AIDS Law Project director and TAC executive member Mark Heywood; that he's celebrated accordingly as the court crusading hero of ACT-UP New York on its website; and that ACT-UP is the TAC's similarly pink, hysterical, ARV-pushing, death-embracing first cousin overseas.

It's notorious in South Africa that, to quote his friend Tiego Moseneke denying this (if he still is his friend, which is to say, if he's still giving him lots of money), 'Roberts endears himself to people, uses them for as long as it serve his purpose and then invariably ends the relationship with an ugly spat.' And with 'bitterness and regret for the other party ... the way of most relationships involving Roberts', added Chris Barron in the *Sunday Times* in his portrait, 'The Unlikeable Mr Roberts', which Roberts made a hundred times more famous when he went and sued over it – but with which rather repulsive assessment the judge heartily agreed after an airing of all the evidence on the matter, namely about what sort of fellow he is.

The list of people Roberts has ingratiated himself with and then discharged in this manner is long, and it's growing: Ken and Kate Owen, Kader and Louise Asmal, and Nadine Gordimer, among the celebs. And I'm not the most recent case either (I'm a kind of inverse celeb), but currently third from the end of the cast-off queue: he's since broken what he calls his 'old friendship' with his book editor James Sanders<sup>12</sup>, co-founder of *Molotov* magazine, and most recently with his publisher Reedwaan Vally, owner of STE Publishers, to whom he now refers contemptuously as 'the coolie'.

I raise this personal aspect because if my purpose was merely to slag Roberts off out of personal grievance, and make no mistake I'm pissed, there's a whole embarrassing heap more I could divulge, but which I shan't – not unless he invites me to. In art and in politics what counts is the work, so it's on this we must keep our eye, save where Roberts's personal conduct may bear on an evaluation of his integrity as a writer. And here I record that by breaching the ordinary confidence between

friends in the most outrageous and dishonest way, Roberts has obviously waived his entitlement claim to this privilege from me.

I met Roberts in late March 2005 in Exclusive Books in Kloof Street, Cape Town. His intense concentration as he was working on his notebook computer chimed with me as a writer myself, and moved me to enquire, 'Excuse me, may I ask what you're writing?' Barely looking up, he replied, 'A book.' 'What about?' I persisted. 'Mbeki', he said coolly. 'Really?' I responded, 'Me too.' At which point Roberts fixed me with a steady look and said, 'You're the AIDS guy.'

I'd just been knocked about in the *Mail & Guardian* again, alongside a bad photograph specially picked to support the jaundiced slant, and Roberts had recognized me from it.

When Roberts said who he was, I told him I was glad to meet him at last, because I'd always enjoyed the contrarian bite in his newspaper columns. I said I was working on a comprehensive analytical history of the AIDS controversy in South Africa, entitled '*Just say yes, Mr President: Mbeki and AIDS*<sup>13</sup>, and that I was deconstructing the conventional African AIDS paradigm from a number of different tacks. This got his ears pricked up.

Roberts pertinently remarked on the fortuitousness of our meeting, because he was busy researching and writing the AIDS chapter of his Mbeki book at that very time, and he asked if he could see my working draft. I agreed (though I've since been told I was crazy) reckoning on a quick calculus that if I helped him get the story straight in a single chapter of his book, it would ease the publication of my own massive dedicated tome on the subject later on, anticipating it wasn't going to be any easy sell. We walked directly up to my flat a couple of minutes away, where I burned the manuscript onto a CD, along with another book I was working on, *The trouble with nevirapine*<sup>14</sup>. I also gave him a paperback copy of my first book, *Debating AZT: Mbeki and the AIDS drug controversy*<sup>15</sup>. If I recall correctly, I burned the text of *Debating AZT* onto the CD as well to facilitate electronic searching on a key word or phrase.

Our meeting was the beginning of a tight friendship that lasted until the end of 2006 – or perhaps into January 2007, if you count a friendly sundowner together with our attorney Christine Qunta after his return from a trip home to Trinidad for his parents' wedding anniversary with a stopover in New York, and some days later an aborted Last Supper (of which more later).

The pattern was typically this: every few days, with varying concertina frequency, Roberts would ring me for an evening drink or meal at a nearby restaurant, at which we'd discuss recent political news, our politi-

cal battles, our personal lives, and the general ups and downs in our writing work. Occasionally he'd invite me over for a glass of wine in his flat nearby, and he had dinner with my sons and me in mine. During their thaws I had a few meals with him and his mostly estranged wife, and was given a free ticket as his special guest at the Press Club lunch he addressed when *No Cold Kitchen* came out. If I ran into him in a café in Long Street or Park Road during the day, I'd invariably stop for a cup of coffee and a chat. I took him along to a few jazz performances – music is my thing – and sent him messages a few times from an exceptionally good concert on the go, but having no artistic or musical sensibilities (none whatsoever), he'd usually respond 'Working.' In short, apart from my occasional invitations to get some culture, it was always Roberts who sought my company.

This may be because people in South Africa and Europe familiar with my work, and with whom I have talked seriously, repeatedly refer to me as 'an intellectual'. A sharp lawyer and multiple book author wrote to a prominent journalist after reading the manuscript of *Just say yes, Mr President* – which he thought 'absolutely breathtaking' and an 'aangrypende ontleding van die ideologiese, religieuse, kommersiële en kulturele onderbou van 'n definiërende verskynsel van ons tyd, naamlik VIGS' ('a gripping analysis of the ideological, religious, commercial and cultural underpinnings of a defining phenomenon of our time, namely AIDS') – that '[Brink is] een van die mees interessante denkers wat ek nog ontmoet het.' ('Brink is one of the most interesting thinkers I've ever met.') Which sort of estimation figured in the journalist's newspaper column soon after he'd begun reading my work too. Just as another very famous local writer reckoned about *Just say yes, Mr President*: 'This book is a pit bull ... relentless ... a *tour de force* ... you write so well ... a brilliant and searing polemic' – and concerning *Debating AZT*, 'A work of genius.' Another journalist thought the moral pressure of my writing reminiscent of Rousseau's. The book's Spanish translator in Mexico recently wrote to a mutual friend in Barcelona: '*Dile a Brink que pasó un mes completo llorando durante la traducción de las primeras páginas.*' ('Tell Brink I cried for a whole month while translating the early pages.') A jazz saxophonist said he found my prose like a bebop solo, every line charged with information, stated and implied, plainly and ironically. A PhD philosopher remarked in a review:

*Humor kan soms 'n politieke daad van die ernstigste aard wees. Niks is gevaarliker as om onaantasbare persone en instansies belaglik te maak nie. ... Wees gewaarsku – die boek het 'n vreemde uitwerking op die leser. Eensyds laai dit iets ondraaglik swaar – grotesk eintlik – op jou skouers, iets waarvan jy nie meer met integriteit kan afkom nie. Andersyds moet jy*

*nie verbaas wees as daar na dese 'n glimlag aan jou lippe kom pluk elke keer as jy die woord 'AIDS expert' hoor nie. ... Die kersie op die koek – wat van Debating AZT 'n meesterstuk maak – is die humor waarvan elke reël, asook die spasies tussenin, deurtrek is. ... Brink se styl – die samespel van ligsinige humor en dodelike erns ... Ek kan nie Debating AZT sterk genoeg aanbeveel nie – of jy nou 'n literêre ervaring wil hê, boeiende geskiedenis wil lees, meer te wete wil kom oor die VIGS-polemiek, tot teologiese en filosofiese besinning gebring wil word, of sommer net lekker wil lag.*

(‘Humour can be the deadliest political weapon. There’s nothing more dangerous than making sacrosanct people and subjects ridiculous. But be warned: the book has an odd effect on you. On one hand it loads an unbearable burden on your shoulders – a grotesque one actually – and you can’t evade it with your integrity intact. On the other you shouldn’t be surprised if you smile every time you read the expression “AIDS expert”. ... The cherry on the cake – and it’s what makes *Debating AZT* a masterpiece – is the humour inflecting every line, as well as between the lines. ... Brink’s style [is] an amalgam of flippant humour and deadly seriousness. ... I can’t recommend *Debating AZT* strongly enough – whether for a literary experience, compelling history, information about the AIDS debate, theological and philosophical insight, or just for a good laugh.’) An American attorney who spotted it on the net late one night told me that as he read it he ‘laughed so loud that I woke up one wife, one son, two dogs and a parrot’.

Everyone agrees Roberts is an engaging raconteur: smart, eloquent, loquacious, well read, aggressively opinionated, a malicious gossip (behind his back he calls one friend of his, quoted in his book, an MI5 spy), and generally amusing and stimulating company. If you’re unimpressed by his proclivity, even at his best, for rather tiresome, self-satisfied wordiness, baroque verbal weaving in which he never quite comes, poor grammar, weak logic, exaggeration, tall claims and short evidence, I can attest that he’s a lot better in conversation than in print: a bright, fun guy to be around for an hour or so after a hard day’s intense, solitary writing.

Although a decade younger than me, and rather thin on real life experience, his immaturity (noted to me by others too), and his colossal conceit (ditto), made him an interesting social performer as a sort of enfant terrible. But I’ll say this: I never mistook Roberts’s entertaining cleverness for wisdom or for depth. Never. Nor did I find Roberts any sort of original, independent thinker, someone able to open my eyes to new ways of seeing, in the way some of my friends in politics here, in Europe, and in other places do.

Roberts's egotism meant he knew everything, and his hunches were therefore certainties, but presiding over an unusually vivid world of his own making, his judgement was always off: he was certain he was going to win the *Sunday Times* Alan Paton Prize for *No Cold Kitchen* and he tabled before me the overwhelming, incontestable evidence; he was likewise convinced that an expected change in the directorate of Johnnic portended the settlement of his defamation case against the *Sunday Times* in his favour, which, when that didn't happen he was anyway going to win hands down; and so on – I could cite other instances.

In his own mind Roberts was always right, and an incident of this was a basic lack of curiosity in regard to why many thoughtful people, including very eminent and accomplished scientists (most recently Lynn Margulis<sup>16</sup>) reject the contemporary American wisdom about AIDS. Roberts is a man happily complacent in his thoroughly conventional American liberal episteme.

Whenever something significant or dramatic happened in his day, and it was often, I'd get an animated phone-call and would be the first to hear about it within half an hour or so at some designated rendezvous nearby (his place is just down the road from mine and I'm two minutes on foot from a strip of new restaurants). Email traffic between us was dense. I loaned Roberts cash a few times when he was broke; carefully proofread his Nadine Gordimer biography manuscript *No Cold Kitchen*, marking several typos, punctuation glitches and other problems per page (criticizing some of it vigorously, but generally liking it); got shown every relevant document and was walked through every jot and tittle of the history of his fallout with Gordimer over her concern about the content of his biography of her, and her consequent rug-pulling on his American and English publishing contracts; vetted at his request many articles, letters and other documents that he wrote; lent him books relevant to his writing; gave him ongoing informal but valuable legal advice sought from time to time in his several legal troubles; drew a draft High Court summons and set of particulars of claim for him when he wanted to sue an enemy for defaming him; identified a legitimate fix worth a fortune to reduce his fabulous tax liability; heard every sad detail of his failed marriage; and closely discussed his defamation action against the *Sunday Times* – about which, from my long experience in the courts, I didn't share his optimism. 'You can't sue a corporation?' I once told him with a grin, and he laughed at his own folly, recalling my quip with amusement later on. Most of the time, though, he was convinced he was going to win exemplary damages, pay off his mortgage with them, and get editor Mondli Makhanya sacked, just as he claimed to me he'd got Peter Matlare fired from the SABC.

'You're a good friend,' Roberts remarked to me on two occasions. He introduced me to his mates and I introduced him to some of mine, and we went out on the town together with these guys.

In short we were good friends, as he put it, who basically respected, trusted and liked each other. A telling indication of this is that Roberts called me down to a waterside restaurant at the V&A Waterfront in February 2006 to show me a letter that he'd just received from Mbeki concerning his book project (the letter's no secret anymore; Roberts quotes from it in his book). I read the letter twice: quickly as we sat together, and again alone slowly and carefully while Roberts was away taking a leak, having handed it to me before leaving. I was obviously particularly interested in what Mbeki had to say about AIDS, and I was thrilled by his perspicacity and typically astringent expression. I made some notes on my cellphone and transferred them to my notebook when I got home.

A few weeks after reading my work (and long before Mbeki's letter), Roberts called me over to a café to show me the draft of his AIDS chapter on his notebook. I was pleased to see huge chunks of *Just say yes, Mr President* quoted (duly credited) with approval. But I was less happy to find it looting the best of the quotations I'd carefully collected over the years; appropriating without credit an original thesis of mine about the political exploitation of AIDS as ideology by gay men; and, content aside, even aping my fingerprint prose style in tone and technique (one-liners, ventriloquism, talk-back) so closely that I ventured it might expose him to a charge of plagiarism later on (I used the word). 'That's how I write, not you,' I said, pointing out instances of this in the text. Roberts agreed without demur, and made the cuts I suggested right away, explaining, 'I can't help it; your writing's infectious.'

The draft of the AIDS chapter that Roberts showed me didn't touch sides with any of the substantial and fundamental issues concerning the American orthodox African-promiscuity/sex-virus/chemotherapy model of AIDS that Mbeki had begun raising a few months after becoming President, and it contained several basic mistakes, but bearing in mind that it was a rushed job produced in a few weeks (I'd been at work on my book intermittently for years), and as he was visibly pleased with it, I didn't make any deflating comment, expecting he'd turn out a better version over time.

Although he subsequently showed me some nicely literary but rather pointless new passages he'd written (I recall one inspired by the history of coffee shops as the meeting place of subversive intellectuals), Roberts never again showed me another complete draft.

There was nothing in the draft of Roberts's AIDS chapter of any interest to me for the purposes of my own writing, inasmuch as it contained no new facts and no fresh insights. I record here that early drafts of *Just say yes, Mr President* saved to CD before I met Roberts will settle any dispute about priority on any score that he might raise.

In the three or four month period after I met Roberts, I did a burst of revision work on the book manuscript, and printed and bound a hard-copy for editing, rearrangement and chapter division (at that stage it was just a loose, undivided running text, like a roll of cloth from which I intended to cut a tight book in the future). I made three other bound hardcopies too: one for Roberts to assist him in the writing of his own book, and two for friends to critique.

'Brilliant, fucking brilliant' was Roberts's appraisal, adding that he found the manuscript 'very funny; it made me laugh out loud'. Roberts qualified this plaudit with the remark that 'It needs some panel-beating', although I hardly needed telling this, given its very raw stage and the purpose of the print.

In a subsequent discussion of the manuscript in his flat, Roberts proposed writing the foreword. Let me be exact: he did not firmly undertake this, he floated the possibility at the level of 'Maybe I should write the foreword', although he never raised the offer again. He thought *Just say yes, Mr President* terrific, and we discussed its insights in our conversations from time to time.

Roberts later on esteemed the almost mature manuscript of *The trouble with nevirapine* highly too, rating it 'Rigorous; your best book' (by then I'd given him a bound copy as well); was forever pressing me on when I was going to publish it; and thought it so important that he asked me to print and bind a copy for him to give Judge Dennis Davis (he said they'd been talking at their gym), which I did. He later suggested writing *its* foreword, but I already had someone on it and told him so.

When on one occasion I spoke lightly of *Debating AZT* as 'just an early sonata compared to my symphony for three orchestras' (*Just say yes, Mr President*), Roberts countered that it was 'very good, very important'. Then again, sure it was: University of Toronto Pathology Professor Emeritus Etienne de Harven MD PhD, a renowned pioneering expert in the electron photomicrography of viruses, and current president of the 'Rethinking AIDS' group of AIDS dissident scientists, clinicians and other academics and professionals, had rated it 'excellent ... the best, most comprehensive review on AZT currently available'. A whole bunch of other big-time scientists and academics thought similarly. So did both South Africa and England's top investigative journalists, Martin Welz and the late Paul Foot. Most significantly, from the horse's mouth, none

other than the very inventor of AZT in 1961, Richard Beltz, Professor of Biochemistry at Loma Linda University School of Medicine in California, wrote to tell me that I was

justified in sounding a warning against the long-term therapeutic use of AZT, or its use in pregnant women, because of its demonstrated toxicity and side effects. Unfortunately, the devastating effects of AZT emerged only after the final level of experiments was well underway ... Your effort is a worthy one. ... I hope you succeed in convincing your government not to make AZT available.

Roberts got to know something of my ideological and political perspectives during our friendship: a profound spiritual and moral disaffection with Western industrial culture and values; an intense antipathy for corporate capital in all its reaches; a heart and soul identification with and support for the government's political, social and economic transformation project; and a seething loathing and contempt for the reactionary South African white English-speaking liberal establishment and its newspapers (unlike Roberts who buys and reads the papers everyday, I can scarcely bear to touch them – beyond a glance at one in a café – lest their mediocrity, their meanness and their ideologically stagnant stench somehow rub off on my hands and spoil my next hour or two; I get my news elsewhere).

But I must say I was never able to discuss the finer points of my thinking with Roberts as I can and do with some of my other friends. I never mentioned to him, for instance, that one day when I'm done with the work I do – and believe me, I'm sick to death of bad drugs – I'd like to retire to a remote place for a decade or so to write *The Metaphysics of Capital*. I've never discussed this with him, because it would have been lost on him. He'd have responded with a disdainful sneer, like a child spurning Beethoven, as he tended to do to novel takes on things that threatened to unseat his own fixed, profoundly conformist views. I knew Roberts well enough to recognize that he has neither the depth nor the values for the idea of such a project to ring with him.

Nevertheless, with some basic appreciation of where I'm at, Roberts approvingly inscribed the title page of my copy of *No Cold Kitchen* given to me when it came out around October 2005:

To Brink  
Honorary nigger  
R

As he saw it, we were comrades of a sort on much the same ideological and political page. Here was Roberts announcing my admission to his ordinarily exclusive native club on a special dispensation, being fair-coloured of ancient European ancestry. I can't say I felt honoured, but I was certainly amused.

In October 2005, at the instigation of the 'AIDS drug lobby mouth-piece' Kerry Cullinan (as Roberts aptly describes her in his book, knocking off my description of her in similar words), the *Mail&Guardian* again tagged me as a 'loony'<sup>17</sup> – the first time being in 1999, with David Beresford slating the manuscript of *Debating AZT* as 'the ravings of [a] drivelling conspiracy-theorist, loony, crackpot, fruitcake. ... I'm a professional at spotting weirdos.'

Cullinan had been fixing to smear me in the newspapers as a crooked lawyer by writing a story about AZT manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline's failed attempt several years earlier to assassinate me professionally for the trouble<sup>18</sup> I'd repeatedly<sup>12</sup> caused it. I threatened to sue if she persisted, and on legal advice her employer rightly warned her off. I'll dwell on this saga for a bit, because it's instructive at several levels.

When I told Roberts what Cullinan was up to, he was appalled and told me so. Leaping to my defence, he hotly phoned her up at his own initiative without telling me first; denounced what he called the 'medieval' character of the attacks on dissenters like me by drug industry-promoting journalists like her; and threatened to write about her 'vendetta journalism' in his Mbeki book – so he told me immediately after the call, and so she complained to her ex-husband and to her ARV-pushing friends.

By his use of the word 'medieval', I understood Roberts to be alluding to Christian Europe's violent intolerance of non-conformists in matters of belief (indeed, he uses the word in this sense in his book).

Put off by the lawyers, but still intent on gutting me, the just-mentioned drug industry bunny then connived with another one<sup>20</sup>, *Mail&Guardian* editor Ferial Haffajee, to scratch and slap me for some mocking comments about them in a stale bootleg copy of my unpublished *Just say yes, Mr President*' manuscript concerning the incredibly dim-witted<sup>21</sup>, trendy leftie<sup>22</sup> female journalists like them who dominate AIDS reporting in the commercial liberal media in South Africa, and who pump the AIDS industry myths that impoverished Africans are sexually unrestrained, which is why they're sick, and that they need pharmaceutical corporations' patented ARV drugs as a fix for the sexual disease that they've brought on themselves or they'll die.

Haffajee assigned a cub reporter to write the article, and then when he'd completed writing the piece, worked it over to stick the knife in,

cutting all copy he'd written about me in my favour, and making me look as bad as possible.

On 14 October 2005 Roberts emailed me about the matter:

Dear Mr Brink

As you are aware I have numerous intellectual disagreements with you on HIV/AIDS. I equally have numerous intellectual disagreements with the Mail & Guardian.

I am nevertheless moved to communicate with you after reading the description of you as 'loony' in the Mail & Guardian last Friday. You may not realise that for a considerable portion of that week I myself was intended to be included in that piece alongside you as a supposed 'intimidator' of Kerry Cullinan. When the facts were properly investigated at my insistence it however emerged that Cullinan, by her own admission, had attempted to intimidate me. She did this by calling upon her ex-husband, a former parliamentarian, and inducing him to contact government officials in order to dissuade me from my supposed intention to attack her in a supposed section of my own unpublished manuscript of my book on President Mbeki and his intellectual tradition.

Once the facts emerged, all reference to me was abruptly dropped from the piece, the better to ensure that Cullinan appeared, one-sidedly, as a supposed victim of your/Rath intimidation rather than in her true light as a would-be perpetrator of intimidation. She failed only because of the intellectual and other integrity of the government officials who were on the receiving end of her attempt to mobilise 'political connectivity' to bully me. The relevant officials simply refused to proceed as she wished.

I don't know what you propose to do about the article but I felt moved by the gross unfairness with which you have been treated to place the correspondence at your disposal. This includes a letter from M&G lawyers, Cheadle Haysom & Thompson, which is about as forthcoming as a terse legalistic missive from some furtive wrongdoer of the sort that the M&G habitually investigates. I'm sure you'll relish that irony.

Whatever my disagreements with you, I do not see how this gross unfairness can be allowed to stand.

Kind regards

Ronald Suresh Roberts

Roberts never did ‘place the correspondence at [my] disposal’, for I never saw it. His claim that he’d been ‘moved to communicate’ with me by email after reading the insulting article about me was false: I already knew the information contained in the email from what he’d told me face to face. Also, we were hanging out as buddies all the time, and hardly addressing each with formal titles: we used plain surnames, and first names only in the company of women.

His dissimulation on these scores aside, what’s notable about Roberts’s email is that it records at an early stage his disapproval of the ‘gross unfairness’ of the Treatment Action Campaign’s supporters in the media calling me ‘loony’ and similar, and, in the instant case, blackening me as the criminal sort who resorts to intimidation (the suggestion that I’d intimidated Cullinan arose from my due warning that I’d act to protect my rights).

In his email Roberts also glibly lied about having threatened Cullinan with writing about her in his book – ‘my supposed intention to attack her in a supposed section of my own unpublished manuscript’ – as if she’d fabricated this. It’s a clear early pointer to where truth ranks in Roberts’s hierarchy of values. I see it now with hindsight; I must admit I missed it then.

Concerning his fair complaint about Cullinan’s bid to ‘mobilise “political connectivity” to bully me’, Roberts’s objection was not to the tactic but to the target. He has no scruples about pulling this sort of low move in principle, because he didn’t stint at later trying it on me (told below). Nor is he troubled by bullying; as I’ll detail below, Roberts is among the cruellest I’ve met.

I’m still not sure why Roberts wrote me that fake email. My grandfather used to tell me that cunning is the dark sanctuary of the incompetent. Perhaps he was trying to generate a false historical record about the nature of our friendship since I was an embarrassing friend to have, being politically completely beyond the pale. Roberts was naturally ill at ease over this, and I always understood it with genuine sympathy and concern.

For the benefit of readers outside South Africa, I should take a moment here to explain that in the current propaganda climate in this country, just as Nelson Mandela, once hated and feared by nearly all whites as the Devil himself, is now adored in even the most conservative blue-collar white suburbs as South Africa’s living patron saint, ARV drugs for Africans are currently white liberal suburbia’s ultimate political fetish, and it is entirely and absolutely taboo to call attention to any research findings in the medical and scientific press contradicting the claims of their promoters that they are, as George Bush puts it, ‘life-extending’,

and which demonstrate the opposite to be the case, namely that ARV drugs such as AZT are deadly poisonous<sup>23</sup> purpose-designed cell poisons<sup>24</sup> and that they hasten the deaths of people taking them – in our country, mostly the African poor.

In the words of *Mail & Guardian* deputy editor Drew Forrest, a confident liberal white man (who only has the welfare of Africans at heart, especially when their chiefs can't make the grade in taking care of them properly), to doubt that in Africa the timeless sentinel diseases of poverty endemic among the impoverished African poor, these days called AIDS, are caused by a sexually transmitted virus; to doubt that African mothers can actually kill their babies by giving birth to them normally and by holding them lovingly to their breasts and affording them the best food Nature has to offer, just as the Lord intended; and to doubt that sick Africans will be restored to vibrant, bouncing good health by swallowing deadly poisonous purpose-designed cell poisons poisonous to all cells they reach, is not 'intellectually respectable'; and for a writer such as Roberts craving fame and financial success, the mere expression of such doubt is professional death.

Public association with anyone like me, who isn't 'intellectually respectable' because he puts his hands on his hips, leans backwards, and guffaws raucously at these stupid American notions, is also extremely dangerous to one's own reputation for pursed-lipped intellectual respectability in the white liberal community (and among their servants).

Also, as it is now with 'denialists', people avoided associating with 'Communists' in the old days for the same reason: they might think you're one too. Indeed, as mentioned at the start of this book, the DA concluded that Roberts, the fervent AIDS believer, is an AIDS unbeliever on the evidence of his friendship with me. Although he did privately wobble over ARVs a bit (thankfully he's back to normal now; more later), I can categorically confirm on my word of honour that, in the words in which he describes Mbeki in his book, Roberts 'is not now, nor has he ever been an AIDS dissident'.

I'd like to take a moment longer over this to explain how what counts as 'intellectually respectable' thinking about the cause and best treatment of broken health among the African poor in South Africa can be traced to what the German philosophers call a *Denkproblem*.

For forty years, between 1910 and the fifties, it was normal medical practice, and it was universally accepted as commendably wise and sensible, for white doctors to repeatedly inject arsenic ('Salvarsan' and its derivatives) into people, especially Africans, diagnosed with syphilis by means of the Wassermann antibody test (now universally acknowledged to have been non-specific and completely useless) – including pregnant

women to prevent mother to child transmission of the alleged syphilis germ *Trepona pallidum*.

This was notwithstanding that arsenic was already well-known to be extremely toxic, and it's currently rated by the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, weighted for risk of exposure, as the very deadliest substance known to man. You'd be arrested at the airport if you tried bringing Salvarsan onto the plane today; along with guns and knives, the notice at check-in explicitly forbids arsenic.

But no less a medical authority than the Health Organization of the League of Nations endorsed arsenic injections in 1934 as a tremendous idea.

And when people became paralysed and demented, went deaf and blind, and died in the most horrible way, the doctors said the medicine just wasn't strong enough. Babies born dead, crippled, with cancer, mentally retarded, blind, deaf, faces and limbs misshapen, and/or very sick and soon to die, were also said to be victims of the terrible germ that the strong medicine unfortunately didn't protect them against in their case. Being much more intelligent than the rest of us, doctors called it 'congenital syphilis'.

Today it's normal medical practice, and it's universally accepted as commendably wise and sensible for white doctors to administer AZT and other similar extremely toxic chemicals to people, especially Africans and homosexuals, diagnosed as HIV-infected by means of an antibody test (non-specific and completely useless, as scores<sup>25</sup> of research papers have reported) – including pregnant women to prevent mother to child transmission of the alleged AIDS virus, HIV<sup>26</sup>.

This is notwithstanding that AZT has been well-known to be extremely toxic since its invention as a purpose-designed cell poison in 1961, with GlaxoSmithKline describing it as a DNA chain terminator in its package insert, below a special 'black box' hazard warning that it's so exceptionally poisonous it may kill you.

When tiny quantities of as little as 25 mg of AZT are packaged for research use – that's between one twentieth to one sixtieth of the amount that doctors give people to swallow on purpose every day: 500 to 1500 mg – the label<sup>27</sup> is embossed with a skull and crossbones emblem against a bright orange stripe, signifying deadly poisonous chemical hazard, with 'Toxic' in six languages below it, and the warning:

TOXIC Toxic by inhalation, in contact with skin and if swallowed. Target organs: Blood, Bone marrow. In case of accident or if you feel unwell, seek medical advice immediately (show the label where possible). Wear suitable protective clothing.

If that isn't exciting enough, the latest version of the label also carries a warning that exposure to AZT may give you cancer.

Like the learned doctors in the HO of the League of Nations all approving arsenic injections, the learned doctors running its successor the WHO of the UN all agree it's a brilliant idea to give AZT and chemically similar compounds to Africans, especially if they're pregnant. You must remember that this is because doctors are much more intelligent than the rest of us.

And when in a recent massive study<sup>28</sup> of more than 22,000 cases, researchers report that ARV treatment actually *accelerates* the death rate of HIV-positive people, and when other researchers consistently report<sup>29</sup> that babies exposed to AZT in the womb and after birth suffer brain damage, neurological disorders, paralysis, spasticity, mental retardation, epilepsy, blindness and much higher rates of serious diseases and early death than unexposed children, as you might expect from ingesting a chemical purposely invented as a cell poison to poison cells, and accordingly sold in the tiniest amounts with a skull and crossbones on the label, and the warning that you shouldn't even sniff it or let it touch your skin, much less swallow it, it's said in South Africa that only a denialist with mental problems would say such horrible things.

After once letting such information slip through by mistake, she told me, *Mail&Guardian* editor Ferial Haffajee responded to an uproar from her readers by promising never to publish it again; and do you know I can't even get past her by paying for some space out of my own pocket to inform the public about these facts, because the *Mail&Guardian* only accepts paid advertisements for ARV drugs from the Treatment Action Campaign, promoting them for pregnant African women especially; and at the request of the TAC the Advertising Standards Authority in South Africa has actually banned such abominable heresy from appearing in the media by way of non-commercial advertising, and no commercial printer may reproduce it in books or flyers either. More than a decade after national liberation in South Africa, I can't get the raw facts about AZT into a commercial newspaper.

What Roberts clearly understood all along was that for my work in campaigning against the poisoning of impoverished sick Africans, especially African babies born to poor African mothers, with failed Western chemotherapeutic drugs, which is to say exceptionally poisonous patented chemicals losing their gleam in Western markets, I was an intellectual and social outlaw, good only for spitting on. The reason for this of course is that in the minds of all right-thinking people who read the newspapers, ARV drugs save lives, especially the lives of little babies. And only a truly evil crank would say the opposite.

‘It’s shocking what they’ve done to you,’ Roberts once remarked – not that I was feeling sorry for myself; I’d just made the point matter-of-factly from time to time that my criticism of ARVs had rendered me a political pariah, and a social leper even, so that once when invited to dinner by Roberts, his wife, and their friends, I thought it right to enquire, ‘Are you sure? Won’t my being there cause you problems?’

To illustrate further: when in September 2006 I emailed the saxophonist Steve Dyer, whom I’d known as a fellow musician at university twenty-five years earlier, for a friend’s address in England ahead of a trip that way, he charmingly replied:

Given your public and vocal position in the debate surrounding AIDS and HIV (a debate which many see as prolonging the suffering and dying of many human beings), it is possible that some people may have difficulty in spending time socially with you.

(I’m glad to report that among the many jazz musicians I know, he’s the only arse who thinks like this.)

Similarly, a dim-witted young doctor, naturally studying psychiatry, whom Roberts and I had met one evening, and whom Roberts unsuccessfully fancied due to her low-cut blouse, later asked him with disgust why he hung around with AIDS denialists. Like why he didn’t brush his teeth or wash his clothes or something equally disgusting. So he reported to me.

And at a party at the home of an old friend of mine, his brother’s girlfriend Louise asked me, shortly after being introduced, her eyes burning with contempt, ‘Doesn’t it worry you that everyone thinks you’re a complete nut?’

I could tell other stories of this kind, some even worse, but I don’t want to embarrass anyone unnecessarily.

In January 2007 Roberts himself lost his nerve at the prospect of being seen again with me. I mentioned earlier that I’d been invited by our attorney Christine Qunta to join him and her for a get-together after Roberts’s return from New York and Trinidad. In view of the contents of the Donadio letter (to be discussed shortly) I attended out of curiosity alone, but picked nothing up – except to note Roberts talking about how AIDS is deployed as an oppressive colonial ideology. Of course I found this idea very interesting, being its author, not Roberts.

A few days later Roberts swung past my flat and suggested dinner. Although I was ill-disposed to this, he pressed and I relented, not wanting to explain my reluctance at that stage. But as we were about to step into the restaurant he took fright, saying, ‘The last thing I need now is for a

photographer to show up.’ I was happy to echo the sentiment from my angle; we called it off, and I went off alone to an art-house film. That was the last time I saw him.

Why it’s ‘intellectually respectable’ for South African white liberals and their servants to think Africans are spreading a sex disease around and are riddled with it, and also to think they should be firmly treated for their imagined sex disease with poisons, is a major subject of *Just say yes, Mr President*, and it can’t be summarized here.

Anyway, notwithstanding his pretence in his email, ‘I don’t know what you propose doing about the article’, Roberts firmly agreed with my immediate decision to complain about the *Mail&Guardian*’s ‘loony’ smear to the Press Ombudsman (he dismissed it as tit for tat).

In twice remarking on the ‘gross unfairness’ of the newspaper’s persistent portrayal of me as mad for researching the toxicity literature on ARVs, and for reporting it to government and to the Medicines Control Council (of which ‘impressive detail’ it had been ‘unaware’, one of its members told Dr Tshabalala-Msimang), Roberts made clear on the record that in his view it was wrong to behave like this.

In conversation with me, Roberts deplored the defamatory manner in which ARV drug promoters evaded substantial engagement with me as a ‘discourse by denigration’.

In fact as far back as 8 October 2000, in his letter ‘Beware those intent on undermining Mbeki’ in the *Sunday Independent*, Roberts recorded his disapproval of RW Johnson’s claim, typical of white thinking at the time, that Mbeki’s views on AIDS evidenced that he was ‘off his rocker’.

Although Mbeki was in ‘error’, and at ‘fault’, said Rev Roberts in his letter, ticking the President off for his ‘error’ in stating in Parliament on 28 October 1999 that there

exists a large volume of scientific literature [on AZT] alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health. These are matters of great concern to the government as it would be irresponsible for us not to heed the dire warnings which medical researchers have been making.

and his ‘fault’, ‘frankly’ speaking, in indulging in harmful and damaging ‘continuing personal musings’ about the reliability of HIV testing, on the basis of which the entire Church of AIDS is built, which only gave the government’s ‘detractors, both here and abroad ... a year-long Christmas present’, this didn’t mean he was dilly, and it was wrong of Johnson to write things like this.

It's in the light of the foregoing that we turn to examine Roberts's allegations and remarks about me in his book.

But just before we begin.

Roberts's 'character assassination' of me (to echo his own complaint in the High Court about the *Sunday Times* portrait of his character) was not wholly unexpected. What did surprise me was the extent of his dishonesty and his extraordinary personal malice, considering the history of our relationship.

A couple of days after Roberts left for New York in December 2006, inter alia to meet a close friend of mine to whom I'd introduced him to help him find an American publisher for *No Cold Kitchen*, I discovered that he'd just written<sup>30</sup> to *New York Times Book Review* writer and editor Rachel Donadio on the 8<sup>th</sup>:

In my book I call the South African AIDS debate a 'clash of fundamentalisms' in which frenzied denialists contest with AIDS-drug fundamentalists, while Mbeki wants reasoned debate for sustainable health and welfare infrastructure.

My youngest brother was once shot in the back with a .45 (the police identified the slug) in an attempted car-jacking (he's fine), and as my eyes fell on those words I felt in that moment exactly what it must have been like for him. The expression 'stabbed in the back' came to life in the most vivid way. I reeled, hardly able to breathe.

It's said when you're dying your life flashes through your mind. A sudden appreciation of personal and political betrayal's the same. At lightening speed, every relevant conversation and everything I'd ever observed and experienced of Roberts's character crystallized before me. In an instant I realized what he was up to. In his clambering ambition to make it in the *New York Times Book Review*, he was going to sell me out – stabbing me and leaving me bleeding in the car park on his way to bask on the podium ('*Al maestro cuchillada*,' the Spanish say – 'To the teacher goes the knife').

I'm the only 'denialist' Roberts knows 'contest[ing] with AIDS drug fundamentalists', and I'm certainly the busiest, at it day and night for years. But he'd never before suggested to me, even hinted, that my work was 'frenzied'. On the contrary, he'd consistently praised it for its tone as much as for its content.

On the other hand Roberts himself had just been exposed as an unbalanced, paranoid obsessive in the High Court in his defamation case, conceding that his 'zealous' behaviour was 'over the top' – 'frenzied', in other words (I'll return to this).

In characterizing me as ‘frenzier’, Roberts was merely displacing his own personality deficits – as is his wont we’ll see from several other examples below. So you won’t be surprised to read in the zealous guy’s book that his favourite word used repeatedly to demean me is my mad ‘zeal’.

Nor had Roberts ever suggested, even obliquely, that I was a ‘fundamentalist’ of any sort – well appreciating how inappropriate and dishonest such a depiction of me is, because I’m the world’s biggest doubter: I doubt everything. He knows it; he gives examples in his book.

Roberts’s use of the word ‘denialist’ was a deliberately misleading sham in his bid to get in with Donadio and her newspaper politically, because he’d correctly bargained that this line would appeal to her and her colleagues as AIDS-fighting white American liberals.

From our many conversations, Roberts knows that the expression is conceptually idle and vacant, and that it’s essentially just emotive hate-speech used to anathematize non-subscribers to the American HIV-AIDS-ARV model. Roberts himself agrees; as we’ll later read, he rejects the pejorative in several places in his book.

Roberts knows perfectly well that I don’t deny that many half-starved Africans in South Africa are sick, and that I’m acutely aware of it (whereas it’s the furthest thing from Roberts’s mind). The misery and the poverty of the majority of South Africa’s people oppresses me like a toothache that won’t leave, and makes a normal life hard for me. I just don’t agree with the claims of white American AIDS experts and the thinking of nearly every single newspaper-reading, right-thinking white South African – many Indians and coloureds too – that malnourished Africans in South Africa are sick, not because they’re half-starved causing their health to break down, but because they have too much sex<sup>31</sup>, and that African men are going around squirting deadly germs all over the place, and African women, no matter how beautiful they may appear, especially when they smile, are actually walking filthy death traps<sup>32</sup> with septic vaginas<sup>33</sup>.

I admit that I could be considered a denialist by those who believe these things and who contend that Africans really do make love too often with too many lovers, because, unlike whites who are much more civilized, Africans are unable to control their animal-like sexual urges for each other, and sometimes for whites too, and for this reason are spreading AIDS everywhere they go because of their infected genitals.

I admit that I do deny that poor Africans fall sick because they are too amorous, and I challenge anyone to show me that as a matter of fact poor Africans have enviably richer and more varied sex lives than wealthy whites with cars and cellphones.

I openly confess to being a denialist in all these respects, and I'll sign the confession.

Including that I don't think that ARVs save Africans' lives, especially African babies, like nearly all other whites do.

The disingenuousness of Roberts's depiction of me as a 'denialist' is also indicated by his due description of me as an 'AIDS dissident' in his Gordimer book (p599), where I feature and where he quotes me with approval. 'AIDS dissident' and 'dissident' are accurate appellations in what is basically a political struggle over health ideology with monumental commercial and political ramifications, and I own them without hesitation. Although Roberts does use the 'denialist' word when referring to me again six pages later, it's only in passing when crediting me as his source for a characteristically dim statement by Judge Edwin Cameron.

What this proves, incidentally, is that (a) Roberts has actually read my work, and (b) he's remembered what he was taught at Harvard and Oxford about the importance of crediting his sources in a footnoted book, the significance of which will emerge below. In *No Cold Kitchen* Roberts duly credits the original source of the Cameron quotation (a television programme) along with where he found it quoted (in my book manuscript). This is the honest and the correct way of citing your sources when citing them, particularly when they aren't found commonly mentioned.

In his book Roberts criticizes Cameron for 'follow[ing] the medieval practice of identifying God's enemies by category (as "denialist")'. But when currying favour with the New York white liberal literary establishment, Roberts considers it just fine to slander me as a 'frenzied denialist'.

He also deprecates what he describes in his book as Cameron's

admitted ... propagandist intent: 'AIDS denialists were openly and repeatedly boasting that they had secured the ear of President Mbeki. They were a discredited band, but they vaunted their influence ... *I wanted to challenge the authority and respectability of their doctrines.*' [Roberts's emphasis]

This is to say, Roberts thinks damnable the strategy that Cameron and his drug-pushing accomplices consciously adopted to discredit the information on ARV toxicity that I've been bringing to the government and the MCC's attention. Instead of addressing the implications of the research findings reported in the medical and scientific press that I've raised, particularly the foetal and neonatal toxicity literature, Cameron and other drug industry stooge friends of his decided to go to work on wrecking my personal reputation. Amazing. But even more so is Roberts's adoption of this very strategy against me in his book, after disap-

proving its use by Cameron and his mates who sell drugs for the pharmaceutical industry to get ahead in life.

Just a line or two earlier, Roberts opines: ‘In a genuine war it might have seemed acceptable to attack, as Cameron did, the “respectability” of his opponents.’ This is to say, although Roberts thinks it’s ‘acceptable’ to tell lies to defame one’s ‘opponents’ in ‘a genuine war’, in AIDS discourse, not being a genuine war, it’s not ‘acceptable’ to attack, as Cameron did, the ‘authority and respectability’ of his opponents and what they were saying – me in particular and what I was saying (Cameron hasn’t ever named me, but the bit in his book quoted by Roberts unmistakably refers to me; see also the back cover blurb of *Debating AZT*).

And Roberts says this right after his full-bore attack on my ‘respectability’ to destroy my ‘authority’, battering it with wave after wave of calumny, in a manner that not even the most ardent pharmaceutical industry drug pusher in this country has ever stooped to.

Like Cameron and Achmat, and their fans in the newspapers who actually admire them rather than despise them, Roberts never in his book engages with the substance of my case against ARVs: that like Salvarsan for syphilis a few decades ago, they’re deadly poisonous<sup>34</sup> and completely useless<sup>35</sup>, including for the so-called prevention of mother to child transmission<sup>36</sup> of HIV, in which case they’re especially dangerous<sup>37</sup>. (I was twice phoned on 13 and 14 August by a prominent African woman, who told me, distraught, that her daughter has been brain-damaged by ARVs – predictably in view of the medical research literature on the brain damage these drugs cause<sup>38</sup>. I know of other cases.)

The reason Roberts never deals with my case against ARVs in his book is situated somewhere in the mire of his dishonesty, his stupidity, his basic personal conformism, and his overarching general lack of principle. Let me explain these hard words.

Although like many other reviewers Roberts fulsomely praised my work, including my ARV critiques *Debating AZT* and *The trouble with nevirapine*, my impression all along was that he’d skimmed these books, less interested in informing himself about how very, very bad these drugs really are, than to search like a magpie looking for racy information to pick out and work into his book – which he did, repeatedly, uncredited.

Unlike others who’ve read these works, Roberts never struck me as disturbed by them. He wasn’t jolted into any kind of action like Mbeki had been. Roberts read them as words on paper, kicking around in an abstract intellectual sport. The last thing he was going to do was expose himself by taking an informed, principled stand on the drugs in question in the light of what he’d read about them, as Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang had. He’s not that sort of guy.

Also, Roberts is a fundamentally uninquisitive person. I'm restlessly, exceptionally curious. I grew up exploring, making and inventing things from a young age (I had a provisional patent when I was 10) and got into all sorts of sciences – to a remarkably advanced level while still a youngster, when I look back on it. I read Hindu and Buddhist philosophy as a boy, way outside the thinking of those around me. Roberts by contrast was a competitive swimmer; he always wanted to swim faster than the other boys. As mentioned, he's a man comfortable in his strong opinions, who reads to build his worldview up on its certain foundations, the better to look down on others. Roberts doesn't read sideways, attracting the danger that the foundations of his castle might be eroded, destabilizing it and toppling it over. You see this clearly in his writing: how he wrests his data to fit them into his strong thesis, rather than going where the evidence sometimes surprisingly goes.

In Roberts's company, Roberts does most of the talking; one's regaled by his thoughts and opinions. Not once in the nearly two years we were friends did Roberts change his mind about anything; not once was he intrigued by any challenge I raised to any of his settled beliefs, because they're set in concrete. They are, as I mentioned, his castle.

When, on the other hand, Emeritus Professor of Cell and Molecular Biology Richard Strohman of the University of California at Berkeley publishes peer-reviewed critiques (and responds equally powerfully to his critics) of contemporary biology's axiomatic belief in genetic determinism (extending from the *assumed* genetic basis of cancer and certain other diseases right up to Pasteur and Koch's germ theory of disease – nowadays including virology, and naturally 'HIV') I sit up and I take notice. I read his papers carefully and we correspond.

Likewise when I find out that the Human Genome Project has turned up many less genes in humans than it was previously assumed we had, and far too few to support the 'DNA is the blueprint of life' theory that's taught from high school – which means that the most hallowed dogma of biology is wrong – I start thinking.

And when over *kaffee und koechen* in Berlin, molecular biologist Hector Gildermeister D Phil (Oxon) says of contemporary molecular biology, 'It's all bollocks', by which he means what's in the textbooks, I understand that much of it is not factual but theoretical, and not just theoretical but wrong, and increasingly insupportable in the light of accumulating disconfirming evidence – such as Crick and Watson's fundamental Central Dogma: that genetic information passes down an absolutely one-way street from DNA via RNA to protein. We know that's completely wrong now (some of us, anyway). It's where all the misunderstanding about reverse transcription and so-called retroviruses (like 'HIV') started.

But to Roberts it's all Greek and of no interest to him whatsoever. When it comes to the papers, he prefers the *Cape Times* and *Business Day* over the scientific ones. He reads books not to learn from, by which I mean expand his fundamental thinking, but to support his entrenched ideas, picking bits to quote in his books to sound thoughtful. I think it would be fair to say he's clever but he's not intelligent; and that the fundamental difference between us is captured in the proverbial dilemma about whether it's better in life to be a happy pig or Socrates discontented.

Beyond possibly browsing them for his limited purpose just mentioned, Roberts never studied any of the scientific papers I gave him: 'A Critical Analysis of the Pharmacology of AZT and its Use in AIDS'<sup>39</sup>, and 'A Critical Analysis of the Evidence for the Existence of HIV'<sup>40</sup> (later published in abridged form<sup>41</sup> in the leading-edge journal *Medical Hypotheses*) by Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos et al. I repeatedly insisted that he had to read these papers if he wanted to understand and portray Mbeki's thinking properly, but he wasn't interested and he wasn't bothered.

That Roberts lacks the cerebral wherewithal to read and understand these pivotal papers was apparent to me then, and it's amply evidenced by the line he takes in his book (newspaper journalists are strongly discouraged from perusing these critiques, because they're far too complicated and also confusing and damaging).

So with Cameron's 'propagandist intent' that Roberts has just condemned, he proceeds to make me out as mental in order to sweep me out the way as 'discredited' and certainly no 'authority' of any sort; and then, once he's done this, he sallies out to make his false case, unhampered by the facts, that Mbeki is as happy as a sandboy with ARVs in the public health system, and that, like Roberts does, he thinks they're 'sensible' drugs for 'sensible' white doctors to give Africans, including their babies. This is the story Roberts sells in his book expressly; and he implies that Mbeki shares his view that the African poor need to 'cut back' on how much sex they have, just as the white American AIDS experts and white American liberal literati think they need to do (more soon).

That Roberts did not honestly believe I was a 'frenzied denialist' as he put it to Donadio, a raving 'fundamentalist ... anti-treatment propagandist' as he put it in his book, is borne out by the following:

I do not like talking about the work I do in new company, because I've repeatedly had the experience that people who don't know me are prone to get worked up when they hear about it and it spoils the evening; and for the same reason I even try to avoid introducing myself by my full name when I meet people for the first time, because the newspapers and internet blogs have made it a swearword (the 30 September issue of the

*Sunday Times* mentioned ‘such loathed personalities as Anthony Brink ... for supporting [Mbeki] at the outset of the Aids-denial debate’).

But in social situations Roberts liked to lead me out of my silence about my work and get me to tell what I do and why I do it. He didn’t do this to provide his guests with a comic interlude during the evening or to treat them to a bizarre performance by the Elephant Man; he did this because he thought I had something very important to say. I recall him once remarking to those listening on one such occasion that he didn’t agree with me about everything in the AIDS controversy, but that he was right with me on my opposition to ARVs. I regret that unlike the instances where I’ve quoted his exact words elsewhere in this book, I can no longer recall the exact words he used. But that’s the thrust of what he said. Privately, for a while anyway, he didn’t think ARVs were ‘sensible’, as he describes them in his book. Not at all.

But it was at ARVs that Roberts drew the line. Notwithstanding his reading of *Just say yes, Mr President*’ and the other published scientific debunks that I gave him from time to time, in electronic form or in hardcopy, he never doubted – as Mbeki had, repeatedly, openly, and in the most mordant language – the claims of white AIDS experts that the burden of disease among the African poor was the result of their exceptional sexual promiscuity, with the result that they were spreading a brand-new virus around that attacked their ‘immune system’ and caused them to fall ill with the self-same diseases from which malnourished Africans have always suffered from the start of the colonial era and the loss of their lands.

In this view Roberts stood resolutely shoulder to shoulder with Tony Leon, Ferial Haffajee, Edwin Cameron and Zackie Achmat, and he has never shifted an inch. To his credit, I must say that Roberts has been quite consistent here. And I can vouch that Roberts is an unwavering believer, completely loyal and absolutely dependable; and the AIDS industry can count on him with assurance in spreading the message that AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease that needs the pharmaceutical industry’s patented, synthetic chemicals to treat.

My own rejection of the HIV-AIDS paradigm was incomprehensible to Roberts; and since the dogmas of HIV-AIDS now lie at the heart of liberal thinking, both South African and American, my apostasy was ultimately powerfully repugnant to his adamant belief system, hence his violently derogatory language in his references to me, both in his letter to Donadio and in his book.

We’re dealing here with a universal phenomenon in Judeo-Christian culture. The animosity generated by non-conformism in the Age of AIDS is about as murderous in spirit as the violent hatred the Catholics

showed for the Huguenots. You do not poke at someone's worldview, especially mockingly, without attracting serious retaliation. AIDS has moved from medical mistake to a social myth; and considering the purposes served by myth in a culture, to methodically and scientifically demythologize it, and laugh that it's all rubbish, is to court extreme antagonism. Of course to subscribers to a myth, the myth they subscribe to is not myth at all but fundamental knowledge enabling the believer to make sense of his world. Myth provides us with our certainties. Whereas mere scientific and medical theories are always open to revision, our myths never.

But the fact is Roberts didn't know me as a 'frenzied denialist' – my polemics are not frenzied but coolly cutting, and he admired my writing as such. To the extent that he has any honest opinions as opposed to keen instincts for where the money is, Roberts was therefore lying to Donadio in misrepresenting his opinion of me, because he thought it would sound cool to her as a white New York liberal, a member of the predominantly Jewish and WASP literati set over there.

I was also already aware that Roberts was going to portray Mbeki as a believer, just as he, Tony Leon, Edwin Cameron, Drew Forrest, David Beresford, Steven Freidman, Anton Harber, Richard Calland, Mark Gevisser and the entire white liberal establishment are, along with their full retinue of servants. This is to say, Roberts was going to assert his own unshakeable and devout convictions about AIDS as Mbeki's, the ones Roberts got from the newspapers, namely that you die from lovemaking, particularly with an African woman, and more particularly with African women low on cash; the African poor are riddled with HIV because they uncontrollably get down and do it too much, and it's why they get sick with AIDS; and good strong ARVs are 'sensible' drugs (among Roberts's favourite adjectives in his book), which, when 'sensibl[y]' administered by 'sensible' white doctors, are good 'sensible' medicines for them, for Africans, both the workers and the picaninnies.

I knew that Roberts would be avoiding any explanation of Mbeki's sudden, astonishing metamorphosis from the Billy Graham of AIDS while Deputy President to the American delusion's defiantly sceptical Giordano Bruno several months after becoming President himself in 1999, and that he would not be interrogating the reasons why Mbeki's thinking on AIDS had manifestly changed so dramatically.

Roberts told me early on that as he saw it Mbeki's involvement in the AIDS treatment and causation controversies was a freedom of speech issue and that he'd be writing about it from this angle accordingly.

Now of course this aspect is very important, and it's why I'd canvassed it in my own book manuscript, citing Herbert Marcuse on the

intolerance of dissent that characterizes ostensibly liberal modern democracies (and I sure know all about it first-hand). Mbeki himself touched on this theme in his letter:

As your manuscript indicates, not surprisingly, the most virulent of the debates, about knowledge, has been concerning the science that informs the global and our own programmes on HIV and AIDS. It is most interesting that the most vocal in this contest centred their argument, as you indicate, on the demand that all discussion must be terminated, and that all that had to be done was to implement what directly and indirectly, the pharmaceutical companies said should be done to dispense the drugs they produce as widely and as quickly as possible.

But the freedom of speech issue is an incidental aspect of the controversy only, and hardly the core question that everyone was wondering about – summed up, I'm sure you'll agree, in the first part of the draft back cover blurb<sup>42</sup> of my own book manuscript:

What led Thabo Mbeki, energetic architect of AIDS policy during the Mandela years, to become the world's most reviled AIDS sceptic a few months after becoming President himself? What accounts for his 'inexplicably contrary views on AIDS'? Why does he claim that 'scientists don't know what they are looking for when testing for HIV' and that the West sees Africans as 'promiscuous carriers of germs ... naturally prone to ... an AIDS pandemic caused, it is said, by rampant sexual promiscuity and endemic amorality', and 'human beings of a lower order ... a depraved and diseased people ... perishing from self-inflicted disease ... doomed to an inevitable mortal end because of our unconquerable devotion to the sin of lust'? Is he really 'mad', 'a nutter', 'no longer playing with a full pack', 'off his rocker', 'having a nervous breakdown', 'suffering from a gargantuan persecution complex', 'paranoid', 'a man whose sensitivity on race points to a previously undiscovered psychological trauma'?

In short, the angle that Roberts's announced that he'd be taking in his book predicted that he'd be skirting the real issues, since they challenge intellectual and ideological taboos and take courage, wit and some serious scientific homework to tackle – but most importantly, the examination of these scientific and ideological issues would require a suspension of Roberts's own deeply-rooted personal beliefs, at the risk of losing them in the process. And as Thomas Edison pointed out, 'There is no

expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labour of thinking.' Fresh thoughts.

Roberts, you see from his book, is given to skating over shiny surfaces, presenting pieces of other people's writing (sparkling gems, certainly), with nary an original significant thought among them.

I found another dismal pointer to Roberts's bloody-minded determination to count Mbeki among the faithful and to present him as a believer, and never mind the clear countervailing evidence that he isn't anymore, in the original front cover that he picked or approved (I presume) for his book.

Many months before *Fit to Govern* was published in South Africa, amazon.com listed the book for future sale from its website. It was changed a month after the book came out in South Africa, but the original front cover<sup>43</sup> bore a photograph of Mbeki taken way back in the nineties, sporting his very socially and politically respectable AIDS ribbon on his lapel – the ribbon he wore when appearing on national television in October 1998 in a special emergency address to warn the country about the terrible AIDS apocalypse we were facing here that was going to wipe us all out, but the one he took off permanently a year and a bit later when, after taking a close look at the quality of the science, and thinking about the Western ideology beneath the laboratory floorboards, he realized what stupid, hysterical, racist, white American, Judeo-Christian, apocalyptic, sex-negative, murderous, money-making, junk-science bullshit it all is.

Once when I realized from something he'd said that Roberts was going to botch his representation of Mbeki's thinking on AIDS, I exclaimed in frustration, but in good humour, as one friend to another, 'You're too lazy and too stupid to read what Mbeki has, and this is why you're going to fuck up your AIDS chapter!' On another occasion, also irritated by some dumb thing he'd said, I told Roberts similarly, 'The reason you're going to fuck up your AIDS chapter is because you're too stupid and too lazy to read what Mbeki has!' Roberts's reaction was not curiosity about what subversive literature I might be referring to, but to roll his eyes or smirk, as if he knew better. Roberts's own faith in HIV-AIDS was adamant, and, as I discovered only recently, had been so, on the record, since at least 2000. The total hash he made of unpacking Mbeki's thinking on the nature, the cause and the treatment of AIDS was therefore unsurprising.

Now to the book.

I mentioned at the outset that I'll first be treating Roberts's attempt to ruin my name by recycling, on the strength of one lie piled on another, the popular newspaper caricature of me as mad. It's not because I'm

excessively defensive that I enter into the detail that I do here (as the Germans wisely say, ‘What does an oak care when a pig rubs his arse against his trunk?’); it’s because, as I explained, and as you’ll see, Roberts’s writing about me reflects on the quality of his scholarship concerning Mbeki.

## Brink portrayed in *Fit to Govern*

Roberts tees off by jeering at me as a ‘self-styled radical’, although on what basis he doesn’t say. I don’t go around in Che Guevara tee-shirts to declaim my political thinking in the shopping malls and coffee shops, although I do have a nice early shot of Marx in my pad, also some cool pics of him, Engels and me in Berlin’s Marx-Engels-Forum, taken by an attractive Australian tourist, who was very chatty and obviously impressed, but there just wasn’t time, none of which he’s seen, so Roberts appears to be objecting to this sentence in the preface to my *Just say yes, Mr President*’ manuscript:

A leading science and science-fiction author, James Hogan (translated into ten languages, Japanese and Dutch fan clubs), with whom I spent a couple of days talking in Dublin in mid-2001, thought the story of how a lone radical activist lawyer had blocked the world’s largest pharmaceutical corporation at the time and turned South Africa’s President and Health Minister adamantly and vocally against its popular drug, to be worth telling in its own right, the demerits of the drug apart.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* tells us simply that ‘radical’ in a ‘(Polit.)’ context means no more than ‘person holding radical views or belonging to radical political party’, which you didn’t need any dictionary to tell you. Roberts knows that my engagement with the pharmaceutical industry and its agents and interest groups has radicalized my thinking generally, because we’ve discussed it. AZT, I’ve told him, represents to me the concrete epitome of capital at most psychopathic. (But this savage reality beneath the sunny propaganda one also generates its galvanizing political potential, and it accounts for my concentration on it year after year.)

I find it’s a common phenomenon among AIDS dissidents: when you’re onto one major institutionalized lie, and see how it’s maintained, you start seeing others and finally you’re onto the banks. My friend Sepp Hasslberger in Rome put it succinctly to me at a conference in Bonn in 2004: ‘When you understand one thing perfectly, everything else falls apart.’ More than one person has said to me that *Debating AZT* ‘changed my life’, by which they meant shifted the fundamentals of their thinking.

By waking Mbeki up to the vast lie he’d been told about AZT being a ‘life-saving’ medicine, *Debating AZT* got the first pebble rolling that started his own cascade of simple questions and rotten answers, to the point where the entire AIDS system collapsed before him.

In *Just say yes, Mr President*’ I argue extensively that HIV-AIDS as a medico-social ideology has become not merely integral but central to the

South African white liberal outlook since the sudden collapse of apartheid in the early nineties. Merely dissenting from this basic ideology would seem to qualify one as radical such per se, having regard to AIDS Law Project director and TAC national treasurer Mark Heywood's fairly framed query in his essay 'The Price of Denial' in *Development Update* in February 2005:

In 1998 Mbeki referred to the 'escalating HIV/AIDS pandemic' as a 'pressing crisis'. Therefore, what is not properly understood is why and how such a radical shift in his own views ... took place.

The hatred and opprobrium attracted by anyone doubting the claims of white AIDS careerists like Heywood, who make their living off the so-called 'escalating HIV/AIDS pandemic' among Africans by going on and on about the 'pressing crisis' among them, is as bad as anything piled on 'Communists' during apartheid. In fact dissension from orthodox thinking about AIDS is generally considered so radical in itself that it's enough to get people calling you insane, just like in the old USSR.

Roberts knows a little of my political thinking generally, and he knows it's hardly middle-class. He knows that I've given the second half of my life to applied politics for the public good, looking to the example of others, some lawyers notably, who sacrificed all during the struggle. And that I've abandoned all ordinary bourgeois aspirations and comforts, having grown up with all the benefits of apartheid privilege, and I'm putting back now, intensely involved and totally committed, working specifically in the AIDS *Problemfeld*, living lightly to write hard, disagreeable truths about the most contentious, divisive knowledge controversy of our time, with gargantuan destabilizing ideological and political ramifications for the dominant Western intellectual system and its structures. I do this mindful that at least two other troublemakers for the pharmaceutical industry, Andrew Tladi and Raymond Korbin, have been murdered<sup>44</sup> in South Africa, both shot dead and left in the boots of their cars.

In his book Roberts pronounces the radical white activists Ruth First, Bram Fischer and Joe Slovo to have been 'plainly natives – the sort of people RW Johnson calls a "freakish new tribe of whites" because they choose to abandon Eurocentrism and to join in transformation'. In declaring me an 'Honorary nigger' Roberts apparently meant to include me in this class of native within the special meaning he ascribes to the word.

And his appreciation that I've left the conventional map in my ideological/political position was revealed in his grumble to my friend in New York that 'Brink's too far out.' Of course in voicing this complaint,

Roberts identifies himself as a sensible centrist. Which is right; that he certainly is.

In mentioning my friendship with Roberts to others, on the other hand, I never once described him as ‘radical’. Roberts doesn’t have a radical outlook of his own in any ordinary sense. There’s nothing original or even unusual about it either. And notwithstanding his criticism of black American conservatives in his youthfully boisterous book *Clarence Thomas and the Tough Love Crowd*, I never thought of Roberts as part of the Left in any broad sense.

As I see it, compassion, care for one’s fellow man, concern for the plight of the poor in capitalist economic formations, and permanent moral outrage at the fundamental structure of the prevailing system usually characterizes the left. From innumerable conversations with Roberts, and from seeing his interactions with other people while in my company, humbler people particularly, the Roberts I know doesn’t make it on any one of these criteria.

I appreciate, however, that I could be quite wrong in my rather homely and unsophisticated view of , and that I may be incorrectly excluding Roberts on spurious grounds, because his complete indifference to and his contempt for the lower orders may be perfectly immaterial to being a left wing type of guy. I know Roberts to be an intellectual player. And I found him entertaining just for that.

I must admit that I laughed out loud when I read Roberts’s line –

Drawing upon the spirit of Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Mbeki in fact sees the vocation of the intellectual as a humanizing one that it is committed to the power of thought to negate accepted limits and open the way to a new future.

– because it perfectly captures what a phoney he is.

The ridiculously sloppy language aside, whereas it’s an accurate portrayal of Mbeki’s concept of the role of the intellectual, as I understand him from what he’s said about this, rolled off Roberts’s tongue the statement is risible. He wants you to know that he’s up on a classic of revolutionary literature. He implies that he’s an intellectual in Mbeki’s class. He suggests that he too cares deeply for the people around him, that he’s devoted his life to work for a better world, a better shake for the downtrodden. He would have you understand that he himself thinks outside conventional boxes; that he thinks beyond ‘accepted limits’; and that he wields his own powers of reason to cut through thickets of what Mbeki described in his letter to him as ‘superstition’ and ‘opinionated prejudice’. Here’s the excerpt from the letter, mentioning these, which Roberts pastes as an epigraph at the start of the book:

One day I pray that I will find the time to write or otherwise address the issue of the calamitous retreat from the habit of thinking in our country, the atrophy of meaningful critical intellectual engagement and communication, and the occupation of the realm of ideas largely by dearth of originality, superstition, opinionated prejudice, stereotypes and a herd mentality.

It must be obvious to the discerning reader that of all the policy controversies that have raged around Mbeki as President, none have been more egregiously stupid than the AIDS one, and to none other does Mbeki's striking remark apply more appositely. I commend you here to a sprinkling of quotations richly illustrating Mbeki's point in my collection under the title, taken from Galileo, 'For very great is the number of the stupid'<sup>45</sup>, in the prefatory pages of *Just say yes, Mr President*, concluding, like the epigraph's opening line, with Mbeki's exasperated comment concerning the AIDS controversy on SABC 3 television on 8 February 2004: 'What puzzles me is why people do not want to think.'

I sat down and spoke to Roberts regularly for nearly two years, and I can assure you that none of his pretensions about the public duty of intellectuals are true insofar as he is concerned. Roberts has no concern for his fellow man whatsoever, absolutely none. He's entirely devoid of conscience or compassion, and he demonstrated this on more occasions than I can count, in front of some of my friends too. My language here is absolute because I mean it absolutely. I sometimes use extravagant language ironically for rhetorical effect, but I'm not disposed to false exaggeration. Roberts's attitude to other people is sociopathic; to him people are consumables.

It's a long story, and it seems so trivial, and you must suspect overblown, but an awful aspect of going out with Roberts anywhere was the regular prospect that he'd start abusing the waiter – in Cape Town, usually a young white male. It was the strangest thing, this compulsion to degrade and humiliate for his evening to be complete. The order would take too long or the wine wasn't cold enough or some other petty thing, and whereas normal people could sort things out, Roberts had to make an unpleasant scene. The endpoint had to be total humiliation, and if there was any resistance because the guy could see through the game, Roberts would demand the manager, and if he too didn't prostrate himself sufficiently he'd get the same treatment. If I tried breaking the tension with 'Never mind' or with some humour, Roberts would reprove me for putting up with 'low standards'. Friends who saw these displays, in one case more than a year after seeing Roberts last, spontaneously recall them and raise them with me; they too were appalled. I'd always

assumed that racism was the basic thing, but the last time I had dinner with Roberts was with a party at a hotel before he left for New York, and this time the waiter was a young Xhosa guy, clearly a township boy, new to the job and trying very hard in an unfamiliar cultural environment. Not hard enough because he nervously mixed up the dinner order. Roberts's treatment of him was so unrelentingly cruel that it was like watching a prison rape. The manager got the treatment too. I tried to soften the gut-churning atmosphere by joking to the dinner guest seated opposite me, 'I always tell Roberts that it's very bourgeois to abuse the servants.' To which she replied, having been out with him a few times too, 'And I always tell him that it's terribly middle-class to always be trying to sleep with the help.'

I've seen bullying at school, in the army, and in the courts, and the cruelty of Roberts's bullying is right up there with the worst I've ever seen. It was something to put up with like bad breath. Of course it's legion that bullying goes hand in hand with cowardice, and Roberts's intellectual cowardice, we'll see, is all over his book.

Although 'Mbeki in fact sees the vocation of the intellectual as a humanizing one that it is committed to the power of thought to negate accepted limits and open the way to a new future', Roberts 'sees the vocation of the intellectual as' a dehumanizing one 'that is committed to the power of' accepted class relations, based on wealth and caste, to assert privilege and walk over people in an imperial and colonial manner as if they aren't people at all but Harijans, mere objects in service of the lord, who imagines he's better than everyone else because he was born into a professional family, was raised in the familiar Indian cultural pattern to believe he's a prince, and when grown up was sent to and taught at ruling class academies, with all expenses paid, and tons of cash to spare.

In truth, Roberts perceives my outlook as 'radical', and the reason he scoffs at it is because he doesn't share it, being more a get-ahead kind of guy. The problem was I challenged his basic thinking. He wasn't used to it. His baseless jeer about this is revealing not of me but of him, because it evidences his undisclosed hostile animus towards me in his book from the word go. The reasons for this we'll canvass at the end.

Next Roberts says I'm 'often invoking Mbeki's name in his own cause'. My first book was about and was subtitled 'Mbeki and the AIDS drug controversy'. My big book in progress is about and is subtitled 'Mbeki and AIDS'. In November 2006 I gave an official presentation entitled 'Why do President Mbeki and Dr Tshabalala-Msimang warn against the use of ARV drugs like AZT?', and prepared a leaflet<sup>46</sup> with this title,

quoting some of their many well-informed public statements in the matter, and showing them to be supported by research reports in the medical and scientific literature. I also quote some of Mbeki's more pungent, mordant public statements about the myths and racial prejudice at the heart of AIDS ideology in some of my open letters<sup>47,48</sup>.

I apologize to Roberts for 'often invoking Mbeki's name in [my] own cause' in this way, and I'm particularly sorry to the extent that I might have stolen any of his thunder in presuming to know, understand and articulate Mbeki's thinking about AIDS and ARV drugs better than he does. Perhaps it would be best if I just tore my stuff up and left the country. Or rolled into a ball and died.

Roberts's clear insinuation by his obnoxious accusation that I'm a deceptively manipulative person 'often invoking Mbeki's name in [my] own cause' is that my negative opinion of ARV drugs, and of the worthless antibody and other 'HIV' tests that precede their prescription, is different from Mbeki's. Roberts means you to understand that whereas he and Mbeki think the same here, Mbeki and I think completely differently. But as the just mentioned leaflet shows, Roberts's implication is false and the opposite is true.

Concerning the worthless HIV tests, Mbeki made the point when opening his International AIDS Advisory Panel in May 2000: 'One of the things we have to do is determine the following: When we do an HIV test, what is the test testing, what is it measuring?' In Parliament on 20 September 2000, he said what had not been resolved, and what his International AIDS Advisory Panel was investigating, was what HIV tests actually measure:

Scientists from both sides of the divide have identified this as an essential question to be resolved in order to provide comprehensive treatment. We need to understand all these complexities so that our intervention can be more effective, even though many people do not want to study this question.

And if this didn't signify to anyone but the most thick-skulled that he already knew the tests were totally useless, Mbeki was explicit in mid-December that year, when during an official visit to Brazil he made the point that 'scientists don't know what they are looking for when testing for HIV'. Spot on.

Unfortunately one has to do some hard reading to understand what Mbeki meant by those peculiar and rather impertinent statements<sup>49,50,51,52</sup>, and like ARV-promoting journalists, AIDS activists and other garrulous opportunistic commentators in South Africa, predominantly white but with a sprinkling of loyal Africans, Indians and coloureds, and even a

Trinidadian, Roberts is far too lazy and much too stupid to get into all this medical and scientific stuff. I know this, because I know him very well, but you don't have to take my word for it, because it's evident from his book. He never troubled himself to look into what Mbeki was getting at when saying 'scientists don't know what they are looking for when testing for HIV'<sup>53</sup>. Roberts never bothered to find out what Mbeki meant by this seemingly outlandish assertion.

The reason for Roberts's failure to go there, as it were, was because all well-informed people who read the newspapers like *Die Son* and the *Mail & Guardian* know that HIV antibody tests tell you whether you're infected with the sex virus<sup>54</sup> or not. And everyone who reads the newspapers knows that HIV viral load tests tells you what your viral load is, which means how badly infected you are with the sex virus<sup>55</sup>. This is what exceptionally intelligent and extremely knowledgeable AIDS experts say, such as Dr Francois Venter, president of the Southern African HIV/AIDS Clinicians Society. And how could he, being a doctor and a white man, be a total moron?

Whereas it's clear at a glance that Mbeki's opinion of ARVs is absolutely negative<sup>56</sup>, and that it's the same as mine – Mbeki's knowledge of these drugs even extends to a grasp of the tricky AZT triphosphorylation problem<sup>57,58</sup> – Roberts's own view of these drugs, at least the one he expresses in his book, is quite different. In fact, concerning the life-saving benefits of ARVs, Roberts goes around holding hands with guys like Zackie Achmat and Edwin Cameron: all agree that ARVs are 'sensible' drugs – 'sensible' because it's said in the newspapers every day that they save lives.

Notwithstanding his private praise for *Debating AZT* and *The trouble with nevirapine* (and these intensively researched books read like epitaphs for the drugs, if I might say so myself), Roberts publicly aligns himself with what John Saul calls the 'progressive consensus' behind these drugs; and faking that he speaks for Mbeki, he contends that ARVs are 'sensible', and can be 'sensib[ly]' given to the African poor, in the same way that arsenic was 'sensib[ly]' injected into Africans in this country in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – as the 'sensible' Southern Rhodesian doctor Michael Gelfland explained in *The Sick African* (Cape Town: Stewart Printing Co, 1944):

Syphilis is a subject of paramount importance. The incidence is difficult to gauge, but it seems to be present in 20 per cent. or more of all Natives. Its recognition is important, not because the treatment given to the Native is in any way inadequate, but largely in order to prevent his spreading the infection by con-

tact with the Europeans or his own people. This is accomplished by giving the syphilitic a short course of arsenical injections, to render him non-infectious. ... Of course, if ... the Native can be persuaded to attend for a longer course, better results will be obtained. ... Perhaps the solution to the problem may be found in the administration of arsenic in massive doses by intravenous injection continued over a few days. Reports from the Union of South Africa ... appear to be promising. This is certainly a form of therapy that should draw the attention of the public authorities. ... I am confident that the solution to syphilis in the Native lies in this form of treatment, but its potential danger must not be overlooked.

After this neurotoxic treat, the next bit follows naturally:

Certain doctors appear to believe that neuro-syphilis in the Native is rare. This is incorrect, for the disease is by no means uncommon. ... No difficulty should be experienced in recognising a case of general paralysis, providing the condition is remembered. It is characterised by gross mental disorders, such as depressive and maniacal states of dementia. The patient may be euphoric or may exhibit grandiose delusions and hallucinations. ... Voluntary power is impaired and inco-ordination marked. The gait may be unsteady. Epileptiform seizures occur in some of the cases, or an apoplectiform attack may set in, with resultant hemiplegia or aphasia. In the Native, G.P.I. [‘general paralysis of the insane’] must be distinguished from other causes of psychosis. ... The G.P.I [case] should be certified and sent to an asylum for treatment.

In *Public Health in South Africa* (Central News Agency, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., undated, but c. 1940), another highly qualified white medical expert pronouncing on the health problems of Africans, EH Cluver (like Roberts, an Oxford man), advised that venereal diseases

tend to spread particularly among uneducated non-Europeans crowded together in the less salubrious portions of our towns. ... The detribalizing of large masses of natives was also followed by promiscuous habits so that infection rapidly spread over wide areas of the country.

They were full of it (‘syphilis’) then, according to the white experts of yesteryear, and they’re full of it (‘HIV-AIDS’) now, according to the white experts today. The best of it – wait for it – is that Roberts, the

Harvard and Oxford educated intellectual, invokes *exactly* the same racist thinking about the African poor in his book:

The rapid circulation of African populations, a side effect of economic modernisation, the migrant labour system and urbanization meant that an undetected epidemic spread powerfully and was set to flood into South Africa long before the levers of public policy passed into democratic hands.

What Roberts means to say, in case you missed what he's saying, is that Africans, not whites, are riddled with 'HIV-AIDS'. And it was 'the obvious momentum of history' that 'create[d] the AIDS epidemic', he writes elsewhere in the book. It's 'obvious'.

This is the putz posing as Mbeki's intellectual biographer and pretending to present his thinking, saying in his fancy talk that the kaffirs have all got it, got the sex disease. 'The point is obvious,' he adds, just to be sure. It's obvious.

In case it's not yet obvious to you that Roberts believes that poor Africans obviously suffer poor health because they have obviously failed to discipline themselves sufficiently, obviously have far too much sex, and obviously haven't adequately reduced their profligacy in this regard, he spells it out in another part of his book.

He begins by quoting 'the young Harvard economist, Emily Oster' (Roberts is forever appealing to the cachet of institutional authority or in-crowd American writers in argument) reporting her findings ('she actually researched the matter') that

Africans didn't really behave so differently from people in countries with much lower HIV rates. They did not have many more sexual partners than Americans on average. And, like Americans, Africans had cut back on unsafe sex in response to AIDS – or at least relatively well-off, healthy Africans had.

What young Emily is claiming, and what Ronald is implicitly agreeing with, is that economically prosperous Africans are more promiscuous than 'Americans on average', but not very much. Certainly, however, Africans are more promiscuous than 'Americans on average' (there hardly a single white who doesn't know this for a fact).

Miss Oster also claims – although we aren't shown the evidence, which boy we'd love to see – that prosperous, healthy Africans had 'cut back on unsafe sex in response to AIDS'. In other words, Africans who are prosperous and healthy and not poor and sick are prosperous and healthy and not poor and sick because they've done what American AIDS experts have insisted, and have stopped banging about so much,

and banging around so much without first going to the shop to buy condoms to pull onto their members.

Here (possibly paraphrasing Oster; it's not clear) Roberts comes in to edify us with a priceless explanation in his own words: 'Poorer Africans, the majority of the population, had made fewer changes because few could expect to reach old age, whether or not they contracted HIV.'

Like the South African farmer, the visitor from Trinidad knows his kaffir, even though the only kaffirs he knows, other than a few very rich ones who give him money, are those who serve him his coffee in uptown white-owned coffee shops. His knowledge of the vernacular is limited to Call the manager. But like Oster does, he knows how 'Poorer Africans' think, 'the majority of the population'. He hasn't done or read any research on how 'Poorer Africans' think, as if this is knowable, as if 'Poorer Africans' all think alike anyway, but nonetheless Roberts knows, because he has degrees from universities overseas, that 'the majority' of people in South Africa, the 'Poorer Africans', weigh the potentially fatal odds he suggests before going to bed with their sweethearts.

Being an African-despising racist from Trinidad (taking after VS Naipaul), Roberts generalizes like the best of the white liberals he's criticizing in his book. He lumps 'Poorer Africans' together in his intellectual scheme, and he says they've ultimately got only themselves to blame for getting sick with AIDS-defining diseases such as TB – just as they always have from the beginning of the colonial era when they were reduced to destitution – because they take a conscious gamble with the sex germ and lose it.

See, according to Roberts and his young authority from his Ivy League joint, what 'Poorer Africans' do when eying a prospective new babe or dude is this: they think to themselves, what the hell we're so poor and often so cold and hungry, due to the 'rapid circulation of African populations, a side effect of economic modernisation, the migrant labour system and urbanization', that we can't expect to live long anyway, so we may as well just have as much sex as we can with whoever comes along and not worry about catching some brand-new germ just arrived in the world out the African jungle that a highly respected white American scientist called Dr Gallo says we can catch every time we get down, and which is so deadly that it will kill us unless we drink poison every day that even comes with a skull and crossbones on the label sometimes.

It's because 'Poorer Africans' think so irresponsibly and behave so dangerously by making love from time to time like everyone everywhere for hundreds of thousands of years that 'Any attack on AIDS should therefore include an attack on poverty' (Roberts is again quoting here his young Harvard person whom he looks up to, and wants us to, because

she also comes from Harvard). To attack the problem of broken health among 'Poorer Africans' we must attack poverty, not because poverty gives rise to the sentinel diseases of poverty that we call AIDS these modern days, due principally to malnutrition arising from the conditions in which 'Poorer Africans' live, but because 'Poorer Africans' have a devil-may-care attitude to loving, and don't think it's necessary to enclose their privates in rubber wrappings before going for it, since they know they're going to die of their penury early anyway.

I really must pause here to remind you, if you aren't already shaking your head, that Roberts is purporting to be setting out Mbeki's thinking on AIDS. He's telling us that 'Poorer Africans' have got so much AIDS, HIV, whatever it is (the 'undetected epidemic'), because 'Poorer Africans' didn't get into behaviour 'change'; they made 'fewer changes' to their wild, uncontrolled, irresponsible, unsafe sexual behaviour. And this is why 'Poorer Africans' have a much higher disease burden than the rich.

Roberts thinks Africans need to undergo 'behaviour change' before their health will improve, which is the polite white liberal way of saying, ahem, those Africans really need to stop screwing around so much, they really do.

We know that Roberts thinks this, because he agrees with University of Cape Town politics professor Anthony Butler, also a foreigner, in his grossly racist presumption about what he thinks are the behavioural problems of Africans (their out of control sexuality), because without even blinking Roberts quotes Butler uttering this imperial mandate about the need for 'behaviour change' in the first draft of his book that was leaked to *noseweek* (discussed below). To Butler and to Roberts the poor health of Africans living in scrap-built shacks – for miles and miles around picturesque Cape Town, for instance – is not because they survive hand to mouth on junk refined food, when they can afford it at all, it's because they have too much sex, and they need to change this if they are to get better.

Butler has an excuse: he's an English immigrant, and a white liberal, and that's how white English liberals think about Africans, both in South Africa and in England. Roberts goes along with him, with the white English liberal who teaches and writes papers on public policy, meaning how the wogs should run the place. And behave in the sack.

Roberts, Mbeki's intellectual biographer, also seriously believes that Africans (not whites) need to undergo 'behaviour change'. And Roberts wants you to think Mbeki thinks this too, when in reality he has sharply rejected the claims of white AIDS experts and journalists about this.

Roberts and Butler do disagree about one thing though. Professor Butler from mother England writes in the journals and lectures his students that all Africans (not whites) need to undergo ‘behaviour change’, which is to say – if we strip away his characteristically English hypocritical penchant for covering ugly things meant with polite and proper talk – Africans generally need to have less sex, because they’re having too much of it. In Roberts’s view, however, it’s more the ‘Poorer Africans’ who need to ‘cut back’ on how much sex they enjoy. It’s ‘Poorer Africans’ who need to have less sex, thinks Roberts, because he thinks there’s more sex disease among them; ‘Poorer Africans’, as Mbeki puts it sarcastically (see below), are the ‘germ carriers’.

This is to say, when Roberts spies an African woman, he thinks the ‘Poorer’ she is, the greater the chance she’s got those death germs under her panties. But if she’s jangling lots of gold, the chance that she’s got those death germs under her panties is lower. This means to him that African women with money are better. (But since, according to the scientific authorities<sup>52</sup>, white women hardly have the death germs under their panties at all, white women are always best for sleeping with, in Roberts’s opinion.)

Roberts fancies himself to be an intellectual person, and his publisher bills him as one in as many words on its website. After reading this, do you also think Roberts is an intellectual person?

Or would it be right to consider Roberts an intellectual person because nearly all white intellectuals think this way too?

The intellectual continues in his book: ‘apartheid and colonial history’ (he’s at last thought of ‘colonial history’ too now) was to blame for ‘the AIDS epidemic that manifested immediately after 1994’. I’ve written an entire book on why ‘the AIDS epidemic ... manifested immediately after 1994’, when the ANC took power, tracing the mass hysterical psychological dynamics in the white suburbs to explain how and why ‘the AIDS epidemic ... manifested immediately after 1994’, in the minds of whites, among Africans. But I can’t unpack it here in a few soundbites. You’ll have to wait. Also, I’m also waiting for the hysteria to abate a bit, because it’s in a cooler climate that the full madness of AIDS will appear more clearly – just as everyone realizes now how mad it was keeping Nelson Mandela in a cage on an island year after year, when for nearly three decades before the nineties nearly all whites thought it seemed an entirely sensible and reasonable thing to do to.

Never mind the nice, prissy, clever little distinctions Roberts tries drawing, on the essentials of AIDS Roberts is at one piece with the entire white South African liberal establishment in his view that Africans, not whites, are riddled with sexual disease, mostly ‘undetected’, which is

to say that in Roberts's view (and Mbeki's words) Africans are 'germ carriers'; and it's because they've failed to control themselves. Or to be precise, in Roberts own words, they've made 'fewer changes' to their sexual behaviour than liberal whites like Butler and Oster would have wished for.

Roberts believes that Africans are riddled with sexual disease because all the mostly white and Indian AIDS experts in South Africa say or imply it: Francois Venter, Glenda Gray, James McIntyre, Nigel Rollins, Gary Maartens, Jerry Coovadia and Slim Karim – bright sparks like these. Along with their African tools, such as SAMA president Kgosi Letlape, who knows what side his bread's buttered on, and William Makgoba too, but he's piped down at last now, thank heavens.

In charging me falsely with 'often invoking Mbeki's name in [my] own cause', Roberts also impeaches my personal integrity on another score. He does so in bad faith and in full knowledge of the facts, because I've told him, taking a swing at me with my hands tied and my mouth permanently clamped shut.

It's pretty much true, as Roberts claims, that 'Brink ... rejects the entire paradigm of western medicine well beyond the AIDS arena'. Well, not 'the entire paradigm', because if I have a car-crash I want the best of it, but certainly I've ditched most of contemporary Western medical dogma regarding disease theory and therapeutics – just as doctors themselves ditch them over the decades; for unlike the medical and healing systems of other cultures, Western medicine is extraordinarily and radically unstable.

I've acquired my scepticism for allopathic disease theory and treatment after taking a hard, close look at it. The history of Western medicine has become my fascination, and I have collected quite a library of medical textbooks, current and vintage, with an emphasis on my special interest, pharmacology. And I tell you this: nothing makes your eyes open wide quite like the mad history of pharmacology. Of 'syphilis' too, as a template for 'AIDS': a Western Christian sex disease construct kept going fearsomely by the fearsomely strong medicine.

Although Roberts paints me as odd for not believing in most of Western medicine anymore, by this measure let me tell you he's a much bigger oddball than me. Roberts doesn't believe in Western medicine either; he goes for Chinese (that pattern again: transferring his quirks onto others and then criticising them).

I asked Roberts one evening about the disagreeable musty smell filling his flat. Showing me a bunch of dried herbs, he explained that his Chinese doctor had instructed him to boil them up and drink every day by

the bottle full. Which he was doing. It was a scent in his flat I'd get used to. Roberts, given to strong opinions on everything, exuberantly extolled the benefits of imbibing this malodorous fluid, saying it would do me the world of good, but I found myself unable to join in his enthusiasm in the matter. But it's not because Roberts has any sympathy for ancient traditional culture and learning that he's into Chinese medicine. He got the idea from TV. He thinks it's chic. In his book, he mentions the predilection of the women in 'Sex and the City' for this trendy alternative. He vaunts Chinese medicine for whites and Westerners like him too on the basis that 'Chinese and Indian medicine have made a discernible contribution, for people who are not themselves either Chinese or Indian'. But he wouldn't trust a genuine chink; Roberts's Chinese doctor is a reliable white man, a Scot who practises in the southern suburbs. And how is it 'discernible'? Kind of like 'meaningful'?

It's also quite true that I've concluded that pap smears are worthless. In mid-September 2005 Roberts morosely told me that following such a test someone close had been informed by a doctor that she had incipient cervical cancer. I right away copied Lynne McTaggart's complete debunk of pap smears<sup>60</sup> in her well-regarded book, *What Doctors Don't Tell You*<sup>61</sup> (London: Thorsons, 1996), and emailed it to him on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Regrettably Roberts was too lazy to read it or too stupid to understand it, and this is why he evidently still thinks pap smears a scientific, reliable diagnostic procedure, since they're mostly done by short-haired white men in white coats who look authoritative as they stick their fingers in (if after reading McTaggart's discussion of the evidence against pap smears you still think they're any good, I feel terribly sorry for you).

And it's true that I don't shudder with morbid apprehension, as Roberts does, that if I meet a charming woman at an art exhibition opening, and there's that miraculous magnetic recognition between us that defies all reason and judgment as if we've known each other forever and everything seems funny and our humour's totally in tune and forty-five minutes later we're out of there and home and clothes are flying across the room and we're at it all night and obviously the following morning as well and then suddenly she's gone, flying back to Namibia, never to be seen again, like a canary escaped from the birdcage, and all that's left is the afterglow of the unexpected miracle in the desert, I could die from it in about ten years time, just because we couldn't be bothered to go shopping for prophylactics, and also because she's black. Roberts and nearly all whites think this, but I don't. My African friends don't either. We laugh at the idea. We're not scared of sex, not in the least. We dig it, and we don't think anyone can have too much of it. In fact we reckon

the more we have of it, the happier we all are, individually and as a society.

Any guy knows that lovemaking naturally is a hell of a lot more rewarding than doing it in a bag: less merely functional, and more intimate and emotionally binding. What's little known is that glue contains an array of subtle mood-elevating hormones, so in addition to the immediate heart-warming sensation, she's being short-changed on those too.

But like nearly all civilized whites, Roberts thinks making love au naturel, especially with an African woman, can make you get sick and die. Here the black man from overseas is a white man at core: he likes his sex rationalized and rational and reasonable and sensible and rubber-insulated and limited and stultified (and now you know why he's always so aggressive). Not counter-cognitive, counter-judgmental, anarchic, free, lawless, authority-defying, structure-breaking, totally connected, totally united. And happy.

Like nearly all whites who read the newspapers and watch TV, Roberts fervently believes that you can die about a decade after making love with a woman without a condom, especially an African woman, because he thinks women, particularly African women, harbour death in the form of miniature invisible demons in the place most guys like being most. Roberts really believes this. Indeed, at lunch with a lady friend of mine in early 2007, he blurted neurotically when she mentioned me: 'He doesn't use condoms!' As if this was the ultimate token of my lunacy. It seems likely that Roberts's alarm was heightened by the fact that she's black, because he doesn't believe white women spread AIDS; it's the blacks who do. This is Mbeki's intellectual biographer.

Roberts claims that

On one occasion, Brink invited his interlocutors to inject him with the HIV virus [*sic*], but then stipulated that it should be 'pure' rather than mingled with anybody's blood – a requirement that, in his own view, rendered the stunt impossible.

Roberts calls this 'Brink's hollow and even comic threat', by which he means to imply that I'm a hypocrite, a coward, and a fake. And he wants you to understand he's clever for having caught me out, even cleverer than I am.

An early draft of *'Just say yes, Mr President'* indeed included a challenge to TAC leader Zackie Achmat to swallow a single month's course of ARV treatment at the full prescribed dose without interruption under close medical watch, and in turn I'd accept an inoculation of his blood. I dropped the challenge from the manuscript when I read that shortly

after commencing treatment with ARV drugs, Achmat had become extremely ill on them – both physically and mentally incapacitated – and was nearly killed by them a year later, an eminently predictable outcome in the light of the medical and scientific research literature on ARV toxicity<sup>62</sup>.

Achmat's disastrous experience of ARVs, and his public deceitfulness about it, are described in a draft criminal indictment<sup>63</sup> that I filed against him in the International Criminal Court at The Hague in January 2007 (see also my open letter<sup>64</sup> to *Mail & Guardian* CEO Trevor Ncube about it), as well as in an affidavit<sup>65</sup> I filed six months earlier in the Cape High Court in July 2006.

Since Achmat had been made very ill and nearly killed by just a few months of ARV treatment, proving my point, my challenge to him became redundant for my purposes and I dropped it from the text. But if Roberts would like me to be inoculated with a couple of drops of Achmat's blood, because such blood is supposedly infected by the deadly sex virus, I'm game anytime. He only has to set the thing up, and I'll be there. Here's why:

Notwithstanding its terrifying connotation to deluded and ignorant people such as Roberts and just about all other white people who trust in doctors and believe whatever they read in the newspapers, the reason why being sero-positive to a so-called HIV antibody test is actually no more medically significant than being sero-positive to a Wassermann test for syphilis, or having freckles on your nose, is set out in an article I wrote several years ago, 'Why the "AIDS test" is useless and pathologists agree'. I included it in the appendices of my first book, *Debating AZT*<sup>66,67</sup>.

For reasons canvassed in paragraph 342 of my affidavit, even though it sounds equally exhilarating, having a high 'viral load' is also meaningless in real terms. So I'm just as happy to be inoculated with anyone's 'HIV-positive' blood having a high 'viral load'. This will sound quite mad until you understand that 'viral load' tests are as worthless as antibody ones, and do not actually count the number of viruses swimming around in your veins per cubic millilitre of your blood, as doctors tell you they do with long faces. (My German doctor friend Julianne Sacher once sent her own HIV-negative blood in for a viral load test and was told it was sky-high; the test is rubbish.)

Just as Roberts picked on my challenge to Achmat as the strongest evidence he could present that I'm not only a fake playing a rigged game of chicken, but also cooked upstairs, the veteran white liberal journalist Allister Sparks did the same to show I'm a mentally disordered 'obsessive' in *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2003), claiming that I 'once challenged a group of

[friends] who were arguing with [me] to inject [me] with HIV-infected blood there and then’.

Actually it was no argument, but a cheerful lunch conversation at the house of one of my oldest and closest friends (and firm supporters too), at which Sparks’s future wife was also a guest. No one there was HIV-positive, and nobody had a hypodermic syringe handy; so please, madam, if you could just get your facts straight, or if you did, box your husband’s ears for falsely embellishing them. But yes, I did say I was willing to be injected with someone’s HIV-positive blood.

To Roberts and Sparks, both true believers in the mythology of HIV-AIDS, SARS, Bird flu, and just about every other crock the Americans dump on us, such a ‘stunt’, as Roberts calls it, is unimaginably frightful. But not if you understand that the scary tests are actually worthless, as worthless as the once ubiquitous, but now wholly discredited Wassermann test for syphilis – legally mandatory for decades in many states in the US before marriage. Or 17<sup>th</sup> Century witchfinders’ tests with big pins for pricking moles and warts in the hidden places of suspected witches – hanged for devilry if they didn’t react the right way.

Having seen my article ‘Why the “AIDS test” is useless and pathologists agree’ in his copy of *Debating AZT*, even if he was too lazy and too stupid to have read and understood it, Roberts knew that there was nothing ‘hollow’ or ‘comical’ in my challenge to Achmat. He knew it was made genuinely, and he knew that such a ‘stunt’ holds no terrors for me precisely because having closely investigated the biochemical architecture of antibody tests I’d written a detailed article stating exactly ‘Why the “AIDS test” is useless and pathologists agree’.

Consequently Roberts’s aspersions against me in his book in this regard were unwarranted, and he knew it, but he dishonestly maligned me anyway, because he’s a naturally dishonest person, who doesn’t scruple at lying whenever he feels like it and thinks he can get away with it.

In the manuscript of *Just say yes, Mr President*, which Roberts thought ‘Brilliant, fucking brilliant’, I explain in simple terms for lay readers how ‘the HIV virus’, as Roberts styles it, has never been isolated<sup>68</sup> by the long-settled standards of classical virology for the isolation of retroviruses, and how its existence is deduced instead from indirect non-specific biological markers. (When people say ‘HIV has been sequenced’, sounding terribly impressive and scientific as they do, all this actually means is that biologists have cobbled genetic fragments together, but with such massive variation that, other than to the believers who’ll believe anything, the so-called HIV genome is a scientific joke, stitched together like the Barnum circus mermaid.) But being too lazy and too

stupid, Roberts evidently didn't understand this part of the book, even though it was framed in simple terms for even the simplest readers.

Nowhere – neither in my specified 'conditions' for my challenge to Achmat nor anywhere else – did I say that for the purposes of 'the stunt ... the HIV virus ... should be "pure"', and Roberts cannot cite any such statement by me (he can check his hardcopy of the book manuscript at pp 101-2). Roberts puts 'pure' in quotation marks to suggest I used the word; I never did, and his suggestion is accordingly both false and dishonest.

Roberts simply manufactured this condition, which is another way of saying he lied in order to set up a fictitious caricature of me to gun down.

Proceeding from the false premise discussed above (that I didn't genuinely mean the challenge because I set an impossible condition), Roberts mockingly equates me with VS Naipaul's demented figure *Man-Man of Miguel Street*, 'the eccentric campaigner', who asks to be crucified and stoned, but protests as soon as the pelting starts and pleads to be taken down.

Thus does Roberts now deride my work in researching and publicising the research literature on the toxicity of ARV drugs. He makes clear that it's not only for my disbelief that I can die from making love with a woman, especially an African woman, that he contends I'm whacko, but for my opposition to the poisoning of the African poor with ARVs too, because he writes:

The outer reaches of Brink's zeal transport him into a twilight zone where a tiny coven of furious anti-treatment propagandists and amateur statisticians make him their unlikely prophet. These include publicity-whore Rian Malan, author of a narcissistic memoir, *My Traitor's Heart*. Brink and Malan found their intellectual home in *noseweek*, the last refuge of the incoherent, a monthly magazine edited and published by Martin Welz, the slipshod beatnik who poses as the town crier of the southern suburbs. Welz's glowing preface fronts Brink's self-published tract, *Debating AZT: Mbeki and the AIDS drug controversy*.

You'd think from this passage that Roberts doesn't think *Debating AZT* any good, and that it didn't deserve a 'glowing preface' from an investigative journalist of Welz's calibre. Or perhaps he means it did, because it only goes to show that Welz is rubbish like me. And that only a rubbish person such as Welz would write a 'glowing preface' to such a rubbish book.

But I've already quoted Roberts's appraisals of my extensively researched critiques of AZT ('very good, very important') and nevirapine ('Rigorous; your best book'). So what does Roberts think? Does he hold a single genuine, honest, sincere opinion about anything? Or are we dealing with South Africa's version of Jonathan Moyo, completely unprincipled and concerned only to ride the political thermals for personal profit?

Whatever Roberts privately thinks – and you can't trust what he says he thinks because he expresses contradictory opinions and lies freely – Mbeki himself doesn't think my work 'incoherent ... furious anti-treatment propagand[a]'. He took *Debating AZT* very seriously indeed by ordering an enquiry into the safety of the drug after reading it and researching the subject further himself. And there's more but I'm not saying.

*Debating AZT* referred to an explosive critical analysis of the pharmacology of AZT<sup>92</sup> by Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos et al., published in *Current Medical Research and Opinion* in May 1999 – explosive in the sense that it shows that AZT *cannot* work as an 'antiretroviral' because it isn't triphosphorylated intracellularly to its inhibition concentration, nowhere near; and by all conventional indices of efficacy it *doesn't* work. After reading this paper, Mbeki sent copies to several local scientists for their comment (all of whom proceeded to disgrace themselves, showing they were too lazy and too stupid to make sense of it).

In bringing this paper to the attention of the government, Mbeki didn't think I was putting about 'incoherent ... furious anti-treatment propagand[a]', or he wouldn't have read it and asked local scientists to comment on it. Roberts's claims about me don't square with the real history. He's writing false history.

I gave a hardcopy of the paper in question to Roberts to read too, but – yes, you guessed – he was too lazy and too stupid to read and understand it. To him, unlike to Mbeki, it's apparently just 'incoherent ... furious anti-treatment propagand[a]'.<sup>93</sup>

In short, in *Fit to Govern* Roberts tries misleading you into thinking that Mbeki rejects my work in researching and reporting the toxicity literature on ARVs, when precisely the opposite is true, and Roberts knows it. You could call this wilful deception a form of lying again.

A 'tract'<sup>94</sup>, according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is 'a short treatise or discourse or pamphlet esp. on religious subject'. *Debating AZT* isn't any of these things; it's a 165-page paperback book critiquing a bad drug: an opening essay criticizing it; a remarkably stupid response by the country's top AIDS treatment expert at the time defending AZT as 'a medicine from heaven'; and my rebuttal in reply in the form of an extensive

literature review – coupled with a report of some of the political drama around Mbeki's intervention in the matter after he read it.

Roberts's misdescription of the book as a 'tract' was disingenuous, and calculated to deride it dishonestly as the rant of some sort of an idiotic, quasi-religious fanatic. Although the word has a perfectly respectable meaning in philosophical discourse, Roberts wouldn't know it, and he didn't intend it.

Roberts calls Malan a 'publicity-whore'. He doesn't support this vile insult with any evidence of any description, so it seems what Roberts is objecting to is that Malan is a brilliant, established writer, and an infinitely better one, whom people find interesting, hence his new weekly column in the *Star*.

Roberts's motivation for abusing his Mbeki book commission to defame Malan is plain. Malan wrote an unfavourable review of an early draft of the book manuscript (discussed below), and Roberts thought he'd get him back in a vindictive and unprofessional manner.

I've known Malan for years, and the 'publicity-whore' cap doesn't fit him in the least, but it certainly fits Roberts (see the pattern?). I got to know Roberts well during our friendship, and I can confirm that he craves the limelight like reptiles do the sun. He'd regularly write letters and articles for the commercial liberal media – his idea of contribution to public discourse (fair enough; each to their own) – and then scrutinize every published word by him and about him, pressing me for encouraging comment, and even when I was done, wanting more, urging, 'Go on.' Roberts was dismayed when *Business Day* editor Peter Bruce told by email to 'Go and peddle your shit elsewhere.' He thought his writing deserved publication without hesitation, since he wrote it.

Roberts doesn't say how or why Malan the acclaimed writer, journalist and song-writer/musician is 'incoherent'. Could he have been envious of Mbeki's lengthy quotation of 'Rian Malan's moving article' in his State of the Nation Address in Parliament<sup>70</sup> on 6 February 2004? If Malan was 'incoherent', Mbeki the consummate literary stylist wouldn't have quoted him so fondly.

Malan has famously flipped and flopped over the years in his optimism and his pessimism for the country's prospects. The last time I checked, he'd gone back to pessimism again<sup>71</sup>, but his waxing and waning in his written sentiments over the decades has never been 'incoherent' by any stretch. His book *My Traitor's Heart*, which Roberts derides as a 'narcissistic memoir', is still in print and on the shelves selling well, close on two decades after it was first published. And unlike *Fit to Govern*, it's written in the finest, most evocative prose. I've read it five times. I could read it five times more. When my sons were young I used to read

it to them at their bedsides. They were riveted. But what distinguishes the two books most is that *My Traitor's Heart* is so searingly honest.

If memory serves me correctly, Roberts hadn't read *My Traitor's Heart* when I mentioned the book to him. His description of the book as a 'memoir', when this is but one aspect of the unusually composed book, would seem to confirm this recollection – that Roberts hasn't even read the book he's belittling. (Needless to say, no 'memoir' Roberts might write one day could ever be 'narcissistic'.)

As for my own alleged incoherence, in truth Roberts considers my writing so tight that 'When Brink writes, you can't answer' (coming up). And as an 'incoherent' writer I've never taken 'refuge' in *noseweek*, because I haven't been published in it (Sparks mistakenly claimed I had; in fact my work was the chief source for some articles by Marten du Plessis).

Roberts never says how or why Welz 'poses as the town crier of the southern suburbs'. He's been mistaken about Mbeki, but he's no friend of the white financial/political/social establishment. Roberts seems to object to the fact that he lives in Rondebosch and works in Claremont. So? Roberts lives swell in a flat he owns in town worth millions, and races about in a Peugeot sports car.

Nor does Roberts provide any basis for his derisory description of Welz as a 'beatnik'. Like me, he's an advocate. Unlike me he doesn't dress like a 'beatnik' and live like a 'beatnik'. Welz is not a 'beatnik'. The aspersion is not just pointless; it's dishonest, because it doesn't correspond with the facts.

Roberts was simply angry with Welz for publishing a negative critique of his book manuscript (discussed below), and thought he'd abuse the platform provided by his book commission to retaliate. Another reason for Roberts's attack on Welz and his magazine is because, he told me, he hoped his own new rival magazine *Molotov* would move in on *noseweek's* market, take over a good chunk of its readership, and put Welz out of business (according to a report<sup>72</sup> in *noseweek*, Roberts has since been fired from *Molotov*).

In a courtroom, Roberts's besmirching of Welz and his magazine in his book about Mbeki would be condemned as a conflict of financial interest, an abuse of the occasion afforded by his book to advance his private business interests. I suppose Roberts could fairly answer that he hadn't thought of this, because I must say that in my many conversations with him, I never had the impression that Roberts knew any law, notwithstanding his legal qualifications at the haughtiest universities and his time spent working for a smart Wall Street law firm. He was always looking to me for legal advice, and often displayed the most surprising na-

ivety. Which explains the vast treasure he squandered on lawyers (other lawyers) when anyone with any brains knows lawyers are in it for themselves and the money, and the whole system's just a total scam.

Camille Paglia has called the kind of writing Roberts offers here as 'alcoholic'; and you can see Roberts sitting alone in a corner, facing what he described to me as 'apocalypse' having lost his defamation case with ruinous costs, and with both the sheriff and the receiver on their way over to cart off his belongings, and after drinking too much, the loser scoops handfuls of muck from the gutter and starts throwing it hatefully at every better, more successful rival he can think of. It's hard to imagine that after *No Cold Kitchen*, carefully written and polished over eight years, Roberts thinks this sort of writing fine, clever or amusing. It's the acme of his tendency to a sad, solipsistic, onanistic style. It's embarrassingly bad, and once his headache clears, he'll agree.

Others have commented that the harsh invective Roberts flings at his enemies degrades his work, and the detestable way he does it, I agree. Personally I like stinging invective, when it's honest and fitting and cut with wit, however obscure it may be to the duller sort of reader. In my own writing I use it liberally against people given to violent denunciation in discourse, and there's none hotter than about AIDS, as a 'taste of their own medicine', although unlike Roberts I ladle my venom down with a wink.

From the self-satisfied relish with which Roberts points out others' mistakes, or alleged mistakes, to show how clever he is, like a schoolmaster preening in front of the boys, you'd think he was careful in what he writes himself. Especially in the light of his insult of Welz as 'slipshod' – although he's not fussed with supporting his charge with any actual evidence of this. In fact the whole book has this schoolmarm didactic tone: Roberts quotes someone saying this, Roberts cleverly says that, correcting them with his red pen, correcting things according to his version. But his lying apart, Roberts's writing about me is dismally slipshod itself. The rest of his slipshod mistakes I'll point out later.

Roberts consistently refers to my Treatment Information Group, the TIG, as 'the Treatment Action Group' and 'the TAG'. Roberts's faux pas couldn't have been less appropriate. Based in New York, the TAG is a third party marketing arm of the pharmaceutical industry. The reason the TAG pushes AZT and nevirapine is because, as its financial statements declare, its chief financial backers are GlaxoSmithKline and Boehringer Ingelheim. This is why the TAG works closely with the South African Treatment Action Campaign and clears money for it for their ARV-pushing propaganda campaigning.

Like the TAC, the TAG is run by Mark Harrington, another one of these HIV-positive gays in fine fettle, year after year, decade after decade, who, like Achmat, has built up a powerful political power-base on the strength of his medically meaningless but politically potent ‘HIV status’, which, like Achmat, he flaunts like a yellow star for special treatment – only in the opposite sense that he expects to be treated like a millionaire pop star whenever he flashes it.

Roberts claims that ‘Treatment Action Campaign ... supporters have used the slogan “one dissident, one bullet’ against the TAG [*sic*: TIG].’ But the slogan on a banner was used at the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in 2000 – years before I established my TIG.

Equating the TAC’s harassment of Health Minister Dr Tshabalala-Msimang by filing vexatious criminal charges against her, Roberts refers to my detailed draft criminal indictment of Achmat served on the International Criminal Court at The Hague in January 2007, which he says I filed with ‘neatly symmetrical zeal’, and he quotes a bit from it asking for Achmat’s ‘permanent confinement in a small white steel and concrete cage’.

Now quoted in isolation, and it’s why like the TAC and its friends in the newspapers Roberts quotes it in isolation, this bleak phrase will confirm that I’ve gone right over the edge. On the other hand many people in South Africa and Europe tell me that when they read the whole section from which Roberts quotes the dark phrase they fell about laughing. So what’s going on?

Read as a whole, the more intelligent reader (this excludes newspaper journalists) will appreciate that the complaint was many things: a serious criminal complaint pleading the basic incriminating facts and setting up a triable case for Achmat’s prosecution under the Rome Statute; a political indictment of his personal hypocrisy and dishonesty in the court of public opinion; and finally, a macabre lampoon of Achmat as an ARV drug pusher, and a black parody of the vengefulness of the Western criminal justice model, especially at the international show trial level in which the victors in geopolitical machinations prosecute the losers, well illustrated by the Milosevic travesty.

In the bit Roberts quotes, the better informed reader will have spotted an allusion to the prison conditions in which the West German government held its most dangerous enemies in the seventies, the RAF, and which drove some of its leaders to suicide (Roberts omitted to mention the ‘bright fluorescent light on all the time’).

Roberts's purpose in quoting only this isolated phrase from the conclusion of the satirical ending of the complaint is to obscure my purposes and mislead his readers. It's a kind of lying, as is his habit.

Had his political opponents in his day quoted only this line in Roberts's dishonest manner,

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragout.

to imply that he's a demented and depraved cannibal, you'd never have understood that in writing his satirical pamphlet in 1729, *A Modest Proposal: For Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick*, Jonathan Swift was agitating against the indifference of the landed rich to the desperate lot of the poor in his native Ireland.

So why did Roberts do this? There are two possibilities. First, he was too dense to make out all the notes in the chord. But he knows my satirical style, having read all my work, and he's even publicly praised it by locating it in the tradition of the finest satirical writing in the English language.

This commends the second option, namely that he's a bounder and a rogue, as is apparent from the rest of his false attacks on me in his book, and that, like the TAC and its supporters in the media, he's deliberately quoted from the draft indictment without context in order to discredit it as a valuable, illuminating exposé of Achmat and the chemical slaughter of the African poor in South Africa for which Achmat is directly personally criminally culpable – now translated by concerned activists abroad into Spanish, French, Russian, Italian, German, and Dutch.

In the following sentence, Roberts sniggers:

In advancing his anti-drug cause, Brink once called on a court to issue 'special directives' for the welfare of children 'where those entrusted with protecting their welfare are patently too slack, incompetent or corrupt.' In the very next paragraph he disputed 'the TAC's claim to "act on behalf of many HIV-positive people.'"

The phrase 'In the very next paragraph' suggests that the order of the matters I'm addressing in the affidavit has a negative significance for me, as if they contradict each other, or the second is even more foolish than

the first, or something like that. But Roberts doesn't say how or why. Indeed, he can't make a case on either score, which is why he doesn't even try. He just dishonestly implies there's something seriously remiss with me and my affidavit, and that clever him he's onto it.

If Roberts tried this style of dishonest argument in court, the judge would have flayed him alive, marked him as a crook, and warned his brethren in the common room after the session that nothing from his mouth should ever be relied upon, and that they should be on the lookout for his deceitfulness the next time he turned up to appear before any one of them.

Indeed in my affidavit I dispute 'the TAC's presumption to "act on behalf of many HIV-positive people."' I do so on the basis of a detailed case made out with supporting facts. Roberts doesn't fault it because he can't, so he simply omits to report the case I make, making my reasoned refutation of the TAC's claims to represent everyone diagnosed HIV-positive look brainless. And in so doing, Roberts implicitly aligns himself with the TAC's bogus claim to be a representative organization, rather than a lobby group for the drug industry, operating with enormous third party funding.

But the careless crook exposes himself as the crook he is in another part of his book. You'd think from his sentence – 'In the very next paragraph he disputed "the TAC's claim to 'act on behalf of many HIV-positive people.'"' – Roberts finds fault with my statement that the TAC is not the representative organization it claims to be. You'd think that he disagrees with me, and that he agrees with the TAC's claim to 'act on behalf of many HIV-positive people' rather than on behalf of the pharmaceutical industry. But Roberts approvingly quotes NAPWA making my point exactly:

Joe Manciya, communications manager of the National Association of People Living With AIDS (NAPWA), told the *Financial Mail*: 'The TAC don't represent any constituency. They are using Africans. Ask them how many members they have.'

Speaking with a forked tongue, because he doesn't have any sort of personal or professional integrity at all, Roberts dismisses my point about the TAC as ridiculous, but he supports NAPWA's perfectly identical point as sound. In fact, quoting Achmat saying he's 'proud' of 'putting the government to shame', Roberts himself makes the point, addressing Achmat, '... just don't pretend that your overriding motivation is to care for sick people' when it's 'To hate Thabo Mbeki, to put South Africa's first democratic government to shame, to discredit African nationalism and the ANC. OK. Those are crystal clear priorities.' (The burden of

Roberts's critique of the TAC is lifted right out of *Just say yes, Mr President*, only I argue the case much more finely.)

The trouble with Roberts when lying is that he forgets his lies and doesn't stick to his lies, so that when telling lies he's not even a good liar, he's a bad liar.

Roberts doesn't mention why I made my special appeal to the High Court's inherent jurisdiction, and he leaves it hanging to ridicule it. But what it's about is implied: my stated concern, we read, is the injury of African children by extremely toxic ARV drugs, and Roberts correctly identifies me in his book as a campaigner against the administration of these drugs to the African poor. I'm asking the High Court to act to protect African babies from being poisoned in the womb and after birth with ARV drugs since the doctors and pharmacologists on the MCC, who earn big money running clinical trials for the pharmaceutical industry, have shown themselves derelict in their statutory responsibilities, and useless in preventing it.

But the tone of Roberts's mention of this is contrived to discredit these concerns, to make it appear as if he thinks them unwarranted. Roberts is well aware, however, that there are scores of research reports in the medical and scientific literature in this regard, which I reported to the Medicines Research Council in several letters I wrote and collected together under the title *Poisoning our Children: AZT in Pregnancy*<sup>73</sup>. Roberts knows about this horror because I gave him a bound copy (some of the main findings are cited in a short pamphlet I prepared recently: *Why Do Zackie Achmat, Nathan Geffen and Mark Heywood Want AZT Given To Pregnant African Women and their Babies? What AZT Does to Unborn and Newly Born Children*<sup>74</sup>). A fellow I know told me that after reading this stuff, 'I cried.' It wasn't Roberts.

Roberts also knows, because I've told him, that my research work in busting my balls digging out these research findings and bringing them to the attention of the authorities has been commended by the most rigorous, thorough, radical critics of AZT, Papadopulos-Eleopulos et al., who remarked to me: 'Quite clearly your knowledge base in this subject extends far beyond ours.'

And concerning nevirapine, Dr Jonathan Fishbein MD, formerly Director of the Office for Policy in Clinical Research Operations, Division of AIDS, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, US National Institutes of Health, wrote to me to praise the original first half of my exposé *The trouble with nevirapine* as 'an expertly written piece about this very dangerous drug' – vetting and approving my subsequent chapter on his whistle-blowing on it too (Fishbein gets a respectful mention in Roberts's book).

In calling *The trouble with nevirapine* 'Rigorous; your best book' and proposing to write its foreword, Roberts supported Fishbein's estimation, even vouching for it with his own reputation when pressing a bound manuscript copy (he said) on Judge Davis.

Roberts knows how the horrible research findings concerning the foetal and neonatal toxicity of AZT that I brought to the MCC's attention in my letters were received by the members of government to whom I copied it, because I told him. He knows that they aren't considered ridiculous at all; on the contrary. Roberts also knows very well that Mbeki doesn't think these findings a joke, and he knows why, because I've told him. So why is he ridiculing them, implying that Mbeki thinks they're a joke too? The irresistible inference must be that Roberts is a totally unscrupulous, unprincipled person, and is indifferent to the serious and sometimes fatal injury of African babies by AZT and similar drugs for as long as he can look clever at my expense.

To hear Roberts's jeering at my plea for the protection of African babies against poisoning by AZT and similar drugs in the womb and after birth by white and Indian doctors would be to understand that he doesn't think there's anything to worry about, and that my concern is unfounded and maybe even a sign of mental perturbation. And, as mentioned, he implies that Mbeki doesn't think so either. But Mbeki's directive in Parliament on 28 October 1999 that the safety of AZT be enquired into was issued at precisely the time that GlaxoWellcome, now GlaxoSmithKline, and its camp followers in Achmat and the commercial media were pressing the government to buy AZT for giving pregnant African women; and Dr Tshabalala-Msimang's statements in and out of Parliament around the time chiefly concerned AZT's foetal toxicity. Roberts knows this because he's read *Debating AZT* which deals with it, an early draft of which sparked Mbeki's concern and his extraordinary political intervention. And which book Roberts himself rated 'very good, very important'.

But Roberts wouldn't want it publicly known that he shares Mbeki's concerns about these horribly toxic drugs, because he's afraid of being branded an 'AIDS denialist'. That's one heresy from South African and American white liberal ideological orthodoxy that he won't go near. 'He's a denialist' is a charge that Roberts, unlike the subject of his book, doesn't have the courage to court. He'd rather be counted along with progressive sorts like Tony Leon, Edwin Cameron, Zackie Achmat, Ferial Haffajee, David Beresford, Drew Forrest, Patrick Bond, Terry Bell, Anton Harber, Nicoli Nattrass, Steven Friedman, and Richard Calland.

Being entirely self-interested and unconcerned about anyone's welfare but his own, Roberts casts my campaign to protect African babies from ARV drug poisoning as ridiculous, so as to look cool, reasonable and sensible – in short, on the 'intellectually respectable' side of the propaganda-generated progressive consensus in support of these drugs. He fakes that he's the sober articulator of Mbeki's views on giving AZT and similar drugs to African women while pregnant, and that there's no problem there. No horror there at all.

Roberts claims that my criticisms of the TAC's false claim to be a representative organization, and of the MCC's dereliction of its statutory responsibilities to protect the public, infants included, from the marketing of bad drugs, is evidence of what he calls, in another meaningless Cameronesque flourish, my 'dictatorial presumptuousness':

As opposed to the dictatorial presumptuousness of the TAG and TAC alike, Mbeki preferred democratic policy formulation premised upon free and open debate. Spare a thought for Mbeki, sailing a ship of state amidst these crosswinds of ideological storm.

After reading this billowing drivel you might wonder how its author got degrees from Harvard and Oxford (on the other hand, Edwin Cameron took a First Class degree from Oxford, so anything apparently goes at those places; if you cringed over *Fit to Govern*, believe me you don't want to read *Witness to AIDS*).

Roberts doesn't identify any 'ideological storm'. He doesn't stipulate what ideological conflict he's referring to between me and Achmat in our disagreement about whether ARVs are very good drugs that save lives or very bad drugs that end them. He just claims that the two of us are vulgar ideological adversaries blowing a lot of bluster on 'Mbeki sailing a ship of state' and making things so hard for him in the stormy 'crosswinds' we whip up that people should 'Spare a thought for' him.

Everything I do is directed at ventilating the little known facts about ARVs for 'free and open debate'. I welcome 'free and open debate', whereas my opponents serving the drug industry suppress it with editorial policy, bans and personal vilification. Roberts knows this perfectly well; we've discussed it often, and he's remarked on it to me and deplored it.

The 'About us' tab at the very top of the right column on the TIG website<sup>25</sup> explains:

The Treatment Information Group is a public interest initiative to promote *research-based* debate of antiretroviral drug policy, al-

ternative non-toxic treatment approaches to AIDS, and HIV testing issues in South Africa.

Debate, see?

In charging me with ‘dictatorial presumptuousness’, beyond disputing the TAC’s claim to be a representative organization, and asking the High Court for a special order in its discretion, Roberts doesn’t think it necessary to make out any case in support. He just flings his turds. What I’ve been doing year after year is research the toxicity literature on ARVs and call attention to it, since no one else in this country is – at the personal cost of being regarded by all newspaper readers as gaga for it. Would Roberts leave this to the doctors? Mbeki himself once lamented to the late Professor Sam Mhlongo that it should be left to a lawyer to be doing the work that doctors should have done. I do not accept that I’m being presumptuous in doing the work I do, to which I’ve given the second half of my life, nor do I accept that I’m being dictatorial. These allegations are lies.

I’m hugely interested in ideology, but the ARV safety and efficacy issues that I’ve raised have no inherent ideological content. Ideology is irrelevant to the case I make against these drugs on safety and efficacy grounds. In exposing AZT and similar drugs as modern-day Salvarsan, deadly and useless, I’m not setting about fanning any ‘crosswinds of ideological storm’. The whites and Indians, mostly, along with a clutch of well-placed African *amakholwa* who’ve learned the best songs to sing for their wages, who promote ARVs for Africans, may react with a hail of ideologically stirred fulminations against me, because the unconscious ideology that shapes their thinking is rattled by what I say, but that doesn’t support Roberts’s characterization of me and my work as unhinged ideological raving. Nothing I’ve published fits this bill. And no honest person will disagree.

Roberts proposes that we ‘spare a thought’ for Mbeki distracted by the ‘crosswinds of ideological storm’ that I’m responsible for putting him in, which I should never have done, and from which Roberts would protect him. Only Roberts’s metaphors, as clever as they sound, bear no relation to reality whatsoever. Mbeki himself appreciates the neo-colonial ideological content of the AIDS construct; Roberts is oblivious to it (more below).

You might infer that what Roberts is seeking to do with this writing is push me out the game. This inference, namely that the Johnny come lately from Trinidad wishes to silence my voice in the discourse, is supported by the fact that while I was working in Europe over the period late April to early July 2007 he attempted to mobilize against me by feed-

ing false information to a strategically placed friend, contrived to filter down to and chill me. I immediately sniffed out the lie, however, and recognized the ploy and his whispering behind it, and his sneaky gambit flopped.

Roberts told me that he was convinced that Nadine Gordimer had ‘mobilized’ (his word) ‘a neo-liberal clique’ (Sanders’s expression in his supporting affidavit in the defamation case) to discredit him in order to kill *No Cold Kitchen* off at birth, and he was bitter about it. Yet in *Fit to Govern* Roberts pulled exactly the same trick on me in regard to my own writing projects. His purpose was to imply in his book that I’m not a serious writer and that I’ve nothing to say that anybody with any sense should take serious account of – well knowing *The trouble with nevirapine* is finally ready for publication (a German translation’s almost complete and an Italian one’s well on the way).

Although a mighty ‘ideological storm’ over *Just say yes, Mr President* is certain some time in the future, because it takes a jackhammer to white South African liberal ideology, it’s not ready and publication is a long way off.

The other thing is I’m not contributing to any ‘ideological storm’ by positing any ideology; in *Just say yes, Mr President* I’m disassembling an ideology. As for Achmat, he’s too stupid to have an ideology; from selling tricks in the toilets (more below), he’s moved on to selling drugs for the pharmaceutical industry, and that’s all there is to it.

I surmise that what Roberts is trying to do is to discredit *Just say yes, Mr President* pre-emptively, because he has no interest in the ideological ore that I’ve mined, and he wants you to think, by writing as he does, that Mbeki finds the ideological dimensions of AIDS as uninteresting and irrelevant as he does. Thing is, once you’ve seen through the dogmas of AIDS science, like the dogmas of the Christian religion, you start to grasp AIDS’s *essential* ideological and political character. But you can’t even start for as long as you’re still a believer, a participant in the delusion. And Roberts, unlike Mbeki, hasn’t gone through that door.

Roberts repeatedly demeans the energy I apply to what I do as ‘zeal’ – not in the sense of commendable diligence and perseverance, but in a fanatical, religious sense (‘frenzied’ was the word he used to Donadio): a ‘zeal’ so excessive that it ‘transports him [*Brink*] into a twilight zone where a tiny coven of furious anti-treatment propagandists and amateur statisticians make him their unlikely prophet’.

Actually, as Owen and Baron have noted about his behaviour, and both the High Court and Supreme Court of Appeal have agreed (stand by), it’s Roberts who’s inclined to run off with mad ‘zeal’. Again Roberts

exhibits his propensity for displacing his unbalanced personality traits on those around him. But anyway, within the ordinary positive meaning of the word, who can reasonably be faulted for doing their work with ‘zeal’, rather than lackadaisically?

By ‘twilight zone’ Roberts seems to mean I occupy a fantasy world; that I talk to myself and hear voices; that I write science fiction. His purpose is simply to insult me, dishonestly, to deceive his readers in his bid to set me up to knock me down – only it’s a straw man he’s knocking down, not me.

Roberts doesn’t know how many ‘furious anti-treatment propagandists’ are in my ‘coven’, and he calls it ‘tiny’ without any evidence of its size. What would it matter were it really were ‘tiny’ – with the very inventor of AZT on our side, and a Chemistry Nobel Laureate too? The number of ‘anti-treatment propagandists’ who began campaigning against thalidomide in the early sixties in the face of similar scoffing was all of a ‘tiny’ two: Doctors William McBride and Widukind Lenz. Roberts doesn’t say in what sense my voluntary association is a ‘coven’, or on what basis he thinks the members of this ‘coven’ are ‘furious’. But all this is to just to demean us by the crassest name-calling. He’s not even exaggerating; he’s just inventing.

In aspersing the ‘amateur statisticians’ he talks about, Roberts is evidently alluding to Rian Malan, who has written cogent critiques for *nose-week* of the wildly inflated statistics and computer projections bandied about in South Africa, and to TIG general secretary Chris Rawlins, an accountant with a serious head for figures, who’s done similar fine work in his letters to the newspapers.

By mocking their debunks of the fantastic HIV and AIDS statistics put about by the AIDS establishment as ‘amateur’, Roberts implicitly backs the thrilling claims of Rob Dorrington, Debbie Bradshaw and the rest of their low-Watt sort that the blacks are riddled with it (because they’re black). This is because Roberts thinks no differently from Dorrington and Bradshaw, as is clear from his claim that ‘an undetected epidemic spread powerfully’ among ‘African populations’ like a ‘flood’, taking everyone (among the ‘African populations’, not the white or any other populations).

Roberts doesn’t support his claim that either of these guys see me as their ‘prophet’. So perhaps it’s because they respect and admire my work. If so, then I was Roberts’s ‘prophet’ for nearly two years, given that he said and wrote how much he respected and admired it too.

After vomiting over Welz and Malan and my collaborators and supporters in my group, Roberts thinks he'll finish me off with a coup de grace in the head: "The police took away Man-Man," Naipaul concludes. "The authorities took him away for observation. Then for good." This is the cue for us all to go Ha Ha Ha. And think Roberts is a hugely funny writer. By trading on VS Naipaul, quoting from his novel word for word.

Of course in portraying me in this manner, Roberts means to convey to the reader that he considers me to be a gibbering idiot who should be confined in a lock-up mental hospital. But does he truly? Is that his honest opinion? Does he have one?

Earlier I cited a written instance of Roberts deprecating what he calls the 'discourse by denigration' style of ARV-promoting activists and journalists in South Africa, on one occasion when I was being abused in this way. And in his book, on the very page before he starts defaming me as mad, Roberts is still making the same point:

People tend to present the AIDS debate as though a mad president was reigned in ... But that is emphatically the wrong story. ... why [did] the natives continue ... to support both the ANC and Mbeki's AIDS policies? Were the voters ... mad? As Cape Town academic Anthony Butler points out: 'Attributions of "irrationality" or "denial" ... no matter how many people hold them to be true do not constitute adequate explanations' ... meaningful analysis must instead embark, Butler cautions, 'with the presumption that South African policy makers are "other persons who are persons in much the same sense as we are ourselves"'.

Roberts's appreciation of the illegitimacy of tarring someone as insane, as a cheap and improper way of discrediting them and eliminating them from a field of contested knowledge, is not some recent epiphany of his. He'd been thinking about it and writing about it long before he settled the final draft of his book. Here's how we know:

I obtained a copy of the AIDS chapter<sup>26</sup> of Roberts's manuscript that he'd written before meeting me. Someone in the President's office seems to have found the manuscript an insufferably pretentious con, and leaked it to *noseweek*<sup>27</sup>, in which journal Rian Malan came to much the same conclusion in his review<sup>28</sup> of it. I'll refer to the AIDS chapter of the manuscript as the '*noseweek* draft'. Since it's little more than a pastiche of quotations, and there's very little Roberts's own work in it, but what there is is relevant for my purposes, he won't mind if I make it accessible online for critical scrutiny. (He didn't think to ask my permission before quoting from my unpublished manuscript, including a passage he para-

phrases wrongly and then wantonly exaggerates in order to knock it, which would never have survived final editing before print, and which I regret for the hurt it caused a third party.)

Roberts responded to the news that *noseweek* had been given the manuscript with the retort that it was a stale two years old. It seems the *noseweek* draft submitted by Roberts to Pretoria for approval ('Personal and confidential. Strictly no distribution') was indeed just his very early AIDS chapter notes. This is consistent with what he told me when we met: that he was busy researching and writing his AIDS chapter. And there's no mention of the political use of AIDS as ideology by gay men, an insight of mine treated at length in my own manuscript which he appropriated without credit both in the draft AIDS chapter that he showed me and in his book. In fact there's no trace of my work in it at all. Which further suggests that the *noseweek* draft preceded it, and was just a very early working note. The point of all this is that Roberts's thoughts recorded in it were not new; he'd been turning them over in his mind from the start.

I point out here that the *noseweek* draft corroborates my recollection of Roberts's statement when we met that he was planning to pitch the controversy around Mbeki and AIDS as a freedom of speech issue, an aspect to which Mbeki referred his comment on the draft recorded in his letter. You see it in his lines early on the first page:

SHUT UP: disquiet as to letter linked to trope of the surfing of internet sites. In the one instance the point is that the native president must not speak. In the next it is that he must not think-or at least not read....

It's evident from the *noseweek* draft that Roberts was bothered right from the beginning by the accusations of insanity that had been levelled at Mbeki for not believing any more. (My own book manuscript that I gave him compiles and lists just about all of these charges against Mbeki, locally and abroad, and discusses their finer meaning. Some of them appear in my draft back cover blurb<sup>79</sup> for *Just say yes, Mr President*.)

Roberts evidently thought the claims about Mbeki's madness so unacceptable that he addressed this matter in the *noseweek* draft as his first order of business, and went on and on about it, page after page, mentioning 'Cameron et al [*sic*] irrationality quotes'; quoting Foucault on the "need" to objectify and distance "the Other" in the form of the madman or the leper'; Megan Vaughan on 'the literature of madness in colonial Africa', 'African madness', 'the mad African', etc; Mbeki on Tony Leon's charge that he is 'suffering from a "near-obsession" with finding African solutions to every problem', and on the allegedly 'unscientific' and 'irrational' African mind; Macaulay's 'defamation of ... intellect'

(Roberts's gloss); RW Johnson on the 'very African ... acceptance of things that are crazy', and how 'South Africa is often less susceptible to frontal logic than it is to a sort of magic realism'; and Johnson again: Mbeki's views on AIDS suggest he 'may be suffering the nervous breakdown that some suspect. Crudely put, many now believe that Mbeki is no longer playing with a full pack – that he's off his rocker.'

But the punch-line is Roberts's express disapprobation of Johnson's defamatory style: 'The excuse that springs to mind is that perhaps Johnson is merely loose with insanity claims. But no.' Roberts then goes on to state why Johnson has no 'excuse' for being 'loose with insanity claims'.

This is to say, Roberts entirely appreciates that calling someone with whom you disagree mad is not on, and in his book there's no justification for it. But being Roberts, only for the moment. When he turns on me, he uses Johnson's tactic to discredit me with 'insanity claims', a tactic he's long disavowed as inexcusable, right from the start. This is because he can't knock me over fair and square: my integrity in what I do is unasailable; I'm scrupulously careful with fact; and, Roberts senses that I'm on to something big, even he doesn't understand everything I'm saying, because he's too lazy and too stupid to understand it.

This is not a book review, but you'll indulge me for briefly venting my opinion of the *noseweek* draft AIDS chapter as an example of what happens when you don't do your homework and you're consequently lost in class and trying desperately hard to get away with winging it, to sound clever, to say the right pleasing sounding things, all pure waffle spoken in your parents' refined, upper-caste voice, a little bit frightened, way out of your depth, but acting brave and confident: the 'point is'; 'the major point is'; 'Leon was precisely not transgressing the historically allotted white identity'; 'the trope'; 'the trope'; 'the trope'; 'this overlooks'; 'This was precisely what'; and so on. Kak like that.

It's quite pathetic, and it's incredible to think Roberts actually submitted this garbage to Mbeki via his Minister in the Presidency Dr Essop Pahad to read, without squirming in embarrassment (one certainly winces reading it). But then again, possibly not, because Roberts absolutely believes that the sun shines. Apparently he was raised to believe this about himself. Everything he writes has a quality of 'self-congratulation', which dismal attribute of his own personality he transfers in the now recognizable psychological pattern: in the *noseweek* draft he says, 'Cite Johnson's self-congratulation – nobody looking at Aids issue. If a tree falls and Johnson doesn't hear it, has the tree really fallen?'

Here, trying to sound awfully wise in mentioning this profound epistemological quandary, Roberts appears to be repeating what he heard someone say in philosophy class back at university. In doing so, though,

he gives away his mythological thinking about AIDS: what white doctors and journalists call ‘AIDS’ in South Africa is to him is like a fallen tree, something big, something new, a new disease phenomenon just as the Americans claim, tearing through Africans, according to the white and Indian experts in South Africa, since the advent of democracy in 1994 (there’s a clue).

To Roberts, unlike to Mbeki from late 1999 on, ‘AIDS’ is not just the timeless diseases of poverty in Africa rebranded as sex disease – the same old sort of diseases at the same old rate of incidence among the impoverished African poor, rechristened with a sexy new name, and given a sexy new cause to distract from the severe historical, political and economic contradictions in our country that have resulted in continuing endemic broken health among Africans for centuries and persisting into the present.

Roberts believes that sex is the problem, not hunger. The fashionable new middle way, though, which appeals to Roberts because it’s risk-free position to take, and being a cowardly sort of person he likes a risk-free position, is to say it’s a mixture of both, namely that poor Africans fall sick because they have too much sex as well as too little food. He says as much in his footnotes: ‘It is equally obvious and orthodox truth that the progress and manifestation of AIDS is driven by an interplay of viral affliction and environmental factors.’

Now, we see, Roberts is elevating his ‘opinionated prejudice’ and ‘superstition’, as Mbeki calls it, to ‘truth’, just as Edwin Cameron and the TAC do. They like to call their same ‘opinionated prejudice’ and ‘superstition’ about ‘orthodox truth’ ‘truth’ too, believing in and asserting their secular myths as fervently and aggressively as Americans who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the main point is that, unlike Mbeki, Roberts considers it ‘equally obvious and orthodox truth that the progress and manifestation of AIDS is driven by an interplay of viral affliction and environmental factors’. Which is Roberts’s precious way of saying if you’re hungry all the time your deadly germs that you got from your girlfriend’s fanny really take off and make you sick and die.

Mbeki doesn’t think this ‘obvious ... truth’ at all. He doesn’t think AIDS, so-called immune-deficiency, is primarily behavioural in cause, he thinks it’s environmental (where and how you live) – telling Tony Leon in their exchange over AZT after rape,

even a child, from among the black communities, knows that our own ‘burden of disease’ coincides with the racial divisions in our country. In this regard, you might care to consider what

it is that distinguishes Africa from the United States, as a consequence of which millions in sub-Saharan Africa allegedly become HIV positive as a result of heterosexual sexual intercourse, while, to all intents and purposes, there is a zero possibility of this happening in the US.

And in his 'Letter from the President' in *ANC Today* on 5 April 2002, Mbeki repeated the point that 'the predominant feature of illnesses that cause disease and death among the black people in our country is poverty' – not blacks having more sex than whites do. Roberts obviously doesn't report these statements by Mbeki in his book, because it doesn't fit into his false representation of Mbeki's new thinking about AIDS from the end of 1999 on. This is because, on AIDS, Roberts's book is a hoax. In a book supposedly about Mbeki's thinking, Roberts is giving us his, as if we're in the least interested.

'Despite the setback they suffered in the 2004 election, the drug lobby and the minority media attempted to continue the effort to immobilize Mbeki's government by creating monsters in it and in him. By instinct and practice a careful thinker and practical policymaker, Mbeki now found himself drawn into a clash of fundamentalisms replete with evangelical language and fuelled by primordial racial stereotypes.'

This is all bullshit. In fact the drug lobby went strangely quiet before the 2004 election, and the reason it went quiet is because Achmat had been so badly poisoned by a couple of months of ARV treatment that he was completely incapacitated, immobilized and bed-ridden (dealt with below). The drug lobby didn't suffer any setback in any meaningful sense in the election; the TAC did not endorse the Opposition parties, for instance.

The liberal media's creation of 'monsters' in the government and in Mbeki wasn't any particular feature of that time, but well something before it, flaring up again in 2006. The theme of how newspaper journalists created a 'monster' of Mbeki is mine, a major focus of *Just say yes, Mr President*, which Roberts has ripped off uncredited.

Mbeki was the only 'monster' created (because white journalists all perceive him as much more intelligent than they are). Tshabalala-Msimang, on the other hand, was attacked as a dimwit and a clown (because white and Indian journalists all think it's stupid to advocate the ingestion of nutrient-rich foods by impoverished, sick Africans rather than cell poisons). So there's no factual basis for Roberts's statement that the 'media attempted to continue the effort to immobilize Mbeki's gov-

ernment by creating monsters in it and in him'. Historically, this is rubbish.

Nor is there any factual historical basis for claiming that 'Mbeki now found himself drawn into a clash of fundamentalisms', because Mbeki never stood between two 'clash[ing] fundamentalisms'. I'm not a fundamentalist. I'm an independent researcher and writer with twenty years experience in sorting fact from fiction, and I brought the facts about AZT to Mbeki's attention in 1999. I did not clash with the TAC in 2004. In January 2007 I filed a criminal charge against TAC leader Achmat in the International Criminal Court, and I've criticized the TAC in my recent polemics, but on the other hand, it's members haven't come close to addressing what I have to say, not even in the High Court recently, in which I make my case comprehensively in an affidavit, with annexures, standing eighteen centimetres high. So there was no 'clash' between Achmat and his TAC and me and my TIG following the election in 2004. Roberts is inventing this like when he was a child telling lies to his mother.

Roberts provides no evidence whatsoever to support his claim that 'Mbeki now found himself drawn into a clash of fundamentalisms' after the 2004 election. He's just manufacturing history as if writing a novel.

Roberts's reference to this 'clash' being 'replete with evangelical language and fuelled by primordial racial stereotypes' is (a) ripped from *Just say yes, Mr President*, and (b) manifestly applicable to Achmat, his TAC, and his supporters in the newspapers, not me. But anyway, Roberts is falsifying the history to claim this 'now' started after the 2004 election. I deal with these elements of the AIDS controversy drama in my book; they showed up much earlier on, when Mbeki was condemning the American medicine AZT and questioning the American HIV theory of AIDS.

Hot after concurring in Butler's immensely perspicacious admonition quoted in his book, and in the *noseweek* draft too, that a politician such as Mbeki should not be considered crazy and in denial ('that is emphatically the wrong story') merely because he no longer thinks, as he once did, that you can die from enjoying making love with a woman; no longer thinks, as he once did, that impoverished Africans who fall ill with all the timeless, familiar sentinel diseases of poverty are sick because they made love with a woman one or more times; and no longer thinks, as he once did, that they can get better by swallowing purpose-designed cell poisons such as AZT that are poisonous to every cell they reach, Roberts sets about presenting me as mad for no longer subscribing to these canards

of the white liberal mind either. Shared by their kitchen maids and garden boys in the newspapers.

You must wonder why Roberts employs the characteristically defamatory tactics of the TAC and its fans in the liberal newspapers, when he's on record in correspondence with me, and even in his book, disavowing this sort of behaviour. A malicious ulterior motive seems obvious. Consider this:

Intent on insulting me as foully as he can, Roberts moves from equating me with the fool Man-Man, to equating me much more offensively with the leader of the TAC, Zackie Achmat, anticipating how repugnant I'll find this.

Tipped by me in *Just say yes, Mr President* (of course he doesn't acknowledge my research work), Roberts gleefully alludes in his book to Achmat's account in his biography of how he used to earn his money bending over for all comers in Cape Town's public lavatories. And in the next breath Roberts claims: 'Brink meanwhile places great emphasis in his own autobiography upon [a] potentially lethal shock that he suffered on a beach as a child.'

One strains to conceive of any link or connection between Achmat's enjoyable career (he recounts) as a rent boy (before he graduated from prostitution in the toilets to pimping for the drug industry) and an accident I experienced in my early childhood. This is just hate-speech in the Julius Streicher tradition.

I've never written any autobiography (a brief introductory note about me on my group's website hardly counts as one), so there's the first lie. But I evidently mentioned the accident at some point in the almost two years that we were regularly hanging out as friends.

I invite you to ponder the likelihood that as a serious writer involved in a serious public policy issue I should have seriously claimed to Roberts that the accident 'gives [me] a certain intellectual electricity'; and not only that, but also that I 'place great emphasis' on it.

In sum, the question is: how likely is Roberts's claim that I would attribute my thinking, my outlook, and/or my writing style to an electric shock forty years ago, and that I'd place 'great emphasis' on it? Or rather: how much more likely is it that Roberts's claim is a perversion of what I told him, a dishonest fabrication to misinform his readers and ridicule me by way of a blatant lie.

You may even conclude that in making up this claim about me, my mind, and implicitly my work as a writer, Roberts is begrudgingly expressing his tremendous admiration and even envy, since it's obvious

that my writing is so much better than his, even if I don't get paid millions by banks to do it.

The determination of the probabilities in the electrical issue for decision may be assisted, if they're not already obvious, by the surrounding countryside of patently false claims that Roberts makes about me.

Relentlessly set on making me out to be a complete fool, Roberts alleges in the next sentence:

A fuming Brink once sent me a press report detailing outrageous conduct by an American AIDS organization in Africa, neglecting to notice that the magazine in question – *The Onion* – was famously satirical.

Were this allegation true, Roberts would be able to produce a letter or an email showing that (a) I was 'fuming' angrily; (b) I had foolishly missed the spoof; and (c) I had been unaware that *The Onion* is a satirical journal online, which I enjoyed reading from time to time, and that instead I thought the journal's articles were for real.

Unless he resorts to forgery – and we must grant that he does have a special talent for manufacture – Roberts won't be able to produce such an epistle. This is because the 'Sent Items' of my email archive shows<sup>80</sup> that on 30 September 2005 I mailed Roberts nothing more than the hyperlink to the piece, with its title 'You all have AIDS' in the subject line – no 'fuming' remarks, and nothing about 'outrageous conduct'. This is to say, in making this claim about me Roberts has written pure fiction again. Or to put a point on it, he's lied, because he can't help himself telling lies. He can't nail me on any point of fact, so he just invents stuff out of thin air – telling flagrant lies in a book pitched to the world as a work of serious scholarship.

The *Onion* parody in point is very clever, very subtle. It skilfully invokes all the usual language and fervour of professional white AIDS careerists and activists ministering to Africans, and it reads like anything one might find written by Nicolai Natrass or on the TAC's website. Chances are that because he's a believer (that Africans are riddled with the sex virus) Roberts missed the joke, and only realized that he'd been taken in well into the piece or sometime afterwards. As we've seen, Roberts repeatedly imputes his own failings to others. He seems to be doing it here again in falsely claiming that I had been fooled by the *Onion* satire, when it appears he had.

The *Onion*'s hilarious send-up, 'You all have AIDS' (like the similar satirical song 'We all have AIDS'<sup>81</sup> at the beginning of the satirical puppet movie 'Team America: World Police'), has been linked to my group's

website since early 2006. The wording of my hyperlink to the piece, ‘You can’t be serious’<sup>82</sup>, is a comment on the Human Sciences Research Council’s preposterous ‘HIV Prevalence’ study released in December 2005, which I analysed and debunked in a detailed critique<sup>83</sup>, copied to government, and posted on my website. I would hardly have used the spoof to highlight how ridiculous the HSRC report was if I thought the piece serious.

The dim view that Mbeki took of the HSRC’s ludicrous claims that ‘HIV’ is rife among Africans, but virtually absent among whites, was reported in the press a couple of weeks later, and is mentioned in a follow-up letter I wrote<sup>84</sup>.

On returning to Cape Town after one of his regular trips to see Pahad in Pretoria, Roberts told me that my critique had been greatly appreciated, and that it had been raised and discussed with him by Pahad’s Chief Director Louis du Plooy. He told me that when asked whether he’d read it, he replied that he hadn’t (even though he had), because he was curious, he explained to me, to hear how it had been received (he lies habitually, and to everyone and anyone, whenever it suits him). Responding to positive comment about my critique, Roberts told me that he’d echoed the appraisal, adding, ‘When Brink writes, you can’t answer.’

Here was Roberts endorsing my work by voicing his appreciation of my careful precision with fact and analysis, coupled with caustic satirical polemic. He knows, because I’ve told him, that the guiding motto I’ve coined for my writing is ‘Meticulous precision with fact; maximum violence in polemic’ (to ‘bring the abscess to a head’, as Fanon put it). He didn’t think this sort of writing style inappropriate then; he thought my chosen approach effective, and he said so.

You must be wondering why in his book Roberts should go out of his way to rubbish me, and belittle and disparage my work as that of an ‘eccentric campaigner’ – considering his opinion of *Debating AZT* expressed to me: ‘very good, very important’; of *The trouble with nevirapine*: ‘Rigorous; your best book’; and of *Just say yes, Mr President*: ‘Brilliant, fucking brilliant’ and ‘very funny; it made me laugh out loud.’ As one thoughtful friend in Cape Town observed to me, Roberts’s attack on me in his book is more sustained and more vicious than against anyone else. Part of the solution to this riddle was suggested to me by a friend in Johannesburg just recently, and we’ll treat it at the end.

Since Roberts demonstrably lies all the time, one must entertain the possibility that for some devious reason he was being insincere in proffering his appraisal of my major work in progress as ‘Brilliant, fucking brilliant’, and that in fact it didn’t actually make him ‘laugh out loud’, as

he claimed it did, because actually he didn't find its style 'very funny' at all, and that he lied, as he regularly does, in reporting that it had made him 'laugh out loud', being 'very funny' and 'Brilliant, fucking brilliant', because in truth he found it dull and witless. Or maybe although he found it 'Brilliant', he didn't really think it 'fucking brilliant', because in his view it wasn't quite as 'brilliant' as fucking.

The possibility that Roberts lied to me for some occult reason in claiming to have found the raw manuscript of *'Just say yes, Mr President'* 'Brilliant, fucking brilliant' and 'very funny; it made me laugh out loud' is excluded, however, by what he wrote about it in *No Cold Kitchen* published a few months later in about October 2005.

*No Cold Kitchen* affords objective confirmation that in truth Roberts thought very highly of the raw manuscript of *'Just say yes, Mr President'*. He quotes a snatch from it, and what he quotes he endorses cheerfully. Most importantly, he explicitly lauds what he called its 'acid Swiftian wit'. This is to say Roberts recorded in *No Cold Kitchen* that he found my lacerating irony entertaining; and he ranked my deployment of satire as a rhetorical blade up there with Jonathan Swift's (his opinion not mine).

And as recently as January 2007, Roberts affirmed to my friend in New York, mentioned earlier, that he considered my work 'extremely significant ... extremely important'.

But in *Fit to Govern* he degrades my writing to 'ferocious polemic', as if I bang out careless diatribes in a mad temper like he does (see just below), rather than slowly and coolly, and taking the greatest pains over every comma. Which he well knows.

In now denigrating my writing as 'ferocious polemic', rather than as meticulously researched, analyzed and served wrapped in 'acid Swiftian wit', Roberts projects his own psychological failings onto me again (just as he calls Martin Welz 'slipshod', and Rian Malan 'narcissistic' and a 'publicity-whore'), thereby exhibiting a childish mental warp commonplace in clinical psychology.

Roberts also declares in his footnotes,

Actually the most ferociously fought difference between local 'denialist' Anthony Brink and the global patron saint of 'denialism', Peter Duesberg, is precisely over Duesberg's acceptance (which Brink rejects) that HIV exists but is harmless. The dissidents therefore hardly 'unite' on this point.

Roberts doesn't bother substantiating his allegation that I've 'fought ... ferociously' with Duesberg, which is to say, again, that I'm a ferocious person. The reason for this may be traced to the fact that I've never even discussed the HIV isolation question with my friend Peter, let alone

‘fought ... ferociously’ with him over it. And I think that’s all I need say for now.

But do you think by saying I write ‘ferociously’, what Roberts really means to say in a backhanded way is that he thinks I’m quite a sharp ou, and that he’s a bit scared of me? (He’s been avoiding me nervously since my return from Europe in July, and actually fled from a cinema foyer at my approach.)

During his defamation case against the *Sunday Times* in the Cape High Court, Roberts himself admitted<sup>85</sup> under cross-examination that his fusillade of dozens of threatening letters to all and sundry following his complaint to the SABC was not just ‘zealous’, but right ‘over the top’.

A bit more than that, the trial judge thought when dismissing his claim. After reading the sort of correspondence Roberts writes, and hearing how he’d behaved in a number of different contexts, the judgment recorded (I cite the judge’s words in different parts of it) that he’s

arrogant, contemptuous, critical, emotional, [displayed] excessive emotionality, [engaged in] inappropriate and provocative behaviour, has a grandiose sense of self-importance, is harsh, has an unreasonable expectation of especially favourable treatment, is haughty, impatient, a name-dropper, obsessed, obsessive, outlandish, paranoid, provocative, relentless, threatening, unbalanced, venomous, and vindictive.

And more to the point, in this critique of his lying and thieving in his book:

I found [him] to be evasive, argumentative and an opportunistic witness ... He was unconvincing, and his evidence was shown to be contradictory. ... [He] spent more time trying to score points off the cross-examiner than in answering the questions truthfully.

Which is to say that on a conspectus of all the evidence, tried and tested, a judge found Roberts to be a dishonest person who conceals the truth; tries burying it under tricky verbiage; manufactures his testimony in the witness stand as he goes along to suit his purposes; changes his evidence as and when he feels it’s to his advantage; is more interested in looking clever than being honest; and isn’t the sort of guy any sensible person should trust and believe, since he tells lies on oath without batting an eyelid.

Yes, M’Lord, he’s like that.

When on 23 April 2007 *Business Day* reported that *noseweek* had obtained a copy of the manuscript of his book, Roberts shot back<sup>86</sup>: ‘The

scale of the hoax that has been pulled on *noseweek* editor Martin Welz will provide light relief around my book's launch in June.'

But there wasn't any hoax at all, let alone a big one, and nor was there any 'light relief' to be had when the book was 'launch[ed] in June'. Nobody had 'pulled' any 'hoax'. By claiming that *noseweek* was the victim of a 'hoax' of some enormous 'scale', Roberts suggested that Welz had been deliberately deceived about the manuscript, as if it was a forgery like Hitler's diaries. But there was no truth in the suggestion whatsoever. Trying to be clever, Roberts lied reflexively without thinking, because lying comes naturally to him.

After perusing the judgment in the light of the trial record, the Supreme Court of Appeal rejected Roberts's petition for leave to appeal against the dismissal of his action on the basis – for this is the test – that no other court might reasonably come to any different findings.

It follows therefore that the judges of the Supreme Court of Appeal agreed with the trial judge's finding that Roberts is one of those blokes who tells lies as often as he tells the truth, even with his hand on the Bible.

Although I've not heard Roberts claim or suggest this before, the judicious reader must also contemplate the possibility that I am 'the biggest liar' (in the memorable words of the biggest naaier Zackie Achmat – it's why he thinks he's got AIDS – shouting on the steps of the Cape High Court, his finger pointing in my face, as the TV cameras rolled), who's told a pack of lies in claiming what Roberts privately said to me about my work (such as 'Brilliant, fucking brilliant', and 'Rigorous; your best book', and later offering, at different times, to write the forewords for both *Just say yes, Mr President* and *The trouble with nevirapine*), and that I have just made all these claims up, because actually it's the complainant rather than the respondent who's the compulsive liar telling barefaced lies all the time.

The judicious reader will be alive to this possibility, given that the unpleasant accusation<sup>87</sup> that I'm such a liar was once levelled at me on the leader page of the *Sunday Times*, and my reply<sup>88</sup>, published<sup>89</sup> with the best bit left out, might have been missed.

The possibility that I am the liar here should be considered, however, in the light of the fact that Roberts's privately expressed positive appraisals of my work, as alleged, are publicly corroborated by his enthusiastic remarks about it in *No Cold Kitchen*, as well as by his statements to my friend in New York (she told me) that my work is 'extremely important ... extremely significant'. Roberts quotes her own writing in his book as a reliable source, and at no time does he suggest that she's a liar who

invents things and puts words in other people's mouths that they never spoke.

In an interview in *Die Burger* on 15 June, the day before the public release of *Fit to Govern*, Roberts was asked why he equated me with a character as contemptible as Achmat – the lowest insult Roberts levelled at me in his entire book. Roberts's reply was reported in paraphrase:

*Die rede boekom by Brink fundamentalisties noem, is wat hy sien as die histeriese en aggressiewe manier waarop Brink – en sy teenbeelde – 'n standpunt verdedig.* (The reason he calls Brink fundamentalist is on account of what he sees as the hysterical and aggressive manner in which Brink, and his opponents, defend their positions.)

This is to say, Roberts justified smearing me as a 'fundamentalist' because of what he claimed to the interviewer was my 'hysterical and aggressive' polemical style.

In truth, however, Roberts liked my style a whole lot. He once remarked that in *Just say yes, Mr President* I'd got what he called 'the register' just right. I recall bouncing one risky passage off him for his thoughts on it, worrying that my hard language set in deadpan irony might be too dangerously extreme. No, he said, it was perfect.

Roberts didn't consider my writing 'hysterical' while we were friends; he said its 'Brilliant, fucking brilliant ... very funny ... acid Swiftian wit ... made me laugh out loud'. He said it was 'extremely significant' and 'extremely important', and so 'rigorous' that 'When Brink writes, you can't answer.' It's knockout stuff, he thought; and when I told him that one top South African medical scientist (not Mhlongo) remarked about me within earshot, 'He has a mind like a guillotine,' Roberts liked the report and agreed.

I raise no defence to Roberts's novel complaint that my writing is 'aggressive', because it's true. He read it all, and he never once suggested to me that I tone it down. It's all carefully contrived, using bruising irony to hack through thickets of myth and prejudice. In this approach I'm in good company: I cite aphorisms on this approach by several famous guys at the foot of the preface to *Just say yes, Mr President*.

Fanon approved 'a fighting literature', 'a revolutionary literature', 'a literature of combat', 'an aggressive response to the colonialist theory of pre-colonial barbarism' in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Indeed, he lauded belligerent literary engagement: 'The native intellectual who decides to give battle to colonial lies fights on the field of the whole continent.' And

chief among these ‘lies told by the occupying power’: ‘Colonialism ... has never ceased to maintain that the Negro is a savage.’

But in a book about Mbeki’s ‘Native Intelligence’ concerning AIDS and ARVs, which is to say what Mbeki thinks about them – or what Roberts claims he thinks about them, which is, he claims, the same as what he himself thinks about them – Roberts opts to tell ‘colonial lies, ‘the lies told by the occupying power’, namely the Western Imperium, such as that the ‘Poorer’ sort of Negro needs to ‘cut back’ on his sexual behaviour, and curb his baboon-like sex-drive. And because he’s failed to discipline himself, he’s contracted an invariably fatal sex disease that’s rife among the Negroes. Furthermore, to treat this invariably fatal sex disease that he’s contracted, which is rife among the Negroes, he needs to consume foreign medical merchandise bought by his government in a forced sale at a cost of billions, or he’ll inexorably die. Thinking these colonial thoughts himself, Roberts passes this sort of colonial thinking off as Mbeki’s.

What Roberts really objects to is that I’m much more militant and uncompromising than he is. I know it. And I know that my stings burn<sup>20</sup>, whereas in his writing (‘slipshod beatnik’, ‘publicity-whore’, etc) Roberts does the equivalent of farting in the room like a schoolboy, thinking he’s clever and expecting everyone to giggle along with him.

It’s usually elementary to anyone who’s gone beyond primary school that fundamentalism goes to ideological and religious dogmatism, not prose style; and Roberts is well aware that, unlike him (he believes everything he reads in the newspapers), I’m a sceptic, a non-believer in regard to all manner of conventional views and models of understanding of things, both political and scientific.

Roberts deliberately misdirects his readers in describing my thinking as fundamentalist, which is to say he’s lying to them again. What makes me extremely unpopular is that I mock the most precious dogmas of contemporary Western culture – another one being that swallowing deadly poisons can extend your life, and that although the US FDA and the new *England Journal of Medicine* have both cautioned pregnant women against drinking more than a couple of cups of coffee while pregnant, let alone alcohol, it’s a good thing to swallow purpose-designed DNA-destroying cell poisons such as AZT<sup>21</sup>, which readily cross the placental barrier<sup>22</sup> and maim the foetus<sup>23</sup> behind it.

I also scorn the usually implied but sometimes expressly stated belief that impoverished Africans have a high burden of disease, not because they’re malnourished, but because, as Zackie Achmat puts it, ‘Africans have lots of sex’ (similar crassly racist statements by other non-African AIDS enthusiasts such as Edwin Cameron and Jerry Coovadia are cited

at pages 23–4 of the ICC complaint<sup>24</sup>). I referred earlier to former WHO AIDS expert Professor James Chin’s expert opinion that Africans are busy with a non-stop sexual orgy. Local highly respected AIDS expert Virginia van der Vliet has written recently in ‘The Poverty Trap’ (i.e. it’s a thinking trap to attribute broken health among Africans to their poverty) in *AIDS Alert*, 14 March 2007, that

Mbeki is deeply conservative in not wanting – for whatever reason – to confront the historically developed current sexual mores of African men in South Africa. All the more then does the dogma of ‘poverty’ – so apparently radical, with the blame always pointed elsewhere – serve as a blind.

Do you think this white woman has enough brains to go to the toilet unassisted by her domestic servant?

But we see from his writing that Roberts believes in all the above-mentioned modern dogmas as firmly as Zackie Achmat, Edwin Cameron, Jerry Coovadia, Tony Leon, Ferial Haffajee, Drew Forrest, David Beresford, Patrick Bond, Terry Bell, Steven Friedman, Anton Harber, Richard Calland, Nicoli Natrass and Virginia van der Vliet do.

During his interview in *Die Burger*, Roberts also stated that in criticizing me (on spurious grounds) and Achmat too, ‘*Dit sluit nie uit dat bepaalde insigte aan enige van die groepe se werk ontleen kan word nie.*’ (‘This doesn’t exclude the possibility that certain insights can be derived from either group [*the TAC drug pushers, and the TIG drug critics*].’)

The interviewer, who’d given ‘*Just say yes, Mr President*’ a critical reading in 2003, recognized uncredited elements of it appearing in *Fit to Govern*, and taxed Roberts about this. He admitted: ‘*Dat hy self bepaalde insigte en gegewens by iemand soos Brink oorgeneem het, soos duidelik uit sy boek blyk, ontken Roberts nie.*’ (‘He doesn’t deny that he adopted some of Brink’s insights and data, as is obvious from his book.’) If Roberts really thought my insights the pointless scrawling of an irrational, unbalanced loony, rather than ‘Brilliant, fucking brilliant’, one’s at a loss to understand why he plagiarized them and passed them off as his own (lots below).

It’s intriguing to read that Roberts gleaned certain insights from Achmat’s ‘work’ too. In a debate with Achmat on Judge Davis’s e.tv show, ‘Judge for Yourself’, Roberts was shaken by Achmat’s coarse and dishonest debating tactics, and particularly by his suggestion on camera that his prestigious university degrees were mail-order fakes. Achmat was ‘a thug’, Roberts protested to me after the confrontation, when I told him my impression that Achmat had trounced him (privately amused to see it). Apparently oppugning your opponents by telling lies about them was

one of the ‘insights’ Roberts ‘derived’ from the ‘work’ of this ‘thug’, who from his manner so obviously grew up in a violent, alcoholic home, as he recounts.

But with Roberts, as always, it’s not the behaviour per se, it’s the direction of it. Roberts himself behaves like a thug in his interpersonal relationships, and like a thug in discourse, as is evident all over his book, with no respect for truth as he attacks people. His complaint was really that in a match of thugs he’d been bested.

From the manner in which Roberts quotes my characterization of Achmat as a ‘pharmaceutical industry pimp’, you’d understand that he disapproves of my denunciation of Achmat’s comprador role in service of the drug industry against South Africa’s democratic leadership and against the interests of South Africa’s people, particularly the majority African poor. But I can tell you from my many conversations with him that Roberts does not differ with me regarding who or what Achmat is.

In truth, Roberts thinks my description of Achmat as a ‘pharmaceutical industry pimp’ entirely apposite – in line with the ANC’s low view of this revolting person and his quisling organization, expressed in *ANC Today* on 17 December 2004 by the question, implying the answer, ‘Whose interests does the TAC serve?’

Mbeki himself likes the word ‘pimp’ (Roberts quotes him using it); he doesn’t purse his lips at the rude word as Roberts does; he doesn’t think it a distasteful or extravagant metaphor for a certain low political type of the Achmat sort.

Roberts writes that ‘On both sides of the religious war one found not the language of science or rationality, but of fundamentalism, anathema and even apocalypse.’ The casual liar is lying again in stating a half-truth worse than a flat-out lie. He cites top AIDS expert Steven Lewis and *Sunday Independent* columnist Maureen Isaacson, who being a white liberal agrees with Lewis’s absurd fire and brimstone AIDS sermonizing, full of Christian Bible-punching language, to show that the War on AIDS is essentially a mass-hysterical quasi-religious mania, and that these people are no longer thinking straight – just as I contend extensively in *Just say yes, Mr President*; it’s a major theme of my book that Roberts has taken from me, uncredited.

But you look in vain for any statement by me (or anyone in my group) quoted by Roberts to back his claim that on my side ‘of both sides of the religious war’ instead of using ‘the language of science or rationality’, I use the frenzied, dogmatic language of ‘fundamentalism, anathema and even apocalypse’.

This I remind you is after describing *The trouble with nevirapine*, a history of the invention and licensing of the drug, but more importantly a close analysis of its molecular and clinical pharmacology, as 'Rigorous; your best book'. The liar just writes whatever he likes, unchained to any empirical reality. The world of Roberts's bitter solitary imagination, where it serves his purposes on any given day, becomes his reality. Let me illustrate this with a concrete example from his personal behaviour.

I can't remember exactly when it was anymore, but one evening when Sanders was in town, Roberts invited me to join them at the Long Street Café. Soon after I got there, Roberts upped and left to fetch something from his flat close by. He was back in a couple of minutes in a fury, claiming that he'd just 'been assaulted'. He didn't volunteer what we lawyers call real evidence of this unfortunate experience, such as a cut, bruise or other unseemly blemish, and none was apparent; nor did he specify how he'd 'been assaulted'. Nonetheless, concerned for our friend, and sympathizing with him in his agitation, Sanders and I promptly repaired to the scene of the crime, led by the victim to a gate in a temporary fence put up by the municipality to close off the side roads during one of Long Street's regular groovy street festivals.

There we found the accused: a twirpy white guy whose grand job it was, he explained, to guard the portal to the world on the other side, and to bar passage to travellers not carrying a special pass.

Of course this would have been damned irritating to Roberts, who lived a stone's throw away, because the strict enforcement of the rule that the watchman had been charged by his bosses to apply meant the infuriating inconvenience for him of having to walk way up or way down Long Street to beyond all the fenced off side streets, before he could cut up and then double back all the way to his flat.

On arrival at the crime scene Roberts insistently demanded the summoning of the constabulary, exclaiming repeatedly in new terms, 'He hit me, he hit me.'

To this criminal averment the weed equally resolutely, but less excitedly, pled not guilty, elaborating his plea with an account of how Roberts had rocked up at his gate and demanded his ordinary right of way. When he challenged Roberts for his pass, and Roberts was unable to produce same, he declined to allow him through, in accordance with his official mandate. Roberts was not prepared to put up with this, he said, and tried to just force his way past him. To prevent this, it being his job, he said he tried blocking Roberts's bumptious manoeuvre by repulsing him with his upturned palms, pressed against Roberts's advancing chest. As he was explaining this, the guard raised his hands in the aforesaid manner in a

demonstration in loco for the benefit of the modest crowd assembling at the scene of the excitement.

Undaunted by these exculpatory protestations, Roberts persisted, 'He hit me,' also shouting at the weed to my considerable amazement: 'I'm not some street kaffir.'

I interject here to report that, like Mbeki ('THE KAFFIRS ARE COMING!'), I'm the first one to allow that the forbidden K word popped occasionally with ironic intention in the right place for its explosive effect works a treat in communicating something offbeat, usually humorous. I remember my late father, the kindest man, and a founder member of, and unsuccessful election candidate for, the old Progressive Party (hot stuff in its day), standing among a group of fellow lawyers at my house late into the night, when the bottles were empty and the conversation had drifted to a pointless discussion of each others' scars and their causes, pointing to one on the back of his hand and saying unexpectedly with countless strata of old-world Natal English humour, 'This is where I was stabbed by a kaffir in West Street.' The mirth was extreme. But there was no humour in Roberts's assertion of his social rank (even as he later in his book mocked Helen Suzman for her distinction, in 1947, between 'the urban Native, who had progressed far beyond the rural Native mentally' and the latter sort of person), just blind rage at having been mistaken for one.

Finally the cops pitched and Roberts restated his grievance. There was an exchange of personal particulars and the rest of the usual about coming to the police station and so on.

As a trial lawyer, and an old whore in the game, as my father, also a lawyer, used to say, I regret to tell you that I found myself bound to prefer the stranger's version over my friend's.

Roberts is a big boy, an Oxford Blue swimmer with a bulging upper torso to match. The very idea that the weed would have taken a swing at him was entirely improbable. But what was most telling for me was the respective demeanours of the witness and the accused. Demeanour, the judges have noted, is a tricky horse to ride; but I've picked my way through truth and lies for my living for two decades, and I can report with some experience in these matters that everything about Roberts's allegation and demeanour rang false, in contradistinction to which the guard was manifestly telling the truth in his plainly related report of the twilight happenstance.

I was not alone in my doubts; I recall the look on Sanders's face, and he was just as disturbed by the whole wicked charade.

I didn't stick around after this, and pushed off straight home. The evening was ruined by Roberts's deliberate, premeditated, persistent at-

tempt to criminally frame an innocent man out of spite and malice, to punish him for daring to frustrate his wish to go home his normal way, by calling down the criminal justice machinery of the state on him. The scale of his dishonesty was awesome, the reek of his diseased morality choking.

Of course I could be quite wrong, and the weed really did throw and land a punch on Roberts, twice his size, as Roberts alleged, but you work it out. It may assist you in your deliberations to be apprized that although he claimed he'd been assaulted, Roberts never pressed charges. This may be because imprisonment is the customary penalty for perjury.

You'd be right to ask me how I remained friends with Roberts after this. I don't really have a good answer. I suppose I just hoped that I'd never again see a show of his character so appalling. By any objective measure, until I read his Donadio letter and then his book, I didn't; but a few months after the incident at the gate, Roberts turned on me one evening, quite out of the blue, with such aggressive vituperation that the negative impression on me was far stronger and even more disquieting than when he was trying to frame the gate guard.

We were having a drink at a café in our usual routine, when suddenly he said: 'The reason you're isolated is because you don't network.' Now in cold print this reads as a friendly advice, and at first blush it sounds odd to mention it with any dissatisfaction. But Roberts's tone and affect were so extraordinarily hostile and malignant that I was seriously shaken. This was not some tiff or a flash of temper between friends; it was an eruption from a deep, poisonous well, something evidently suppurating a while and then uncontainably spilled.

What Roberts was ostensibly criticising me for was living simply and working alone quietly behind the scenes, mostly beneath the media radar, whereas he was flying around the country fleecing corporations of hundreds of thousands of rands on the basis that he was an independent writer with valuable intellectual contributions to offer as a counterpoint to the white liberal dominated political discourse in the media. What irked him was that I wasn't conducting myself like he was. Perhaps because I'm too independent, personally, philosophically, and in what I do; and moreover, unlike him, I don't write to order for money.

I might mention here that I once saw Roberts 'network[ing]', and it wasn't a pretty sight. He was trying to cadge some cash from an investment banker, and invited me along to dinner with him. You never saw such an insincere, sycophantic, grasping display: forced laughter at the dull guy's dull cracks; even 'That's quite funny' when it wasn't, to make sure his fake show of amusement registered; and super-charged brown-nosing the whole evening.

Actually I do ‘network’, and I do so extensively: In July I returned from three months of networking with activists, scientists, clinicians, journalists and politicians in six European countries – as I did in September and October last year; and as I finalize this critique I’m back in Berlin for six weeks more of the same business, travelling the length and breadth of Germany, and to Paris and Barcelona too. But while in practice as a lawyer I never drank with the commercial classes for their patronage, and unlike Roberts I don’t now hang out with these people either.

I’ve never been able to make complete sense of Roberts’s strike at me that evening. His habit of emptying his mental bowels on others is, you’ll have appreciated by now, one of his more prominent if less savoury psychological failings. It may be that my unspoken disgust at his showing at dinner with the investment banker was grating him, and as is his wont he was dumping on me over it.

It may also have been that Roberts had been talking and intriguing against me (he’s an intriguer; more in ‘Motive’ below) and he was feeling bothered and under some psychological tension about what he was doing behind his friend’s back. But who knows? If you’re a shrink, and you can work it out, lemme know.

I avoided Roberts for many weeks after this, walking on if I saw him anywhere. I sensed intuitively that something had turned, and that something bad was looming. Then my younger son and I ran into him in Long Street and we picked up, chatting jovially over refreshments as if nothing had changed.

There was another dark but revealing development at the time Roberts was in court for his defamation case against the *Sunday Times*. I attended the first two days of the trial at the end of November 2006; and on the second day I was spotted by Achmat and reported to the *Sunday Times*, which scandalously mentioned my presence in court ‘to support Roberts’ in an article about the case on 3 December.

Roberts was embarrassed by the association, and asked me in a café whether I’d spoken to the reporter. When I said not, he pressed me to write a letter to the editor, stating this fact, and that the journalist therefore had no basis for saying why I was there. I made a note of what he dictated, but then looking at it again afterwards I dumped it, for the simple reason that it was true on the surface but false in substance. I was there precisely to support Roberts, having held his hand, as it were, through every leg of the run-up to the hearing. He phoned a couple of days later to enquire whether I’d sent the letter yet, and when I told him I hadn’t and why, he was livid, uninterested in my principled justification, snarling, ‘I don’t appreciate you unilaterally changing your mind in a mat-

ter that affects me.’ (I didn’t ‘appreciate’ being expected to lie in the newspapers, or at all, but didn’t say so in those terms.) He hung up abruptly, and again we didn’t talk for quite a while.

‘AIDS drug fundamentalism, on both its TAC and TAG [*sic*: TIG] sides – as pontificated by Achmat and Brink respectively – was tragically incompatible with the governing temperament of South Africa since 1994. It is beyond dispute that relevant South African policy and scientific debates were in fact curtailed.’

Roberts never does say how my work in researching and writing about AIDS drugs was ‘tragically incompatible with the governing temperament of South Africa since 1994’. If it wasn’t a visiting Trinidadian talking, I might even be offended by his suggestion that I’m an apartheid type. The suggestion is just so stupid that it doesn’t leave the ground.

How I supposedly ‘curtailed ... South African policy and scientific debates’ I’d love to hear, considering that I started the ‘South African policy and scientific debates’ with *Debating AZT*. Fact is Roberts is not just writing rubbish; he’s lying. And he’s compounding his lying by declaring his lying to be ‘beyond dispute’.

‘It is also beyond dispute that neither Achmat nor Brink are scientists.’ Roberts’s dismissal of me and Achmat in the same breath as non-scientists is contrived to paint us in the same colour as ignorant ‘AIDS drug fundamentalis[t]’ fools.

Whereas Achmat described himself in *Rapport* on 10 February 2002 as ‘scientifically illiterate’, and he’s certainly right about that, I’m not. I’m a recognized autodidact expert in clinical and molecular ARV drug pharmacology. The latest recognition of my expertise comes in the form of a commission by a distinguished senior medical biology professor to write the foreword to his next book.

Getting on top of a specific field in science is no big deal, if you have the head for it. It’s routine in cases involving scientific or medical disputes for advocates like myself to have to become complete masters of a given corner of science in order to lead their expert witnesses properly, and more importantly, demolish the claims of the opposition’s witnesses. I once won a case for the widow of a man who died after an operation on his sphenoid sinus, and I can tell you there was nothing I didn’t know about the anatomy of the nose after that.

I also happen to have a history of teaching myself. As a boy I learned chemistry to an advanced stage on my own, got some lessons in micro-technique from my grandfather and went further on my own, mastered audio electronics on my own and built no end of complicated sound

equipment for my recording studio and my concert hall sound system, taught myself to read music and to play several musical instruments etc.

By Roberts's standard, Harvard Professor Walter Gilbert, Nobel Prize-winner for Chemistry in 1980 for his invention of DNA sequencing technology, is not a biologist. He only qualified in nuclear physics, and has no papers in biology beyond a high school pass.

It's true that I'm not a professional scientist. I don't wear a white lab coat. Like Gilbert, I don't have any qualifications in biology either. But I have taught myself. I have several big fat advanced university textbooks on the subject. After studying ARV drugs closely for a decade, and having written books about them, I claim to know way more about them than anyone else in South Africa, both at the molecular and clinical level.

Arguing like Nicoli Nattrass and the TAC do, Roberts suggests I'm unqualified and therefore should be ignored, as if only psychiatrists are placed to critique psychiatry, only astrologers are qualified to critique astrology, and only ARV-prescribing doctors are qualified to critique ARVs. However, not a single ARV-prescribing doctor would be able to give you an account of the AZT (and similar drugs) triphosphorylation problem<sup>25</sup>, which Mbeki has twice been reported in the media talking about. Mbeki understands it, he sees it. Doctors don't; they don't even know what it is (or they wouldn't prescribe the drug). And Roberts wouldn't have even the remotest idea of what you're even talking about, if you asked him to state it; and why the triphosphorylation problem means AZT and other similar ARVs can never be 'sensible' as he describes them in his book. It's also why he doesn't mention Mbeki's reference to the problem, despite seeing this discussed in paragraph 141 of *Debating AZT*.

If Roberts wasn't too lazy and too stupid to read and understand my work properly, he'd recognize my expertise as many top-ranking scientists and even a top-ranking University of California at Berkeley law professor have (he'll respect that); but he can't, because to sell his book he's made up a story, and I'm the fictionalized character at the centre of it functioning as a mad foil against which Roberts equally falsely characterizes Mbeki as a moderate believer in regard to ARVs and the sex germ theory of AIDS. As history this is pure fiction.

'More was heard in the media from one side in the national debate (the TAC) than the other (the TAG [*sic*: TIG]) but in the end the policy on the ground reflected a sensible balance that surrendered neither to the vocal fundamentalism not to the suppressed one.'

Against Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang's informed better judgement and will, the South African government has been coerced by pharmaceu-

tical industry interest groups into spending billions of rands on ARV drugs, drugs that Mbeki correctly describes as ‘immuno-suppressive’ and ‘harmful to health’, based on ‘the dire warnings that researchers have been making’ in a ‘large volume of scientific literature’. Tshabalala-Msimang has made numerous similar statements. The government has also been forced by the courts to supply nevirapine to women in labour and their newborn babies in a public health debacle that defies belief.

The TAC and other pharmaceutical industry interest groups have forced the government’s capitulation on ARVs; and Roberts describes this policy defeat, this policy capture by the pharmaceutical industry, this forced national health policy as ‘sensible ... policy’. Mbeki doesn’t think this. But Roberts does, because like Achmat he believes in HIV, AIDS and ARVs, which are ‘sensible’ drugs to have in the public health system. Roberts approves of giving ARVs to Africans. To him it’s ‘sensible’, just as the TAC contends.

The ‘policy on the ground’ does not reflect Mbeki’s thinking, and again Roberts is resorting to his crooked trick of conflating policy adopted with Mbeki’s own policy views.

‘Instead of faith-based alignment, Mbeki brought to the AIDS debate intellectual discipline.’ Roberts the liar and the fraud suggests that I’m a believer like he is. That my work is sprung from faith. That my work is on the same level as the TAC’s propaganda for the pharmaceutical industry.

I ignited the ‘AIDS debate’ with *Debating AZT*. Until then, there’d only been controversy over the affordability of AZT. Mbeki thought *Debating AZT* showed considerable ‘intellectual discipline’ I imagine, because I got a message of appreciation for its quality and for the trouble I’d taken to research and write it. I would be interested to know what things in the AIDS controversy Roberts considers that I have faith in, meaning unsupported by fact. I’m not the believer; he is. Roberts himself recognizes *The trouble with nevirapine* as ‘Rigorous’. I think he meant by this that it demonstrated my ‘intellectual discipline’.

Roberts invokes JM Coetzee (I’ll certainly send him this book) to claim a piece of his brilliance for himself and to put me down as a crank: ‘Convictions ... not backed by reason ... are not strong but weak.’ (My ellipses.) More interesting is the rest of what Coetzee has to say about ‘intellectuals’:

Such is their confidence that they may even welcome attacks on themselves, smiling when they are caricatured and insulted, re-

sponding with the keenest appreciation to the most probing, most perceptive thrusts ... They are in many ways like the chess grandmaster who, confident in his powers, looks forward to opponents worthy of him. [*my ellipses*]

Coetzee's description of the confidence of unpopular intellectuals when 'caricatured and insulted' by base and ignorant people like Roberts rhymes with me.



## Mbeki represented in *Fit to Govern*

### Opening note

Before we begin combing his eighth and ninth chapters to demonstrate Roberts's thieving from me, his lying about Mbeki, his theft from Mbeki, and his theft of physical as well as of intellectual property, it bears repeating that before he met me and read my work, Roberts's intention was to write about Mbeki's engagement with AIDS as a freedom of speech issue. That was going to be his tack. He told me this around the time we met; it's apparent from his early AIDS chapter (the *noseweek* draft); and Mbeki commented on this in his letter.

As I saw it, however, much more important than the freedom of speech issue was (a) the sandcastle medical science of AIDS and all the politics around it, and (b) the inherent racism in AIDS ideology and all the politics around it; and this is why these are the major topics of *Just say yes, Mr President*, anticipated in the preface in the introductory pages to the book, posted on my TIG website for ages.

Imagine my surprise to find that after reading my work Roberts dropped 'SHUT UP' as the heading of his AIDS chapter in *Fit to Govern*, or at least as its dominant theme. That is, he deemphasized the freedom of speech issue as not being central to the controversy after all, as I'd repeatedly urged. Imagine my surprise too to find the subtitles of Roberts's AIDS chapters reflecting the medical and racial politics themes of my book manuscript precisely: 'A clash of fundamentalisms 1: medical politics' and 'A clash of fundamentalisms 2: racial politics'. And that appropos of the latter Roberts had raised in his interview by *Die Burger* 'die rassediskoers wat met die vigsdiskoers verweef geraak het en wat hy in 'n afsonderlike hoofstuk in sy boek bespreek' ('the race discourse that's become interwoven with the AIDS discourse, and which he discusses in a separate chapter in his book') – a matter I've been pondering deeply since early 1997, and noted in my preface. You'd think reading this that Roberts was a terribly original thinker. In fact he's a common thief. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but when flattered in this fashion the pleasure of being so admired is considerably diminished to discover not only imitation but outright theft, and much, much worse, mangling and vulgarizing of one's work in the course of it, in which all the main points and all the subtleties are missed. Not to mention a violent attack on the person admired so much in the course of the robbery.

Even before his AIDS chapters began, Roberts was helping himself to my work without crediting me.

He repeatedly mentions Immanuel Kant's advice on the flogging of slaves, a pearl given to me by an academic friend for my book and which I added to my section on the anti-African racism in European thinking, as expressed by numerous philosophers of the Enlightenment and since. Roberts found my pearl so pleasing that not only did he set it in his book, I hear he also held out this pearl of mine in his speech at the launch of his book at the Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria, only he didn't say it was my pearl that he was holding out.

Lest you be disposed to generously affording the accused thief the benefit of the doubt, and acquitting the accused thief of stealing my pearl from me, on the basis that it's a perfect coincidence that he's as erudite as I am on this score, I must ask you please to turn a few pages, where you'll find Roberts citing the racism of David Hume, which also by a perfect coincidence concerning our unusual erudition on this specific matter features in my discussion of the racism of these guys.

In both cases, the master criminal contrives to cover his traces by quoting the philosophers saying different racist things from the racist things I quote them saying. He gets the idea from me and then he smudges it a bit to confuse the issue. This is not the impetuous knock-off of the book thief; this is the calculating criminal premeditation of the armoured car heister.

In another perfect coincidence, in the same context, Roberts quotes the racism of the surgeon Georges Cuvier, who dismembered Saartjie Baartman's corpse for European science, as though she were an exotic frog. Mbeki put me onto Cuvier in his speech at the burial of her remains in the Eastern Cape, and I discuss it all in my book.

Remember, before he met me Roberts was writing about Mbeki's involvement in AIDS as a freedom of speech issue. I gave him my work to help him get the history and the reasons for Mbeki's intervention straight. I go deep into the inherent racism of AIDS, tracing it back to the widespread racism of the Enlightenment philosophers. That's my big thing in my major work – deconstructing AIDS with reference to historical context, precedents, analogies, and ancient European cultural foundations. And what does Roberts do. He suddenly decides to write a whole chapter on racism in AIDS (very badly), and he steals my work on the racism of the Enlightenment philosophers and puts it in a different part of his book thinking I wouldn't notice.

I once lost a vintage Fender Stratocaster electric guitar that I'd restored and loved very much, and also my favourite breakfast bowl out the kitchen window, and when someone steals your things it's terrible. I tell you it really feels terrible. You just want to cry over it.

## Re: Chapter 8: 'A clash of fundamentalisms 1: medical politics'

Roberts opens the first of his two AIDS chapters with a strikingly racist statement by Robert Gallo, the originator of the HIV theory of AIDS, which he puts up as an epigraph:

Who really knows [how AIDS crossed from monkey to man].  
Maybe there's some ritual with monkey blood – who knows?  
They do a lot of funny things in Africa, like when they make  
their lower lip stick out or when they put things through their  
noses.

Roberts wants you to disdain the top white American AIDS expert's contempt for Africans, revealed in his open insults. Of course, this is easy to do. But that's all Roberts wants you to do. He doesn't want you to think any further, because Roberts, like everyone who reads the newspapers, believes AIDS came from Africa, from Africans, since top white American AIDS experts like Gallo say so, and Roberts says nothing to cast any doubt on this. He doesn't refer you to any of the scientific debunks<sup>26</sup>, because that would involve reading<sup>27</sup> and thinking<sup>28</sup>, and Roberts is way too lazy and too stupid for this. Actually, there is nothing about the orthodox view of AIDS that he disagrees with, including that it came to us from monkeys via Africans; he even quotes Helen Epstein laying out his articles of faith in a classic confession of them (discussed below). And he wants you to think Mbeki still goes for that stuff, like he used to when he was still wearing his little red ribbon. Roberts has no idea what the scientific problems with Gallo's theory are.

Even in his epigraph Roberts flubbs it. As Mbeki has pointed out, AIDS is not a disease, but a syndrome of familiar diseases, and a syndrome of old diseases can't have 'crossed from monkey to man', which is why no one apart from Roberts has ever suggested they did. According to top white American AIDS experts, a certain brand-new virus, 'HIV', crossed from monkeys to Africans, spreading equally between the sexes entirely unnoticed; and then when it made its way over to America, it only went for gay men for many years, being a very intelligent virus that can discriminate between the sexes and sexual orientation on different continents, before deciding to infect some normal good Christian white people too, to help the Centres for Disease Control keep its funding up.

Roberts puts Gallo's claim about his "discovery" of HIV/AIDS' in inverted commas to signal to you that Gallo's claim is insecure or false. Well it's true Gallo didn't discover 'HIV/AIDS', because he never claimed to have discovered what Roberts cluelessly calls 'HIV/AIDS'.

It just goes to show that the ‘opportunistic commentator’ doesn’t know the difference between a disease, a syndrome, a virus, a medical theory, a scientific hypothesis, and a monkey in a tree. He says, ‘In 1985, the very year that Cameron says he contracted AIDS...’ But A, he didn’t, B, you can’t, C, you are said to be infected by a virus, and D, AIDS can’t be ‘contracted’, not being a disease. Roberts appears to have got his hysterical conception of AIDS from TV; it’s on TV that they talk about ‘contract[ing] AIDS’.

AIDS had been conceived as a new medical construct (a ‘surveillance tool’, not a disease) by American epidemiologists contemplating the particular health problems of certain poppers (amyl nitrite) sniffing, antibiotic abusing, eating badly, living unhealthily, menially or unemployed, inner city gay men years before Gallo claimed at a press conference in a New York bistro on 22 April 1984 to have discovered a new sort of miniature demon, invisible to everyone but learned experts like himself, which he mooted as the probable cause of AIDS (a syndrome of health conditions). And which allegedly newly discovered miniature demon was baptized by the *New York Times* the next day as ‘the virus that causes AIDS’. Gallo never claimed credit for the “discovery” of HIV/AIDS’.

In his footnotes Roberts mentions the antibody test patent dispute with the French that followed Gallo’s claim, as if this is the interesting thing (other than to show that, like Roberts, Gallo is a stranger to the truth), thereby completely missing and distracting from the real story<sup>92</sup> going to the root of the HIV theory of AIDS (were Roberts a policeman arriving after a bank robbery, he’d set about counting the stolen paper-clips). But investigating and reporting this real story takes some intelligence and diligence, and as we know, the ‘opportunistic commentator’ lacks these personal qualities that women find attractive when garnished with a dash of personal integrity, consideration, good looks and a sense of humour. The sort of men who aren’t troubled by a sexual neurosis about catching deadly germs from them.

Roberts learned about the trouble with Gallo’s HIV discovery claim in my essay about him, ‘The Pope of AIDS’<sup>100</sup>, in the appendices to the copy of *Debating AZT* that I gave him (Gallo doesn’t feature in Roberts’s *noseweek* draft). But you’d never know it, because he doesn’t credit me in the book or the footnotes for putting him onto this.

You may say, Look, be fair to this guy. He’s only an ‘opportunistic commentator’ and not a scientist, and this is radical scientific stuff you’re expecting him to have read. How can you expect him to have looked into the basic trouble with Gallo’s claim to have discovered the retroviral cause of AIDS<sup>101</sup> – the missing virus problem – when even the most prominent American AIDS dissident scientists have found this too

heavy-going for them, and have balked at wading into such deep water – appreciating, like Roberts, that this reading will rock the foundations of their scientific thinking, even collapse it, like so many explosives drilled into the base of an old hotel making way for a new one?

The excuse doesn't do. As Mbeki's self-billed intellectual biographer, claiming on the back cover blurb of his book that he 'explores [and] examines the difficult issues (e.g. ... HIV/AIDS ... ) that have faced President Thabo Mbeki and casts fresh light on Mbeki's logic', it was incumbent on Roberts to have investigated the reasons for Mbeki's often expressed doubts about the mere two-decades old orthodox American sex-germ AIDS model, and to elaborate them, so as to 'cast fresh light on Mbeki's logic' as he promised to do, when inducing you by means of this representation to hand your money over for his book.

The thing is, Roberts doesn't merely fail to do this because he's too lazy and too stupid to go there. In the very first crooked line of his first chapter he pretends it's not necessary – and after reading it, you know anything's possible from this person. Black is blue. Hard is soft. Dogs are mice. It was a dark and stormy night. He hit me. Anything. Roberts just writes fiction according to his fancy.

Even before you open his crooked book, the indications of his crooked intentions are on the back cover:

Instead of ... enigma-breaking ... call this a displacement of certain fictions – an engagement with many of the myths that have piled themselves high around Thabo Mbeki.

The very sub-title of the book, 'The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki' claims it to be an account of what Mbeki's thinks.

The big myth that Roberts has had in mind to dispose of all along, because he wants it to be a myth, and he wants to dispose of it, because if it's not a myth, it challenges what he thinks he knows, and never mind the discordant facts that he's run into on the way, is stated in his first line: 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident.'

And in a footnote to page 236, near the end of his second AIDS chapter, Roberts repeats: 'Steinberg neurotically ... without argument or evidence ... labels Mbeki a dissident. That much is clear from my main text.'

Curiously, however, Mbeki's AIDS 'dissidence' is a 'myth' and a 'fiction' that Roberts himself propounded in an interview in the *Natal Witness* on 30 September 2005 under the title (referring to Mbeki) 'Misunderstood': 'The public and the media forget that the emphasis on nutrition and the caution on toxicity are a part of orthodoxy that came out of Mbeki's early dissidence.'

Roberts is quite clear here: he's saying that the orthodox AIDS experts and their followers have now adopted positions held and advanced by Mbeki that were dissident in their day, but have now become orthodox.

Except that this claim is substantially untrue, as usual. Mbeki was never merely cautious about ARV toxicity, and he'd never merely contended for the cautious use of AZT and similar drugs; he had categorically abjured AZT as 'a danger to health', based on his reading of a 'large volume of scientific literature' concerning its 'toxicity', about which 'medical researchers' had been issuing 'dire warnings'. The drug was 'immuno-suppressive', he said, which is to say it causes the onset of immune deficiency and the syndrome of illnesses that typically result from immune deficiency. Mbeki unequivocally rejected AZT for giving rape victims too, on the basis that it was not approved anywhere for this indication – and even the manufacturer weighed in to agree.

It's so that American AIDS experts changed their treatment guidelines in January 2001, but they did not adopt Mbeki's position; they reaffirmed the use of AZT and similar, only they recommended that the drugs be given later rather than sooner – and that was all.

It is also untrue that AIDS experts now agree with Mbeki's support for the provision and ingestion of nutrient-rich food as the primary route back to health, mostly expressed through Tshabalala-Msimang, having regard to the way she is constantly reviled everywhere for her statements on this score. To speak of the primacy of nutrition, let alone the sufficiency of good nutrition, in the treatment of Africans with AIDS-defining diseases such as TB is to attract derision from mostly white commentators in the most poisonous terms.

After a colloquium to promote his book at WITS University on 31 August, attack its critics and suck up to *Mail&Guardian* editor Ferial Haf-fajee to win some column space, Roberts repeated his line in the *Witness* in 2005 to an SABC reporter about how the AIDS orthodoxy has come over to Mbeki's dissident view: 'What has been described as denialism has become part of conventional wisdom.' We'll revisit this in the appendices.

Let's unpack this magisterial and categorical 'not now, nor has he ever been' statement from the 'opportunistic commentator' (the judges all agree he's 'opportunistic') who doesn't know what the fuck's going on.

Roberts means that Mbeki believes and has never doubted, as he Roberts believes and has never doubted, not even for a moment, that you can die from making love with a woman, especially if she's African; that the reason for this according to the American scientific authorities is that Africans, unlike whites<sup>102</sup>, are riddled with a new sexually transmitted disease that they originally got from monkeys chasing each other around

in the jungle and scratching under their arms; African mothers can kill their babies by bearing them in their wombs normally, giving birth to them normally, and breastfeeding them normally; and that if Africans are treated by 'sensible' white doctors with 'sensible' doses of 'sensible' ARV drugs sold by unimaginably rich and powerful American and German pharmaceutical corporations hiring the best PR firms to help sell their merchandise to the public, they'll stay well, or get better if sick, and the little African babies will be saved, because ARVs are a 'sensible' life-saving miracle of foreign multinational corporate pharmaceutical medicine. And it's because Roberts has read in the newspapers that they make sick, impoverished Africans better, keep impoverished Africans well, and save little African babies from being killed by their mothers' germs that lurk in their private parts, but not according to the scientific authorities in white women's, at least hardly, that he esteems these drugs so highly, and considers them so eminently 'sensible', which is why he keeps on using the 'sensible' word when talking about these 'sensible' drugs.

And he wants to convey to you that, like he and Zackie Achmat and Tony Leon and Edwin Cameron, Mbeki also thinks these drugs are 'sensible', and has never wanted anything but to provide them 'sensib[ly]', rolled out at a 'sensible' pace, even though, after investigating them, he's condemned them<sup>103</sup>.

What's notable about the style of the not guilty plea that Roberts presumes to tender for Mbeki in his very opening line, the tack he takes in broaching the subject of AIDS, is that he consciously situates the controversy in an ideologically supercharged 'McCarthyite' environment – and he's right on the mark in doing so.

But instead of telling Mbeki's persecutors to bugger off, the cringing Negro lawyer stands between him and the white inquisitors in their hoods and ropes, and cowering defensively before them, pleads the brief he imagines he holds: He's not guilty, Suh; he's not one of them, Suh; and I swear he's never been one of them, Suh.

Roberts does not in his book criticize the AIDS establishment for racking Mbeki to just say yes. This is because Roberts himself just says yes. And he pretends that since 2000 Mbeki still says yes. What Roberts does is tut-tut and carp a bit about people he doesn't like, but all within moderate, acceptable and 'sensible' limits, and never challenging the fundamentals. He knocks some bishops about in his book, but never does he reject the doctrines that they're selling and even less their merchandise.

After tendering this plea for the accused, even though he hold no instructions to do so, the crooked American-trained lawyer immediately invents a decoy to dupe the hick jury, a polarity of opposite but equal

extremes, two ‘fundamentalisms’, and he scripts Mbeki as the moderate policy maker ‘sailing a ship of state’ on a ‘sensible’ middle course between them, and at a far remove from both. And in doing this, employing a classic liberal rhetorical device, Roberts plays it just like a white South African liberal.

Whereas it is clear from the way Mbeki talks generally, and in his letter specifically, that he situates himself in the ‘resistance tradition’ vis a vis the ‘imperialist tradition’, when it comes to AIDS, the ultimate ‘coloniser’s interpretation of reality’ (coming up), and a supremely imperialist ideology going right into the bedroom, Roberts paints Mbeki as a ‘sensible’ liberal middle-roader. Why he does this is a matter for discussion at the end.

While we’re on the subject, it’s convenient to mention here that elsewhere in his book, Roberts also casts Mbeki as a believer, in noting his ‘refusal to be the object of a desire to get him to recant fallacies he had not proclaimed’.

It’s so that Mbeki hasn’t proclaimed that he no longer believes you can die from lovemaking (it’s the heresy that dare not speak its name); and it’s true that one of the interesting things about the drama in this country has been the unending pressure on him to ‘recant’ (giving me the title for my book, suggested by the front page headline of an issue of the *Mail & Guardian*: ‘Just say yes, Mr President’), as if we’re still in the Middle Ages; but here’s the thing: Roberts talks about ‘fallacies’. In using this strong word, Robert is proclaiming his own orthodox belief. He’s judging and condemning dissident thinking about the nature, cause and treatment of AIDS-defining diseases as a bunch of ‘fallacies’. Such as the dissident fallacy that you can’t die from making love with a woman, especially if she’s African – Roberts truly believes you can. Here Roberts is implying that he’s read and evaluated the principal critiques, and that he’s found them fallacious. But he hasn’t. On AIDS, Roberts takes Gallo and his cardinals at their word, just as Cameron and Achmat do.

In another spot in the book, Roberts repudiates Nadine Gordimer’s disapproval of Mbeki’s ‘(even tacit) denial that HIV causes AIDS’ in a letter written to Edward Said: ‘The “denialism” attributed to Mbeki is, as already seen, an ideological fiction.’

This is to say, according to Roberts, Gordimer was wrong to criticise Mbeki as ‘even’ a ‘tacit’ AIDS denialist, because Mbeki doesn’t in fact disagree with what Gordimer, nearly all other whites, and Roberts also, believe about the sexual theory of AIDS and the benefits of administering ARVs to Africans. Mbeki’s not a denialist, Roberts assures us, he’s a

professor; and it's an 'ideological fiction' to suggest or imagine that he's privately broken with the orthodox American AIDS construct.

The evidence that Roberts provides for his assertion that it's an 'ideological fiction' to conclude that Mbeki privately no longer subscribes to orthodox Western ideas about AIDS is because look the government spends so much money on AIDS awareness and condoms and drugs and everything. That's why it's an 'ideological fiction'. Arguing like this, do you think Roberts would last five minutes in the courts?

It's informative to look at the specific content of conventional white thinking about AIDS enunciated by Gordimer and quoted by Roberts in his book – which Roberts suggests Mbeki still subscribes to too (because it's an 'ideological fiction' to contend Mbeki doesn't think like this any more):

So far as poverty being the main cause of the spread of the disease in Africa, from the point of view of wretched living conditions with prostitution the only resort in unemployment, I'm entirely with him however.

Gordimer says she agrees with Mbeki that poor Africans are sick with AIDS-defining diseases because you see it's not that poor Africans don't get enough nourishing food to eat that causes their health to fail, it's because African women are so poor that they have to whore around and this causes the 'spread of the disease in Africa'.

Poverty, according to Gordimer, is not the primary cause of broken health among the African poor; the primary cause of broken health among the African poor is too much sex, because poor Africans have more of it more often than they should. Gordimer attributes her befuddled thinking to Mbeki. Except Mbeki has never said anything of the sort.

But Roberts agrees with Gordimer here, for he evinces no disagreement, and he lets Gordimer's statement of the facts, on her version, in which she claims Mbeki concurs, pass without any comment, none at all, except to assure us that Mbeki is not 'even [a] tacit' denialist as Gordimer suggests. And just to remove all possible doubt, we recall that Roberts has already confirmed he believes in the need for 'Poorer Africans' to undergo 'behaviour change' before their health problems will improve, which is to say 'cut back' on love-making, and also that AIDS was inevitable given the

rapid circulation of African populations, a side effect of economic modernisation, the migrant labour system and urbanization [which] meant that an undetected epidemic spread power-

fully and was set to flood into South Africa long before the levers of public policy passed into democratic hands.

And it just can't be emphasized enough, can it, that Roberts shares precisely the thinking of the great white fellow Oxonian South African medical expert Dr Cluver on the health maladies of poor Africans, explaining way back in about 1940 that so-called venereal disease seen by white doctors everywhere among them, but not whites,

tend to spread particularly among uneducated non-Europeans crowded together in the less salubrious portions of our towns. ... The detribalizing of large masses of natives was also followed by promiscuous habits so that infection rapidly spread over wide areas of the country.

– for which imaginary disease diagnosed with the useless Wassermann test the treatment in those days wasn't modern AZT, it was old-fashioned much the same thing really arsenic, also claimed to be specific for the germ, but actually deadly to all cells. If you don't mind me reminding you.

Roberts claims that

While Mbeki tried to make sensible policy on a massive public health issue, HIV/AIDS, he was buffeted from two sides within a clash of fundamentalisms that seemed at times to be more theological than scientific in tenor. This chapter untangles those debates.

The record shows that until late 1999 Mbeki believed that 'HIV/AIDS' was a 'massive public health issue'. Then quite abruptly something changed and he evidently no longer believed that 'HIV/AIDS' was a 'massive public health issue'. This is not to say he stopped recognizing that there is a high level of broken health among the African poor; but he stopped believing that the poor health of the African poor was due to their unusually rich and varied sex lives. What got his faith slipping was the manuscript of *Debating AZT*. After reading the research reports cited and synopsisized in it, and after researching the matter further himself, Mbeki rejected AZT and similar AIDS drugs. And soon the rest of it came tumbling down, like a cathedral collapsing wall by wall after a hit in a bombing raid.

While we were friends, Roberts never suggested my work was just quasi-religious histrionics in the same boat as the TAC's drug propaganda. You already know what he said he thought about it, because I've

quoted him. The scientists and clinicians who reviewed my work on AZT and nevirapine didn't think so either. Take this one, for example, concerning AZT:

superb, extremely well researched, analyzed, written. ... I could not have done a better job. ... Are you a scientist or do you collaborate with one? How could you survey so many scientific publications as an attorney? ... Could you publish your article or a variant of it in a medical/scientific journal? It would strengthen our case no end, if scientific papers of that quality would come from several sources, not only from Berkeley and Perth.

And this: 'I still can't believe he wrote that. He's really a molecular biologist pretending to be a lawyer.'

You can find out who this accomplished molecular biology professor and member of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America is in the inside covers<sup>104</sup> of *The trouble with nevirapine*.

Mbeki himself has not characterized my work as a sort of 'theological ... fundamentalism', and Roberts has no honest basis for implying that he has. He's writing fiction. And Roberts doesn't honestly think my research reviews and analytical critiques of ARV drugs are any kind of 'theological ... fundamentalism' either. He's described them as 'very good, very important ... rigorous ... extremely important ... extremely significant'. And my critique of the HSRC's report that just about every second African in South Africa is living with HIV was excellent, he agreed, and in fact, like the rest of my work, unanswerable.

Roberts's statement that

While Mbeki tried to make sensible policy on a massive public health issue, HIV/AIDS, he was buffeted from two sides within a clash of fundamentalisms that seemed to be more theological than scientific in tenor

suggests, in the light of what's soon to follow (I'm named), that I've been hassling Mbeki with unscientific, faith-based, dogmatic raves. Roberts doesn't cite a single piece of evidence to support his claim that I interfered in Mbeki's attempt to formulate 'sensible policy' by 'buffet[ing]' him with such rants. The reason he doesn't do so is because no evidence to this effect exists. As usual, Roberts is lying.

It is certainly true that *Debating AZT* disrupted Mbeki's thinking about the drug – 'buffeted' it, if you like, right off its former course; but had Mbeki considered it unscientific, fundamentalist, theological raving he wouldn't have risen to it and acted upon it in Parliament as he did.

And Roberts can't talk his way around this, no matter how much and how quickly the crooked city-slicker lawyer tries. After mischaracterizing Mbeki's thinking about AIDS after the end of the nineties in a manner that can only be called lying, he likewise mischaracterizes me and my work in the same deliberately false way. He cannot claim that he was merely ignorant, and an incompetent and useless researcher, because I'd provided him with all the facts in *Debating AZT* and in *Just say yes, Mr President*, but he decided to lie to his readers that they didn't exist.

This is to say, after making his opening false claim about Mbeki's thoughts about AIDS, Roberts levels a false charge against me by clear implication. Had he done this at a police station, he'd have wound up being arrested himself for lying on oath and paying damages for malicious prosecution. Even in the Bible it says you're not supposed to bear false witness, but in writing his premeditated historical fiction Roberts lies without a second thought. This is because he's an extraordinarily dishonest person, who, we'll soon discover, lies as often as he steals.

'Mbeki's policy on HIV/AIDS is, and has always been, based on the premise that HIV causes AIDS.' This statement is perfectly true, but in Roberts's mouth it's a lie, because it's calculated to obscure the distinction Mbeki has himself made to distinguish the basis of government policy from his own private conclusions and opinions (more later).

'For the avoidance of further misunderstanding, it is worth setting out this premise as lucidly summarised by Helen Epstein<sup>105</sup> in the *New York Review of Books* for 20 July 2000', and right away you identify the game this creep is playing and why (as usual, although I put Roberts onto this article, different bits of which I quote in *The trouble with nevirapine*, Roberts doesn't credit me for doing his basic research homework for him).

By citing Epstein laying out your standard white American, simplistic, reductionistic, monocausal, Cartesian, tainted blood and poisoned semen germ neurosis<sup>106</sup>, which Roberts obviously finds 'lucidly summarized', because he goes with it, he's playing to the American Jewish and WASP liberal intellectual crowd, working his way to acceptance, respectability and sales in these affluent white circles.

Roberts's choice of the adjective 'lucidly' is also calculated both to kiss Epstein's butt and gladden editor Bob Silvers's heart. Epstein is the daughter of the late Barbara Epstein, co-founder with Silvers of the *New York Review of Books*. What's all-important to Roberts, more than adherence to truth or any other personal or professional value, is getting ahead as a writer; and to get ahead as a writer nothing helps like a favourable notice in the *New York Review of Books*. And since the *New York Review of*

*Books* crowd is hugely into AIDS from a conventional white liberal perspective, there's no way in hell Roberts has any prospects of making it by presenting Mbeki's thinking on AIDS like it is. It would be incorrect, an affront, and unacceptable. There are certain things you just don't say to liberals. Like it's complete nonsense that Africans in South Africa are riddled with sex disease.

Although in his book he describes Helen as a 'lucid' person, in his footnotes he's panning her as 'anti-intellectual' for disapproving of Mbeki's convention of his International AIDS Advisory Panel. You understand Roberts's method, his abuse of language: if he shares your 'superstition' and 'opinionated prejudice', as Mbeki calls it, you're marvelously 'lucid', but if your 'superstition' and 'opinionated prejudice' don't appeal to him you're 'anti-intellectual'.

It's not a very good idea calling Barbara's daughter 'anti-intellectual' in his footnotes, so Roberts quickly repairs the damage that this indiscretion may harm his chances with the magazine by rehabilitating her in an article<sup>107</sup> in the *Mail & Guardian* on 24 August 2007 as 'the liberal intellectual Helen Epstein, who covers AIDS policy for the *New York Review of Books*' (discussed in the appendices to this book).

She's back to being an 'intellectual' now – although if you've ever read Helen Epstein, I can't imagine you'll agree with Roberts's view that she's an 'intellectual'. He doesn't seem very sure himself, and to read her is to understand why. And when we find out in the appendices what Helen Epstein thinks is the reason for the terrible AIDS epidemic among Africans, and not whites, any question over whether Helen Epstein is an 'intellectual' or not, irrespective of who her mother is, will be settled. Unless it's 'intellectual' to be a racist.

It's evident from Roberts's chopping and changing on Epstein that he doesn't hold an honest opinion of anyone; in his scramble to succeed as a writer, everything's for sale; it's all a matter of positioning himself to best advantage in an utterly mercenary way.

But more than contriving to please the American liberals by pleading Epstein's 'lucid' confession, Roberts himself really does wholeheartedly agree with Helen's 'lucidly summarized' articles of American faith that 'AIDS is caused by a virus, which is passed on through sexual fluids, blood, or blood products, or from mother to unborn child in the womb or through breast-feeding.'

And that the 'virus destroys the immune system' which 'eventually ... begins to disintegrate' and the next thing wow you're being over-run with every kind of cootie.

This stupid hysterical woman, whom Roberts thinks the very soul of clever New York 'lucid[ity]', left out that according to the white Ameri-

can scientific authorities, mothers, mostly African, can also kill their babies by giving birth to them normally through what white doctors say are their polluted clams, and so therefore they should be cut out so they don't have to arrive through them and be fatally contaminated by them. Being full of deadly germs.

It's of no moment to Roberts that, having ardently propounded such exciting notions before 2000, Mbeki afterwards repeatedly impeached this new American theory. Even though I deal with this radical tectonic shift in his thinking extensively in *Just say yes, Mr President*, Roberts pretends for the purposes of his book that nothing changed. All that happened, he suggests, was that Mbeki applied some cautious brakes on the ARV drug rollout, and called an unremarkable conference of experts in the normal course. In other words, as Roberts reports it, Mbeki was merely involved in a policy controversy over the rate and scale of the government's provision of ARVs – and not a knowledge dispute going to the very foundational tenets of the HIV-AIDS-ARV paradigm.

Mbeki even tried nudging Roberts to this insight in his letter to him, quoted in the book:

As your manuscript indicates, not surprisingly, the most virulent of the debates, about knowledge, has been concerning the science that informs the global and our own programmes on HIV and AIDS. It is most interesting that the most vocal in this contest centred their argument, as you indicate, on the demand that all discussion must be terminated, and that all that had to be done was to implement what directly and indirectly, the pharmaceutical companies said should be done to dispense the drugs they produce as widely and as quickly as possible.

But Roberts is too thick to see it, his ears stopped, too fast in his own belief. Clearly from this statement, read in the light of all the others he'd publicly made, Mbeki had undergone a radical epistemological break. He was no longer talking from within the conventional 'knowledge' edifice, the body of American 'science that informs' the commercially driven War on AIDS, the entire conceptual basis for it. Roberts missed another striking pointer: Early in his book he quotes Mbeki (*ANC Today*, 8 October 2004) quoting 'Ngugi wa Thiongo'o on the imperative to "reject the coloniser's interpretation of reality"'. But to Roberts the HIV-AIDS paradigm is not 'the coloniser's interpretation of reality', but hard, irrefutable, certain Western (and therefore reliable) science, even if it's only two decades old and changing all the time – boiling down to: if you make love with a woman you can die, so it's best not to.

After quoting from Mbeki's letter to him, Roberts's next sentence begins again, repeating his lie like a Nazi propagandist, perhaps betraying his ill-ease with his false story: 'Based on the premise that HIV causes AIDS, Mbeki raised a range of questions about drug safety and about the role of co-factors (nutrition, poverty) in the manifestation of the disease.' Roberts, the slow learner in special class, is still calling AIDS a 'disease'. Needless to say then he doesn't have the nous to pick up Mbeki's cue: 'most virulent of the debates, about knowledge, has been concerning the science that informs the global and our own programmes on HIV and AIDS'.

Roberts's allegation that 'Based on the premise that HIV causes AIDS, Mbeki raised a range of questions' is false. As we've seen, he deliberately and deceptively conflates government policy on AIDS with Mbeki's thinking on it in order to avoid dealing with it, in order to pretend that they are one and the same thing. But in a SABC interview on 22 June 2001 Mbeki himself drew the distinction:

government policy is that there is HIV/AIDS, and various things follow from that. That is the basis on which the government is acting with regard to the development of vaccines, testing of nevirapine, and so on. It is based on that. Whatever I think won't impact on what the government is doing, and the government is doing what the rest of the world is doing with regard to this matter.

And to anyone listening he couldn't have put it much more clearly than that.

When Mbeki pointed out in Parliament that AZT was dangerously toxic and unfit to swallow, according to reams of research papers by concerned scientists and clinicians reporting how harmful it is, he was indeed, as Roberts says, still a believer in the HIV theory of AIDS. We know this because in the same speech he was still talking the same familiar American shit-brained Biblical plague hooey that he'd read in the newspapers: 'we are confronted with the scourge of HIV-AIDS against which we must leave no stone unturned to save ourselves from the catastrophe which this disease poses.'

But soon afterwards Mbeki began explicitly challenging the viral theory of AIDS. Which is to say, for slow learners, Mbeki's own thinking no longer sprung from the same 'premise' as before. I list all the instances in *Just say yes, Mr President*'. Roberts read it, but like a slimy prosecutor concealing evidence at trial to advance his career, Roberts omits from his book all and any mention of Mbeki's public statements that contradict the case he set out to make, namely that Mbeki still believes, as he used

to, until late 1999, that you can actually die from making love with a woman, especially if she's African.

'Mbeki combined the orthodox premises of HIV/AIDS science with good governance, including an interrogation of issues rather than wild or blind expenditure.' Having just quoted Mbeki pointing up the trouble with 'the orthodox premises of HIV/AIDS science' in his letter, the problem of 'knowledge' about it, Roberts goes on to utter this unbelievably stupid statement. Everyone knows that applied AIDS policy in South Africa is completely orthodox. No one's interested in this. What everyone's interested in is why Mbeki personally thinks out of tune with this orthodoxy. But not the clever boy from Trinidad who has no concept even of syntax.

'Based on the premise that HIV causes AIDS, Mbeki raised a range of questions about drug safety and the role of co-factors (nutrition, poverty) in the manifestations of the disease.' In fact Mbeki did a lot more than merely question ARV drug safety; he condemned AZT as 'immunosuppressive' and 'a danger to health'; he was twice reported publicly raising the AZT triphosphorylation problem, which goes to efficacy; he rejected AZT for rape victims; he repeatedly raised the worthlessness of HIV antibody tests; he raised the ludicrous cross-continental epidemiological anomalies in the orthodox theory; and he repeatedly challenged the HIV/AIDS statistics. Just for starters. The rest of Roberts's sentence is such typically empty waffle it doesn't warrant any time on it – except to note that Roberts is so stupid and so ignorant that he persistently calls AIDS a disease.

Roberts again quotes the 'lucid' 'intellectual' or 'anti-intellectual', depending on what day it is, 'lucidly' stating that

Botswana ... launched an HIV treatment program two years ago that is a model for the rest of the world. [But] the virus is still spreading at the same, staggering rate, so that Botswana has the highest infection rate of any country on earth. [*my ellipsis*]

You'd think reading this, in a book purportedly about Mbeki's thinking, that Mbeki also thinks these thrilling thoughts: that the extent to which the pharmaceutical industry has penetrated the market in Botswana is marvellous; that Africans in Botswana are spreading the 'virus' amongst themselves at 'a staggering rate', thanks to how much sex they're getting, how much more than the Jewish American woman is. But everyone

knows Mbeki has lost his former enthusiasm, and other than Roberts no one in the world suggests otherwise, not even the most stupid of stupid newspaper journalists like Tamar Kahn<sup>108</sup> and Kerry Cullinan<sup>109</sup>.

These are not Mbeki's thoughts; these are Epstein and Roberts's thoughts about sex disease being rife among the Negroes in Africa.

'The recognition that HIV causes AIDS is, in other words, merely the beginning, and certainly not the conclusion, of a balanced and adequate HIV/AIDS public health strategy.' What makes this writing so fantastically dishonest is that, as several critics of Roberts's book have already pointed out, Mbeki had evidently quit recognizing that HIV causes AIDS from his many public statements uttered after the turn of the decade. Apparently this sort of poncy writing impressed Roberts's tutors at Harvard and Oxford; it's completely empty, save to the extent that it obfuscates what Mbeki himself thinks about the American idea that you can die from making love with a woman, particularly with an African woman.

'The recognition' is Roberts's, not Mbeki's. By 'balanced and adequate', Roberts tells us that he thinks the supply of ARVs at government hospitals and clinics is good and right, and he implies that Mbeki thinks so too. But he doesn't; he's condemned the drugs unequivocally. John Carlin writing in the *Observer* on 2 September 2007 also thinks like Roberts that ARVs in the public health system are good: 'The government's official policy on Aids today is medically sound at last.' But unlike Roberts, Carlin truthfully records that 'Mbeki has been bludgeoned into grudgingly starting to have anti-retroviral drugs handed out.'

Roberts is next quoting the white American AIDS expert Kevin de Cock talking about 'the epidemic' and 'new infections' and people who 'require therapy' in a statement he uses to try to show that Mbeki was justified in the way he arrived at a 'balanced and adequate HIV/AIDS public health strategy', 'beginning' with 'The recognition that HIV causes AIDS'. All these notions left Mbeki's head at the close of the nineties: 'the epidemic' seen by American AIDS experts is nothing new, just the diseases of poverty among the African poor at the same rate rebranded; there are no 'new infections' from lovemaking, because Mbeki doesn't go for that American idea any more; and no one 'require[s] therapy' namely ARV drugs, because as Mbeki has indicated these chemicals are useless, deadly poisons.

Roberts's uncritical citation of De Cock is completely out of place in a chapter about Mbeki's thinking, because it reveals Roberts's thinking about AIDS, not Mbeki's. And although Roberts may consider himself a

very important person, actually no one could care less what he thinks about AIDS. It's Mbeki's thinking about AIDS that everyone's interested in figuring out. But in Roberts's book, all you read is Roberts's obvious lies about it.

Equally out of place is Roberts's citation of 'New York University Professor William Easterly'. Are you impressed? You're meant to be – even if Roberts doesn't say in his book what he's a professor of, whether of home economics or Polish. Roberts's world is shaped not by his own ideas, but by what people he thinks 'intellectually respectable' think and say; and the argumentum ad verecundiam is his basic childish mode of reasoning, constantly. One gets the impression Roberts grew up always trying to please his mother, to win her approval by showing how clever he is, quoting other clever people, and he never grew out of it (he's so afraid of her still that he didn't even tell her when he got married).

Easterly believes, as Roberts does, that ARV 'treatment' gives 'AIDS patient[s] ... extra year[s] of life' – but he prefers 'averting an infection', because it's cheaper. In a book about Mbeki's 'logic', it doesn't matter to Roberts whether Mbeki thinks ARV 'treatment' gives 'AIDS patient[s] ... extra year[s] of life', or whether Mbeki holds a contrary opinion of ARVs, supported by the research literature, namely that ARV 'treatment' in fact shortens the life of 'AIDS patient[s]', because, inter alia, it is 'immuno-suppressive', and thereby gives rise to what AIDS experts call immune deficiency, rendering the treated person fatally susceptible to every kind of opportunistic infection, as the saying goes, with his blood cells being slaughtered, along with his bone marrow cells, liver cells, muscle cells, brain and nerve cells, bone cells, and all other cells.

Roberts doesn't care whether Mbeki also still thinks, as he and Easterly do, that by not making love with women any more, or by only making love with a woman all covered up to make it safe, because unless you're covered up it's dangerous to make love with a woman because she can kill you with her germs, one is 'averting an infection' that will kill you unless you submit to ARV 'treatment', which, because it's 'immuno-suppressive', means that it destroys bone marrow in which blood cells are generated, destroys those that are, and kills every other cell it gets into, or maims them by causing any number of cancers. (Readers of the *Mail&Guardian* wouldn't know this; its journalists preach just about every week like Easterly does that ARV 'treatment' gives 'AIDS patient[s] ... extra year[s] of life'. Sort of like everlasting life.)

Roberts next claims that because 'Treatment is far less cost-effective than is prevention', De Cock and Easterly's recently stated preference for

‘prevention’ over ‘treatment’, is precisely the thinking for which Mbeki’s government had been pilloried six years earlier’. This is completely false. But then this is not surprising, because it’s Roberts who wrote it.

In truth and in fact it was not for advocating ‘prevention’ over ‘treatment’ that ‘Mbeki’s government had been pilloried six years earlier’. Mbeki ‘had been pilloried six years earlier’ for stating in Parliament that AZT was dangerously toxic; for convening a panel of international and local AIDS experts, with a spectrum of orthodox and heterodox views, to discuss controversies about the viral theory of AIDS and its treatment with AZT and similar drugs; for pointing out the glaring paradoxes and anomalies in the conventional HIV theory of AIDS in his private letter to other world leaders and at the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference; for raising his doubts about the sex virus theory of AIDS in interviews in the media; and for challenging the thrilling statistics put about by the white AIDS experts.

Roberts’s claim that Mbeki’s government had merely expressed a preference for ‘prevention’ over ‘treatment ... six years earlier’, and that this had been ‘precisely the thinking for which Mbeki’s government had been pilloried’ is a lie.

It is so that seven years earlier, in 1998, a year before Mbeki read *Debating AZT* and before he became aware of the ‘large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health’, about which ‘medical researchers have been making ... dire warnings’, ‘Mbeki’s government’ had cancelled pilot studies in which pregnant African women were being given AZT, on cost grounds. But this was a minor storm relative to those that broke around Mbeki for the reasons enumerated above.

Roberts quotes Easterly again, talking about ‘prolonging some lives’ of ‘Africans’ with ‘antiretroviral treatment’, and referring to the ‘universal human right for HIV-positive patients to have access to life-saving health care’. Roberts says Easterly’s book

starkly faced the moral and political costs that arise where AIDS-drug treatment is made a moralistic and fundamentalist priority instead of a competing option within sensible policy formulation.

Roberts is supposed to be writing a book about what Mbeki thinks of ‘antiretroviral treatment’, among other issues, and we know what Mbeki thinks of ‘antiretroviral treatment’. He does not think as Easterly and Roberts do that it’s a ‘universal human right’, that it’s ‘life-saving’, and that it ‘prolong[s] ... the ‘lives’ of ‘Africans’; and for this reason Mbeki does not think that it can ever be ‘a competing option within sensible

policy formulation'. It is entirely unprofessional and reprehensible that Roberts should be presenting his own thinking, and that of his American white liberal ideological soul-mates, as Mbeki's, namely that 'antiretroviral treatment' is a 'universal human right', that it's 'life-saving', that it 'prolong[s]' the 'lives' of 'Africans', and that it is 'a competing option within sensible policy formulation' – meaning that to give ARVs to Africans at government hospitals and clinics is a 'sensible' idea to be weighed in when formulating 'sensible policy'. But what can you expect from a habitual liar?

Referring to the 'prevention of the further spread of AIDS ... [treatment for] other killer diseases, freedom from starvation, and access to clean water', Roberts claims that 'Mbeki simply sought to consider all of these issues, including the appropriate scope and pace of anti-retroviral roll-outs, in a methodical manner.'

In truth Mbeki didn't 'simply [seek] to consider all of these issues' including the scale of ARV provision in public hospitals and clinics. He first pointed out in Parliament that there

exists a large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health. These are matters of great concern to the government as it would be irresponsible for us not to heed the dire warnings which medical researchers have been making.

He later got involved in a written disputation with Tony Leon over his well-informed, closely reasoned opposition to the provision of AZT to rape victims, and even the manufacturer agreed with him (this is detailed in *Just say yes, Mr President*, which Roberts lifts without credit).

Never did Mbeki provide any indication that he'd changed his mind after this, as Roberts obliquely implies he did, and that he thought 'the dire warnings which medical researchers have been making' about 'the toxicity of this drug' weren't so dire anymore. Never did he suggest that he's changed his mind about AZT, satisfied, after mistakenly thinking so for a while, that 'the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact' not 'a danger to health'.

Never did Mbeki ever say or suggest after October 1999 that as far as he was concerned, AZT is actually beneficial to health, because 'the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact' not something to be seriously concerned about, and that the benefits actually outweigh the risks after all. And that therefore it should be provided for administration to mostly poor Africans in the public health system 'in a methodical manner'.

The circumstances in which our democratic government was forced to spend billions on purchasing AZT and similar drugs from multinational pharmaceutical corporations and supply them in the public health service, in the teeth of Mbeki and his Health Minister's strenuous, informed opposition, could fill a book. It does, but I'm still busy with it. But reading Roberts you'd think that Mbeki was merely concerned 'about appropriate scope and pace of anti-retroviral rollouts'. And not whether the drugs were useless and deadly poisons, like Salvarsan just a few decades before it.

Roberts's talk of the 'prevention of the further spread of AIDS' is Roberts's alone, not Mbeki's. Gone for Mbeki is the basic belief among nearly all whites, just as they just about all believed in God and Jesus and the virgin birth, and many still do, that AIDS is 'spread[ing]' among Africans when they have sex – like all other people in the world who also have sex, but who somehow aren't 'spread[ing] ... AIDS'.

'George W. Bush found more than R15-billion dollars [*sic*] for antiretroviral drugs.' Roberts just makes it up as he goes. Fast and free with the facts, he habitually exaggerates for bang like a tabloid journalist: 'more than R15-billion dollars [*sic*]'. Actually it was \$15 billion on the head. And it wasn't 'for antiretroviral drugs' either. It was for a range of AIDS projects, among them the provision of ARVs, after a mandatory third of the allocation went to teaching Africans not to have sex (a provision only just repealed by the Senate on 7 September). No joke. The Americans call it 'abstinence training'. And praise the Lord.

'... the money was paid to drug companies that were major Bush campaign donors.' In his footnotes Roberts credits me for this information, saying, 'On the funding, Anthony Brink undoubtedly makes a good point'. He then carries on to plagiarize my writing about it, altering it a little here and there as he pleases, but providing no indication by way of quotation marks that you're reading what I researched and what I wrote in *Just say yes, Mr President*'. Compare Roberts's footnote:

Bush's interest in seeing to the provision of AIDS drugs to Africans has nothing to do with solicitude. Because he's a GlaxoSmithKline man. A Republican Party fund-raising dinner was held on 19 June 2002 at which Bush was the evening star. CBS reported the following day, GOP Bash Rakes In \$30 Million — a record-breaker: 'Among the top corporate donors at Wednesday's fund-raiser were GlaxoSmithKline, a multinational drug giant, which gave at least \$250,000, according to the

Washington Post.' In his dinner speech Bush gave special thanks for the fundraising prowess of dinner committee chairman Robert Ingram — you guessed: president of pharmaceutical operations at GlaxoSmithKline. [italics added] [*sic: there are no italics added*] Donald Rumsfeld stepped up to the post of Secretary of Defence on 20 January 2001, stepping down at the same time as Chairman of the Board of Gilead Sciences, Inc., a pharmaceutical company that develops 'novel treatments for viral diseases' (including AIDS drugs), as Rumsfeld himself put it. Between 1977 and 1985, Rumsfeld was Chief Executive Officer, President, and then Chairman of drug giant GD Searle & Co, subsequently merged with Pfizer. Bush's gigantic R15 billion [*sic*] President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar) funding package was announced in January, 2003.

With mine:

But Bush's interest in seeing to the provision of AIDS drugs to Africans has nothing to do with solicitude. Because he's a GlaxoSmithKline man. A Republican Party fund-raising dinner was held on 19 June 2002 at which Bush was the evening star. CBS reported the following day, *GOP Bash Rakes In \$30 Million* — a record-breaker: 'Among the top corporate donors at Wednesday's fund-raiser were GlaxoSmithKline, a multinational drug giant, which gave at least \$250,000, according to the Washington Post.' In his dinner speech Bush gave special thanks for the fundraising prowess of dinner committee chairman Robert Ingram — you guessed: president of pharmaceutical operations at GlaxoSmithKline. [...]

Bush's right hand man is a drug industry crony: When he appointed Donald Rumsfeld Secretary of Defence on 20 January 2001, he was Chairman of the Board of Gilead Sciences, Inc., a pharmaceutical corporation big into the development of 'novel treatments for viral diseases' (including AIDS drugs), as he put it when he'd taken the job. Before that, from 1977 until 1985, he was Chief Executive Officer, President, and then Chairman of GD Searle & Co, a multinational drug company now part of Pfizer. His business acumen at Searle won him the Outstanding Chief Executive Officer in the Pharmaceutical Industry award from the *Wall Street Transcript* in 1980 and a similar one from *Financial World* the following year.

After stealing my work, Roberts claims in the same paragraph, lying like a child making up stories, because respect for the truth is not one of his personal values, and therefore is not to be found in his professional output either, that both ‘Donald Rumsfeld as well as Dick Cheney were leading Big Pharma executives’. I told Roberts about Rumsfeld in my book manuscript, which information he resprayed for his book like a car thief. But don’t go straining your eyes for any mention of Dick Cheney in the part of my book that Roberts plagiarized, because he isn’t in there. Dick Cheney is not now, nor has he ever been, a ‘Big Pharma executive’ (really; I don’t tell lies like Roberts does).

You may be surprised to learn from Roberts that

It is an essential and unnoticed fact that the AIDS treatment orthodoxy that dominated the 1990s while Mbeki was Deputy President faced a crisis and collapse in 1999 as he became President

on 14 June. You’ll search in vain for any evidence of this ‘essential ... fact’, and you’ll soon appreciate that the reason for your difficulty, and why this ‘essential ... fact’ has hitherto been ‘unnoticed’, as Roberts correctly records, is because, other than to Roberts, it’s not a fact at all. He’s made it up. It’s called writing false history. If Roberts belonged to any sort of historical society, he’d be expelled for it. A sophomore writing this would be rusticated from his university.

I’ve tracked and charted the drunken shifts in AIDS treatment orthodoxy in detail in *Just say yes, Mr President*. Again, as we’ll see amply shown in a moment, my book manuscript is Roberts’s primary but uncredited source here, but again, being an unprofessional slob, and trying so hard to please, he completely screws it up.

While Mbeki was still Deputy President, there was no significant pressure on the AIDS orthodoxy to review its ‘hit early, hit hard’ approach with multiple ARV drug combinations, much less did it ‘face a crisis and collapse in [mid-] 1999 as he became President’. This is fabrication for a good story. It’s like an oil portrait of a king in which the painter fakes his girth and his hairline for history, because he thinks it will win him favour.

The reason why Mbeki’s political intervention in October 1999 in ordering the safety of AZT formally investigated and reported so shocked the AIDS clergy, which reacted violently accordingly, was precisely because it was so unexpected. It took a politician to draw public attention to the fact that AZT ‘is in fact a danger to health’ and that there ‘exists a large volume of scientific literature [on] the toxicity of this drug’, sup-

porting this statement that AZT ‘is in fact a danger to health’. Just as it took a lawyer to mass it all together and bring it to his attention.

It was not until much later in 2000 that the Henry J Kaiser Foundation privately convened a panel of officials and experts in the US to review David Ho’s universally accepted treatment model, namely promptly administered heavy doses of AZT and the like for the HIV-diagnosed. And it wasn’t until early the year after that that Ho’s ‘hit early, hit hard’ approach was changed – but only the ‘hit early’ part.

It is completely false to claim, as Roberts does, that in mid-1999 the ‘hit early, hit hard’ treatment protocol ‘faced a crisis and collapse’. It’s Roberts’s usual fiction.

This ‘AIDS treatment orthodoxy that dominated the 1990s’ – actually the mid-1990s onward when the ‘hit early, hit hard’ approach was initiated, and not throughout the 1990s – was indeed ‘replaced by a starkly different treatment orthodoxy’, but it’s rubbish to say that it was ‘much more attuned to the very same drug safety, toxicity and nutrition issues that Mbeki himself raised’.

First, nutrition had nothing to do with it, in that there was no new emphasis at that time by American AIDS experts on the importance of good nutrition as the essential basis of recovery from an AIDS-defining illness such as TB.

Second, Mbeki had been quite explicit about AZT in Parliament. There

exists a large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health. These are matters of great concern to the government as it would be irresponsible for us not to heed the dire warnings which medical researchers have been making.

Mbeki wasn’t saying that because ‘medical researchers have been making ... dire warnings [in] a large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health’, the government shouldn’t provide the African poor with it immediately on being diagnosed HIV-positive, but only later on according to other equally irrelevant but alarming sounding lab test results. Mbeki was saying ‘the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health’. In his correspondence with Tony Leon, Mbeki correctly described one of the principal reasons why AZT is ‘a danger to health’: it’s because AZT is ‘immuno-suppressive’, which you’d be right to understand means it causes immune deficiency<sup>110</sup> and makes you very sick.

Mbeki had taken and expressed the clear view that AZT was pure poison. Period. He never ever expressed any agreement with American AIDS experts that because drugs like AZT are so dangerously poisonous, they should therefore be given to Africans combined with other similar exceptionally toxic chemical drugs at the same deadly dose, only a bit later.

Mbeki's rejection of AZT soon after extended to other similar ARVs. As he told Tony Leon in his letter to him on 1 July, 'all responsible medical authorities repeatedly issue serious warnings about the toxicity of antiretroviral drugs, which include AZT'.

Roberts claims that 'far from standing outside of orthodoxy as a relentless and reckless "dissident", Mbeki was the most visible articulator of a change that was in any event underway within orthodox science itself.

This is utter rubbish again. If one has regard to the furious reaction of the orthodoxy at the time, both lay and medical, Mbeki's position on AZT was classic AIDS dissident in their view, and indeed it was. In his September 2005 interview in the *Witness*, Roberts himself describes Mbeki's stance on AIDS issues, expressed in word and deed in the early 2000s, as 'dissiden[t]'.

And there was no 'change underway ... within orthodox science' in October 1999. The change came abruptly, much later, in January 2001. But this false statement sounds appealing, which is why Roberts simply invented it for his fake account of Mbeki's thinking in this matter, substituting his own stupid ignorance for his subject's well-informed, studied views.

'Ho's idea was to knock HIV back until it was undetectable, after which the patient could live happily ever after drug free.' Ho never proposed the rider that Roberts cooked up to add sparkle to his tale. Ho never said if you take some stiff shots of ARVs as soon as you've been told you've got the virus in you, according to some dim doctor with his antibody test, you won't have to swallow them every day for life until you die on them. His idea, his failed idea, first accepted then repudiated by all his colleagues when they saw the deadly harm it was causing, was 'controlling the virus' with large, early doses of combined ARV drugs.

In the same paragraph opening with his false statement about what 'Ho's idea' was, Roberts proceeds to pillage from *'Just say yes, Mr President'* without crediting me as the source of each and every quotation from *New Scientist*, *Newsday*, and Anthony Fauci. Like a shoplifter he just helps himself. The *New Scientist* and *Newsday* quotations that Roberts has stolen from me, I find intact in his book, still in one piece, starting and ending

exactly where I'd cut them for my book. From my Fauci quote, Roberts has used the second sentence only.

'Any doctor who today prescribed antiretrovirals on a hit hard, hit early basis would be nothing less than a dissident, by present norms [...]'. While Roberts is on his lifting spree, he's even aping my writing style (he did tell me he 'can't help' himself nicking my art, because like his virus, my 'writing's infectious'). 'Any doctor today' is one of my hooks – as in my affidavit filed in the Cape High Court in mid-2006:

Today, only half a century later, any doctor who injected arsenic into his patient on its own, or in combination with such other deadly toxins as mercury and bismuth, even once, let alone repeatedly, no matter whose authority he cited for this, would be considered criminally insane and arrested for attempted murder.

(I'm referring here to the highest medical authority: the Health Organization of the League of Nations.) It's nonsense to contend that 'Any doctor who today prescribed antiretrovirals on a hit hard, hit early basis would be nothing less than a dissident, by present norms.' The current chatter among white American AIDS experts favours earlier rather than later ARV treatment again (the 'hit hard' dose has never changed).

Apropos of Roberts's statement that 'present-day norms were already in transition in 1999, when Mbeki began to look at the problems with the Ho School AIDS establishment', Roberts is embellishing on his earlier fiction, telling one lie on top of another.

In late 1999 Mbeki started looking at the toxicity literature on AZT administered alone and with other drugs, which I'd set out in *Debating AZT*. He did not investigate the pros and cons of swallowing smaller or larger quantities of this poison sooner or later. Like the syphilis experts' pros and cons of injecting smaller or larger quantities of arsenic sooner or later. Or of medical conventions among the learned doctors of Harley Street in regard to the opening of veins and letting smaller or larger quantities of blood sooner or later – still being recommended for the treatment of pneumonia by 'the Father of Modern Medicine' Sir William Osler in his authoritative *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* right up to the 1946 edition. And Mbeki did not then, as Roberts implies, settle on and go for the AIDS experts' new approach of administering AZT with other drugs later rather than sooner. (Being more intelligent than we are, it's obviously impossible for AIDS experts to concede that they've simply been poisoning people on the clear evidence that they have been.)

Roberts is just making up his ‘present-day norms were already in transition’ claim, straining dishonestly to justify and rationalize Mbeki’s clear rejection of AZT on the basis of a false historical record of what happened, and to try and keep him onside within Roberts’s own puny and cowardly conceptions of intellectual respectability.

Fact is, if you swallow this deadly poison with a skull and crossbones on the label later rather than sooner, you’ll die later rather than sooner. That’s all. It’s simple, but it’s too simple for Roberts. And it’s too simple for white doctors, journalists and public commentators concerned about Africans all of a sudden. Just as long as they can wield AIDS as a political club with which to batter their white liberal agenda through in reaction to the transformation programme of the democratic majority government. Pretending to care about the welfare of Africans more than their own liberation movement at last in government does.

‘So it turns out that Mbeki’s caution in 1999 about toxicity and the unrestrained distribution of the then “standard of care” drugs to people who test positive but lacked symptoms was correct.’ The habitual liar spews up another chunk. As usual, Roberts misreports what happened.

Mbeki was not merely showing ‘caution’ about the toxicity of what Roberts calls “‘standard of care’ drugs’ to people who test positive but lacked symptoms’. He spoke only of AZT in Parliament. And he was unequivocal in damning AZT as ‘in fact a danger to health’, because as he later described it correctly to Tony Leon AZT is ‘immunosuppressive’, being first and foremost a blood cell poison. Mbeki was categorical.

Mbeki did not express himself on the prevailing treatment orthodoxy since the mid-nineties, which was to give high doses of ARV drug combinations to healthy people who merely tested HIV-positive: typically 600mg AZT plus 300 mg 3TC (a chemically almost identical drug) plus a protease inhibitor, as if 900 mg of AZT and 3TC daily wasn’t already enough of a baseball bat to the head.

Mbeki had nothing to say at this time about the sense of giving clinically healthy HIV-positive people AZT mixed with other poisonous chemicals. He had nothing to say at the time about the need for white doctors to keep an eye on Africans they were poisoning to watch them being poisoned and maybe lay off a bit.

Mbeki was not merely being cautious in 1999: he was calling attention to ‘a large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health’ and the ‘dire warnings which medical researchers have been making’ about AZT.

Roberts quotes Mbeki explaining to Debra Patta on e.tv on 24 April 2001:

You had the US government issue new guidelines about the use of anti-retroviral drugs – radically different to what had been the practice before ... So they changed the guidelines, which is fine. What they are raising fundamentally, is that science does not have enough answers to deal with this question.

Although Roberts found this in *'Just say yes, Mr President'* (of course he doesn't say so) for once he has gone on to look up the original, because his edits are different from mine.

If Roberts had any brains, if he had any nose for Mbeki's characteristically subtle manner of speech in tight spots, he'd have picked up that Mbeki was conveying in this statement that the AIDS experts' abandonment only of the hit early part of their hit early, hit hard convention remained unscientific. It was unscientific even within the parameters of and by the standards of Western evidence-based medical science. See?

'Mbeki's pause allowed a more careful and sustainable rollout now, of better drugs within a better infrastructure and without the brutal "hit early, hit hard" philosophy.' Since Roberts is completely unprincipled, and takes massive cash payments from anyone, do you think that writing like this he's now maybe on a retainer from the TAC? Because you'd imagine from this sentence that everything is lekker now, and that Africans aren't being decimated<sup>111</sup> by these drugs, now that Achmat and his white shop-boys have forced the closure of the multi-billion rand deals for ARVs that the pharmaceutical industry wanted.

The UK-based ARV-promoting propaganda organ NAM (openly funded by ARV-producing pharmaceutical corporations 'Positive Action GlaxoSmithKline (founding sponsor), Abbott, ... Boehringer Ingelheim, ... Merck & Co., Inc., Pfizer, Roche, Schering Plough'), published a report 'Patient retention difficulties for South Africa's public sector' in its latest AIDSmap circular 'HIV & AIDS Treatment in Practice #90, August 31st, 2007', talking about

the distressingly high loss-to-follow up rates reported by some large ART-dispensing facilities ... at the 3rd South African AIDS Conference. ... For instance, 27% of the first tranche of patients enrolled at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban starting after April 2004 were 'non-persistent' (defined as having failed to return for prescription refills for 90 days or more) within 12 months of starting ART. ... Dr Helen Schneider of

the Centre for Health Policy at the University of Witwatersrand ... concluded about a third of these ‘drop-outs’ were deaths.

An article by the same outfit in September reported:

Felege Hiwat hospital in Bahir Dar, in the northern Amhara region [Ethiopia] ... started over 3600 patients on ART by the end of 2006. However 22% of those patients were lost to follow-up ... Home visits and other enquiries were able to locate just 6% of patients, with a further 44% of the LTFUs discovered to be dead, and the remainder still missing. In South Africa, Klerksdorp Hospital in the North-West province ... the loss to follow-up rate ... reached 21%. The vast majority of those lost to follow-up defaulted during the first six months of treatment, but an audit of 300 patients lost to follow-up could only identify 126 deaths from local death records. The remainder were still out there somewhere, but, said Dr Ebrahim Variava [*without saying how he knew*], either their address details weren’t complete, or they weren’t answering their mobile phones.

Don’t ask Roberts to specify what drugs he’s referring to when he claims that ‘Mbeki’s pause allowed ... better drugs’, because he wouldn’t be able to tell you. He’s just making this up again as he goes along, so accustomed to lying his way through life that he doesn’t even think before lying. What ‘better drugs’? AZT is very much still around, and Achmat and his TAC are currently pressurizing the government to provide it to pregnant African women. There is no evidence that any of the pharmaceutical merchandise that has come onto the market since the end of 1999, such as the TAC’s new favourite tenofovir, is ‘better’ than AZT. But it pleases Roberts to lie that there is, because it sounds nice and makes a good story. Also it sounds politically correct and ‘intellectually respectable’.

Contradicting Roberts’s claims, a major meta-analysis by Rosen and others, just published in *PLoS Med* 4(10): e298, October 2007, indicates the extent to which Africans are being poisoned and killed by ARVs in the period since ‘Mbeki’s pause [which] allowed a more careful and sustainable rollout now, of better drugs within a better infrastructure and without the brutal “hit early, hit hard” philosophy’, namely post-28 October 1999. The researchers report:

we conducted a systematic search of the English-language published literature, gray literature (project reports available online), and conference abstracts between 2000 and 2007. ... We in-

cluded 32 publications reporting on 33 patient cohorts totaling 74,289 patients in 13 countries in our analysis. ... Under the worst-case scenario, 76% of patients would be lost by 2 y [years]. The midpoint scenario predicted patient retention of 50% by 2 y. ... losing up to half of those who initiate ART within two years is cause for concern. From the data as reported, attrition averaged roughly 22% at 10 mo [months] of follow-up. This average comprised mainly deaths (40% of attrition) and losses to follow-up (56%). ... we believe that actual attrition is higher than ... we report ... The midpoint scenario suggests that approximately half of all patients started on ART were no longer on treatment at the end of two years. ... A recent attempt to trace lost-to-follow-up patients in Malawi determined that 50% had died, 27% could not be found, and most of the rest had stopped ART ... those reporting on these cohorts do not know what ultimately happened to patients categorized as lost to follow-up ... our analysis is necessarily limited to publicly available reports and thus potentially subject to publication bias. Researchers may be less inclined to publish long-term outcomes from cohorts that have experienced very high early attrition. ... Better information on those who are lost to follow-up is urgently needed.

By falsely characterizing Mbeki's intervention as 'Mbeki's pause', Roberts implies that he stopped just to ponder and then resumed something, that he merely sought to limit the scale and pace of the government's provision of ARVs cautiously. This reading has no basis in anything Mbeki has ever said. It's invention. In other words it's deliberate historical falsification by Roberts, with his eyes wide open.

Roberts can never offer the excuse that he didn't know everything Mbeki ever publicly said about ARVs and AIDS, and so got it wrong inadvertently, because I gave it all to him in *Debating AZT* and *Just say yes, Mr President*.

You can always smell a fake when he says 'sustainable', a trendy chestnut of a word calculated to anoint a claim with legitimacy, cool, and membership of some sort of progressive club (like in Roberts's letter to Donadio: 'for sustainable health and welfare infrastructure'). It's like painting an AIDS ribbon on the children's home bus. It makes people want to give you money.

The last thing Mbeki has ever wanted, as opposed to what Roberts and his New York white liberals have wanted, is a 'sustain[ed] rollout' of ARV drugs in South Africa for administration to the African poor.

By saying,

Achmat's supposedly 'courageous' and 'heroic' refusal to go on anti-retroviral drugs during the late 1990s was the best thing he could have done for himself, because the orthodoxy of the early and mid-1990s was dangerous according to the treatment practices of medical orthodoxy in the new millennium, the then 'standard of care'

Roberts legitimizes the current routine of providing ARV drug combination treatment at the same combined dose, started a bit later. Which he implies is all well and good now. As if Mbeki also thinks, as Roberts and white American AIDS experts do, that ARV drugs that are much too toxic for healthy people are not much too toxic for sick people.

But as Roberts mentions in a different part of his book – lifting from one of the news reports that I found and excerpted in my affidavit in the Cape High Court, as well as in my criminal complaint against Achmat in the ICC, and which Roberts obviously doesn't credit me with – within just couple of months of complying with 'the treatment practices of medical orthodoxy in the new millennium', having put off treatment for years, Achmat had been severely poisoned, to the extent that he'd become both physically and mentally crippled and incapacitated<sup>112</sup>.

The moral of the story is that if you swallow poisons you can expect to be poisoned. If you put off swallowing them, you can put off being poisoned by them. I do appreciate that this is an impenetrably complex concept for doctors, activists, journalists and public commentators, mostly white, to grasp; and to Roberts it's just as opaque too, even though he isn't on the outside. This is why you'd never come to this insight reading his book. Reading it you'd think that Mbeki helped establish a 'sensible' ARV 'treatment practice for the new millennium'. It sounds groovy; it's just the sort of thing the AIDS-fighting white liberal establishment in New York wants to hear; and this is why Roberts writes this way. For them. Sustainably.

Roberts's lazy, cowardly and dishonest style of contention, already seen, is to set up a fake representation of his subject or his subject's position, the more easily to engage with and defeat him or it. Here's another example: 'Mbeki's refusal to play stenographer to the drug companies in the management of South Africa's major public health issue apparently meant that Mbeki was a "denialist" or "AIDS dissident".'

At the risk of being accused of petty pedantry of the type Roberts habitually rejoices in, being a person of little imagination, as I understand the hip new meaning of the word, a 'stenographer' in contemporary dis-

course means an indiscriminating journalist who uncritically transmits as news all and any information manufactured by and issuing from political and corporate power aggregations – typified by ARV-pushing AIDS journalists in South Africa, mostly female, mostly white, but also basically culturally white Indian. So in his shabby, careless, rudderless writing Roberts puts cool above meaning; because not being a journalist, Mbeki couldn't have been a 'stenographer to the drug companies' even if he tried.

It was not for merely for pointing out that AZT ('a medicine from heaven' in the words of then Southern African HIV/AIDS Clinicians Society president Desmond Martin) was actually 'a danger to human health', according to 'the dire warnings that researchers have been making' about 'the toxicity of this drug' in 'a large volume of scientific literature' that Mbeki was accused of being a 'dissident' or a 'denialist'. The main reason he attracted these charges was because he'd openly signalled his doubts about the HIV theory of AIDS.

Roberts says that 'the term [*I presume the term 'denialist'*] merely means that some or other political opponent happens to dislike you for reasons wholly unrelated to healthcare policy' (but of course it has to do with 'healthcare policy'). He correctly identifies 'denialist' (and 'race-obsessed') as 'smear-words'.

Yes, and this is exactly why Roberts applied the label 'denialist' to me, and unmistakably to me, in his letter to Rachel Donadio at the *New York Times Book Review*. Roberts knew it was hate-speech to smear me, delegitimize me and kill me off in the discourse around AIDS – like calling me a Jew or a Communist in a political environment in which being these things was something hateful.

We've already seen Roberts quoting 'Anthony Butler, a University of Cape Town academic' in support of his proposition that 'To label [Mbeki's position on AIDS] "denialism" is not good enough.' And he describes 'denialist' and even 'dissident' (which I think an appropriate word) as 'tired labels'. If Roberts really thinks these are 'tired labels', he wouldn't use them, and he'd use the adjective 'heterodox' instead. In fact, he says, referring to the 'tired labels' 'dissident' and 'denialist', 'The terms are a trivialization of a momentous public health issue.' Let's take this apart.

HIV-AIDS is a most certainly a 'momentous public health issue' to those, like Roberts, who believe Africans are riddled with it, in the same way that black Africans were a 'momentous' threat to the safety, security and prosperity of the 'braaivleis [*barbecue*], rugby, sunny skies and Chevrolet' lives of white South Africans during the apartheid era. The racist regime elevated this 'momentous' threat to ideology and controlled the

country with it. In those days it wasn't HIV-AIDS, it was swart gevaar (the black threat). Unless sjambokked into line, the government said or implied, Africans would rape your wives and daughters, steal everything and kill everyone. And the apartheid regime came to power and maintained its power on the back of this lie, just as Zackie Achmat telling related lies about Africans being riddled with AIDS has accumulated the power to completely own and control health policy in South Africa, such that the President and Health Minister are powerless and just look on as the government is forced to import the most deadly corporate merchandise into the country at a cost of billions of wasted rands and dead and dying Africans everywhere.

Since Roberts and Cameron sit together on HIV-AIDS and believe essentially the same things about it, so 'lucidly summarized' by 'anti-intellectual' Helen Epstein, about how it's rife among Africans and all, it won't surprise you that Roberts secretly finds Cameron's histrionics about it exciting. Both Roberts and Cameron have this effete way, like Achmat, of exaggerating everything. This is why Roberts finds Edwin's favourite word 'momentous' attractive. I quote loads of Cameron's public statements about AIDS in *Just say yes, Mr President*, and running a search on the 'momentous' word, I find that in his goes at Mbeki Cameron uses it no less than eight times.

Roberts's expression 'trivialization of a momentous public health issue' is basically straight out the mouth of another fraud, Allan Dershowitz, who recently sabotaged his leading critic Norman Finkelstein's bid for tenure at DePaul University in Chicago. Finkelstein, the son of Nazi slave-labour concentration camp survivors, has called attention to Dershowitz's fraudulent scholarship on Israel. Among other things, Dershowitz calls him a 'Holocaust trivializer'<sup>113</sup> for this – and for Finkelstein's exposure, before this, of what he condemns as the Holocaust industry, a racket for extorting massive payments from European governments.

The expression 'trivialization of a momentous public health issue' sits well in Roberts's mouth. A fraud too, Roberts resorts to the deceptive propaganda techniques both of Dershowitz in perpetrating and covering his fraud, and of Cameron in blowing up the bogey he's conjuring up as 'momentous'.

Roberts's crooked trick is this: You dare not openly doubt the veracity of his claim that we really do have a new 'momentous public health issue' among Africans suddenly on our hands in South Africa since the ANC came to power in 1994 (rather than age-old diseases renamed AIDS); and you may not even call yourself an AIDS dissident, or be called an AIDS denialist, because even this is 'trivialization of a momen-

tous public health issue', and you don't want to be called an AIDS trivializer any more than you want to be called a Holocaust trivializer.

Can you see why Ken Owen calls this person a terribly shabby debater?

Roberts and Dershowitz have a natural friend in Nicoli Nattrass in the manner in which they all seek to silence their opponents by pretending to write from the highest moral high ground there is. At the beginning I mentioned her condemning Roberts's book in a review in the *Mail & Guardian* on 20 July:

Recent attempts by President Thabo Mbeki's official biographer, Ronald Suresh Roberts [*he isn't*], to airbrush Mbeki's Aids denialism from the historical record smell of Stalinism – the era in which history was most cynically and viciously rewritten – and trivialize the responsibility Mbeki carries for thousands of lives lost because he gave credence to ludicrous denialist tenets about the cause of Aids and the efficacy of antiretrovirals. ... According to demographic modelling, if during the Mbeki presidency South Africa had rolled out ARVs for pregnant women with HIV and for treating those sick with Aids ... then at least 170 000 HIV infections could have been prevented and more than 340 000 deaths averted. This amounts to what European commissioner Peter Mandelson once described as a form of 'genocide by sloth'.

Believe it or not, this woman is a professor at UCT. Roberts would obviously be right at home employed there.

Mbeki, says Roberts, was 'Seeking not ideological warfare or pseudo-warfare, neither faith nor counterfaith, but [was] looking only for a sensible policy discussion with which to improve the plight of the sick and poor people'. Notice how Roberts, as ever, sneaks himself, his stultified thinking, into the centre of the frame, instead of his subject's.

Of course Mbeki wasn't 'seeking ... ideological warfare or pseudo-warfare' when he pointed out that AZT was 'harmful to health' and that it's 'immuno-suppressive', or when he was repeatedly publicly challenging the reliability of the antibody tests on which the entire AIDS craze among whites and their servants in our country is founded. Nor was he interested in 'faith or counterfaith'. He explicitly deplored the religious vehemence with which the orthodoxy tried shutting down his opening of dialogue between orthodox and dissident scientists and clinicians.

None of my work on drugs and the HSRC 'HIV Prevalence' study has been inherently ideological, unless you count my highlighting of the es-

sential racism of the AIDS construct in my critiques of the HSRC report, quoting Mbeki on this in the course of it.

But by talking this way, Roberts open up his personal agenda. Beyond being a comprehensive history, my book in preparation is an extensive multi-angled exploration of the ideological underpinnings of AIDS as a medical-social-political construct. Having praised it fulsomely, Roberts is pissing on it now for the basest personal reasons (about which more later).

Roberts says Mbeki was 'looking only for a sensible policy discussion with which to improve the plight of the sick and poor people'. Obviously 'sensible' has little inherent objective meaning. As AIDS promoters call people 'denialists' to say 'I hate you' (which I've explained to Roberts and which he recognizes and writes about in his book, without crediting me), Roberts uses 'sensible' to elevate the line he's proposing above the irrational, unsensible people squabbling below. Like Achmat and me.

What Roberts is busy trying in his characteristically slippery way is to cut off my tongue. He suggests that I engage in barren ideological warfare – worse, pseudo-warfare, which is to say my work is worthless on two counts: it's not just empty ideological haranguing, it's fake. He's back to vilifying me instead of representing what I have to say, accurately or at all. In his footnotes he says I made a good point about Bush's drug industry funding. And that's it; you'd think this an aberrant gem from some crazy Taliban type.

To support this line, Roberts now proceeds to quote from Mbeki's letter, but his gambit fails, because Mbeki is plainly referring to the behaviour of orthodox AIDS promoters, and not to me:

People who otherwise would fight very hard to defend the critically important rights of freedom of thought and speech occupy, with regard to the HIV-AIDS issue, the frontline in the campaign of intellectual intimidation and terrorism which argues that only the freedom we have is to agree with what they decree to be established scientific truths.

I'm hardly insisting by way of 'intellectual terrorism' that Mbeki and others must 'agree with ... established scientific truths'.

It's evident from this passage that Mbeki is alive to the insecurity of the 'established scientific truths' of AIDS. But Roberts is so determined to portray Mbeki as a believer like he is (that the African people of South Africa are vrot with sexually transmitted disease) that he misses it.

Mbeki is clearly onto something a lot more 'momentous' than mere 'sensible policy discussion' within the orthodox paradigm. Roberts would

prefer you not to know this, because the evidence of it doesn't fit into his case.

Roberts's phrase 'the plight of poor and sick people' is naturally calculated to warm the hearts of caring American white liberals, but of course it's transparently bare propaganda, and I assure you it's the least of Roberts's own concerns.

'As Judge Edwin Cameron grudgingly conceded in his memoir, it was Mbeki who first brought AIDS to national attention in a televised address on 9 October 1998 and who turned up, unannounced, at a meeting during the Mandela presidency, after Cameron's AIDS-lobby delegation had been relegated by President Mandela to a meeting with Deputy President De Klerk. Mbeki's 1999 address at his inauguration as President turned first to poverty and then passionately to AIDS: "There can be no moment of relaxation while the number of those affected by HIV/AIDS continues to expand at an alarming pace."

Before pointing out Roberts's grossly tendentious wresting of his source materials, I might mention that he got them all from my book manuscript; but he cites Cameron's and Hadland and Rantao's little books as his source instead, because he counts on plausibly getting away with it. *Just say yes, Mr President* put Roberts onto the October 1998 speech, the Cameron-Mbeki meeting, and Mbeki's alarming pitch for the AIDS crowd at his Presidential inauguration, long before Cameron's book came out. I cite the full text of Mbeki's 1998 speech at the start of my book. Roberts has copied and pasted from it, to save him the typing time and effort, but he pretends to have got it from Hadland and Rantao's little biography published in 1999.

Here, as quoted by Roberts, is the one time AIDS happy-clappy putting the fear of unauthorized lovemaking into the nation's heart:

For too long we have closed our eyes as a nation, hoping the truth was not so real. The danger is real. ... Because it is carried and communicated by other human beings, it is with us in our workplaces, in our classrooms and our lecture halls. It is there in our church gatherings and other religious functions. AIDS walks with us. It travels with us wherever we go. It is there when we play sport. It is there when we sing and dance. ... HIV/AIDS is not someone else's problem. It is my problem. It is your problem. By allowing it to spread, we face the danger that half of our youth will not reach adulthood. Their education will be wasted. The economy will shrink. There will be a large number of sick people whom the healthy will not be able to

maintain. Our dreams as a people will be shattered. HIV spreads mainly through sex. You have the right to live your life the way you want to. But I appeal to the young people, who represent our country's future, to abstain from sex for as long as possible. If you decide to engage in sex, use a condom. In the same way I appeal to both men and women to be faithful to each other, but otherwise to use condoms.

The language is odd, stilted, ridiculous, and it's untypical of the razor-sharp intellectual we know. It's not Mbeki's characteristic prose; indeed, he'd explained before commencing his speech that he was standing in for Mandela, who couldn't make it. Nonetheless Mbeki was able to mouth all this nonsense without bursting out laughing, because he was still in thrall of the American AIDS delusion at this point. You discern the willing believer's suspension of his normal sense, his normal critical faculties, his normal rapier intelligence. It's like when someone's telling you all moist-eyed how Jesus loves you, even though he's never met you to decide whether he loves you or not.

Incidentally, Mandela evidently hadn't written the speech either (some white AIDS careerist, probably: the speech has that stupid feel that you pick up reading the writing of white AIDS careerists like Nicoli Natrass and Virginia van der Vliet). As I detail extensively in my book, a remarkable aspect of the South African AIDS drama is the way Mbeki and Mandela crossed the floor in opposite directions after Mbeki took office as President. Mandela only became a fired up believer after he left it, for reasons that I detail.

Let me confess that in 1998 Mbeki was not a fool alone. I recall around that time telling my colleagues in the Bar common room about the imminent AIDS explosion in KwaZulu-Natal predicted by all the white AIDS experts: how we'd be stepping over bodies in the street, how AIDS orphans would be swarming around in the cities. I believed it, my colleagues believed it, and Mbeki believed it. Because the white AIDS experts said it.

And Roberts still believes it. Which is why he quotes from this speech without any critical comment; he doesn't think it preposterous at all.

As it turns out, the economy isn't shrinking, far from it, and Mbeki says he doesn't know a single person who's died of 'AIDS'.

By citing Saul before he became Paul, Roberts is defrauding you (had he behaved this way in business, he'd have been arrested and jailed). He wants you to believe that Mbeki still thinks all this – because he, Roberts, does, he really does. It's like citing Bram Fischer defending racial segre-

gation (he did) before he became a Communist. Roberts's dishonesty is breathtaking.

It's precisely because Mbeki's thinking changed so fundamentally that makes the drama of his engagement with AIDS so intriguing, but Roberts, the fraud and the fake, pretends nothing changed in Mbeki's head at the turn of the decade.

Roberts is not merely suggestive in his fraudulent intentions, but explicit:

We thus have the enormous paradox that Thabo Mbeki, who was the key figure to break the silence on AIDS in South Africa during the 1990s, while others evaded it, was later strategically – which is to say, dishonestly – recast as 'denialist' by those, including Cameron, who sought to evade serious engagement on policy issues.

Here Roberts cites Cameron and University of Cape Town Chancellor Professor Njabulo Ndebele correctly noting that, as Cameron puts it, 'President Mbeki has never publicly stated that his view is that HIV does not cause AIDS.' This is true; instead he's had the temerity to publicly question the medical theory from America.

Roberts also quotes former US Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalalala saying she didn't believe Mbeki was 'in denial', as if her (convoluted) view is probative in the matter. Roberts rips this quotation off without crediting me for my research find. It's not in the edition of the manuscript that I gave him, but I subsequently added it to a later version of the prefatory pages posted online on my website in the list of illuminating quotations recently retitled 'For very great is the number of the stupid'. He won't deny it, and an audit of his machine will show it, unless like a careful criminal he's erased his internet surfing history.

Roberts's mindless use of the white AIDS activists' moronic shibboleth 'broke the silence' situates him squarely among the believers. Only a true-believer would speak so stupidly. To read the transcript of Mbeki's 'Partnership against AIDS' spiel on national television on 9 October 1998, in which he indeed 'broke the silence', as Roberts puts it, is to cringe; likewise his AIDS day speech on 1 December 1999, in which he spoke of the need to 'continue to break the silence and talk about this disease with openness'. Looking back on it all now, Mbeki feels embarrassed – so Mhlongo told me, reporting Mbeki's comment to him about how foolish and how angry he felt with himself for having been so totally taken in.

Roberts knocks William Gumede's claim that Mbeki is 'sincere in challenging mainstream science and his support [sic] of AIDS dissidents [*Roberts's 'sic'*]. And then he challenges him:

When, exactly did Mbeki perform this 'challenge' and 'support'? [*sic*] Certainly not at the famous AIDS Advisory Panel meeting in Pretoria in June 2000 where orthodox scientists outnumbered dissidents two to one.

At this point you could be forgiven for wondering whether Roberts didn't maybe once fall out of a tree onto his head.

Before it was decided in Cabinet that it would be best were he to withdraw from further public participation in the controversy, Mbeki made numerous statements making clear that he no longer believed you can die from making love with your girlfriend just because she's new in your life and hasn't first been certified pure by a white doctor, and that he no longer believed impoverished Africans in South Africa are riddled with disease because they sometimes also do so like people of other colours.

Straining to demonstrate that Mbeki still believes this, because he, Roberts, still does (that your girlfriend can kill you by making love with you, especially if she's African), Roberts cites the numerical composition of the AIDS Panel – and never mind the extraordinary historical significance of Mbeki's convening of the symposium in itself, and its intended purpose: to allow the dissident scientists and clinicians, their voices previously suppressed, to square off against the orthodox fellows for an open debate of the very fundamentals of the HIV theory of AIDS.

Among those invited by Mbeki himself (big clue) were De Harven, Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos, Turner, Mhlongo, Fiala, Giraldo, Kothari – the radical dissidents who ask, Virus, what virus, where? We've looked hard but we can't find it.

The slipshod slob mentions the Panel's 'meeting in Pretoria in June 2000'. There was no 'meeting in Pretoria in June 2000'. There were two meetings, in Pretoria and in Johannesburg, and they were held in May and July respectively. Please believe me; I was there.

Regarding the composition of the meetings<sup>14</sup>, less significant than a simple head count is the list of people Mbeki personally invited to participate. This is because numerous scientists whom he invited couldn't make it, or like Gallo chickened out from having to give an account of their theories because they feared seeing them torn to pieces (Mbeki had cameras positioned at all angles to take up the entire show). Many scientists and other participants were invited to the Panel by the Panel Secretariat, and so, because we can't be absolutely sure that Mbeki had a hand

in their selection, we'll exclude them from Mbeki's definite personal selections, *ex abundanti cautela*, as we lawyers say.

Mbeki's list of personal invitations tells you out loud that he's fully au fait with the HIV theory of AIDS and its fundamental problems. He knows precisely who its authors and leading champions are, and likewise its leading critics. Unlike Roberts, he's completely on top of the game.

In his usual manner, reckless as to the truth or falsehood of what he writes, because truth and falsehood are not important to him, only what will sell to the liberal American WASP and Jewish literati he's targeting his book at, Roberts claims that 'at the famous AIDS Advisory Panel meeting in Pretoria in June 2000 ... orthodox scientists outnumbered dissidents two to one'.

Actually, and here I'm quoting from the AIDS Panel report<sup>115</sup>, the tally invited by Mbeki and present at both meetings was '14 orthodox' and '10 dissident'. The rest of the numbers breakdown you can find in the report: some scientists and clinicians whom Mbeki invited couldn't make it, including the dissident Nobel Laureate Dr Kary Mullis, and others were present at the first or the second meetings only; and there were likewise plenty of orthodox champions invited by Mbeki to defend themselves against dissident criticism, who pitched up to one of the two meetings only, or who stayed away. As mentioned, Gallo was one of the cowards afraid to stand the public trial of his HIV theory of AIDS that he'd invented and announced at a government-convened press conference in 1984.

Imagine, back in time, a king moved enough after carefully considering Galileo's arguments to convene a meeting to formally thrash out the Copernican controversy, not for him personally, because for him the penny's already dropped, but for the world – with some fool saying afterwards, See, he doesn't go for Copernicus. He's with us geocentric guys because there were more orthodox contenders there than dissidents.

Next Roberts is taking a crack at Cosatu Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi for having

attacked Mbeki for a non-existent 'denialism' while at the same time overlooking what Jacob Zuma had said in 2000, when he reportedly praised 'the [dissident] AIDS group ACT-UP San Francisco' [*Roberts's (correct) [dissident]' interpolation*] and compared 'its belief that HIV is harmless to Galileo's 17th century crusade to prove that the earth rotates around the sun'.] That is the most categorical and clear-cut denialist statement made by any public figure in South Africa since 1994.

The plagiarist has ripped this straight out of my book, uncredited, but being incompetent and unreliable as well as dishonest, he fumbles and then kicks the ball gloriously into his own net. Here's how and here's why.

After seeing their gay friends wiped out by ARV drugs – the drugs Roberts mocks me as an 'eccentric campaigner' over for my work in researching and exposing them over the last decade – the surviving members of ACT UP San Francisco turned their backs on ARVs, and in short order saw through the HIV theory of AIDS too, and began agitating against the whole con (I've corresponded with these guys and have some of their film documentaries).

I describe in my book how Professor Jerry Coovadia had cancelled their accreditation after they'd initially been assigned an exhibition booth at his 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in July 2000. And I describe how the group wrote a letter to Mbeki about this. Note please: the group wrote to Mbeki; it did not write to Zuma.

So what did Mbeki do on receiving this 'most categorical and clear-cut denialist statement'. Did he throw it into his office trashcan, being a 'most categorical and clear-cut denialist statement', and therefore completely at odds with his own thinking, on Roberts's representation of it?

No, Mbeki gives this 'most categorical and clear-cut denialist statement' to his deputy, and he instructs him to read it out in Parliament, no less, including this bit that Roberts naturally deliberately left out (for if he included it, it might have lent my work some unwanted credibility):

For the past decade in San Francisco we have witnessed the destruction of human life caused by AIDS drugs. We hoped that by exhibiting at the conference, we could warn participants to prevent a similar catastrophe occurring in their countries.

This 'most categorical and clear-cut denialist statement' is the statement that Mbeki handed Zuma to read into the Parliamentary record. I rest my case.

Why does Roberts write this stuff? It's obvious. Being 'a freelance hitman'<sup>116</sup> as Chris Barron reported him aptly described by someone else in the *Sunday Times*, a mercenary partisan, Roberts thinks he'll be winning favour with Mbeki in the run-up to the Presidential succession by smearing Jacob on the way. He wants you to think Zuma, think denialist. He wants you to think this, because his language in describing ACT UP's letter is hard and certain: a 'most categorical and clear-cut denialist statement'.

Only it was written to Mbeki, and Mbeki liked it a whole stack.

Incidentally, it's as clear as a bell from his personal conduct that Zuma also privately scoffs at the entire HIV-AIDS folly<sup>117</sup>, but this just by the way. He doesn't think he needs to pull a condom on or he'll die because his sweetie's HIV-positive. He laughs it off. He thinks it's nonsense too.

But if, like Roberts, you believe this, that you need to wear a condom if your lover is HIV-positive or you'll die later on, feel free; it's your democratic right. It's a free country to believe what you want. Although it's not a free country to not believe what you want, because then you'll be attacked as mad; ask me.

Immediately after blowing his foot right off, Roberts quotes *Sunday Times* editor Mondli Makhanya writing with quite remarkable acuity, for once:

'AIDS was our politics. AIDS created heroes, villains, militants and conservatives' Mondli Makhanya belatedly conceded, 'We generated our own army of freaks who went out of their way to outdo each other in misleading people.' Makhanya himself was freak-maker-in-chief.

Here Roberts leans back and smiles, pleased with his clever invention, and orders more coffee. It does not occur to him that this charge might stick better with a little evidence put up here. Nor does it occur to him that he supplies ample evidence to convict himself of this dishonest behaviour when he's vilifying me as a demented freak by way of barrage after barrage of palpably false representations about the sort of person I am.

Next Roberts is back to plagiarism, summing up in two sentences an important novel insight I came to and which I argue closely in two different places in my book – but Roberts states the bald charge without my supporting facts or argument, thereby unintentionally making it sound ridiculous:

Cameron knowingly traded on the AIDS debate in order to advance an ulterior agenda of gay and lesbian rights. There is nothing wrong with advancing gay and lesbian rights, but a disease ought not to be exploited.

Gee, thanks for assuring us that it's OK for gays to advance their rights – we didn't know this before. And for damaging what you were stealing, while stealing it.

Roberts liked very much that insight of mine. Actually he liked it so very much that he repeats it in completely messed up form on the next page:

the passion underneath the AIDS-drug debate had less to do with science, than with an unnecessary and opportunistically displaced gay and lesbian activism. ... more than a debate over healthcare policy, the lobby was seeking a cultural politics for expanded popular acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles.

And Roberts makes the same kind of point, my point, a third time (coming up in the next section).

You'll recall my mentioning near the beginning of this book that Roberts included my insight on this score, uncredited to me, in the draft of his AIDS chapter which he produced a few weeks after reading *'Just say yes, Mr President'* off the CD I gave him.

As I said, he broke what he stole, because my argument was much more refined, but being both lazy and stupid Roberts wouldn't know a Stradivarius from a tomato box. I dissect and I elucidate the appeal of AIDS ideology to gay men, as I see it, but the thing's quite complex and multi-stranded, and therefore quite beyond the intellectual from Trinidad.

'Mbeki inherited this pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting, which Cameron and his disproportionately white male and gay colleagues knowingly deflected from themselves and towards Mbeki. Meanwhile post-apartheid journalists continued to be as hysterical (but in different ways) as their apartheid predecessors. The hysteria shifted from gays to blacks.'

Are you able to follow any logical thread? Again Roberts is trying to write clever; and again he's stealing more of my ideas uncredited, and completely mangling them. A huge part of my book, a major thesis, is that AIDS is a mass hysterical phenomenon. Everything Roberts writes about the hysterical dimension of AIDS is stolen from me, uncredited.

First Roberts says 'Mbeki inherited this pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting'. But 'hysteria in AIDS reporting' only took off for real when Mbeki began behaving disobediently and started threatening the white man's intellectual property, so to say. It was then that the 'pattern of hysteria' went completely berserk. I cover this and the reasons for it in group psychology extensively in my book.

Also, Mbeki never 'inherited this pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting', because Mbeki himself had energetically placed himself at the centre of it, and was responsible in large measure for fanning national hysteria with his own ridiculous 'Partnership against AIDS' speech in October 1998, which all the white-dominated media loved with all their hearts and made a big song and dance about. The SABC television report on it that night showed a clip of healthy African children in a room, with the

white reporter lamenting, 'These are the faces of HIV-AIDS'. The nigger children. The faces of HIV-AIDS.

Roberts presents no evidence that journalists during the late apartheid era were typically hysterical. I'm not saying that there wasn't any hysterical reporting, and I don't doubt there was, but I was here thirty-five years before Roberts arrived in 1994 in the year the apartheid regime finally surrendered, and I remember the media generally being confused and feeble at the time, rather than hysterical. An exception to this aimless reporting was the *Mail & Guardian*, which to me then was political investigative journalism at its finest (now gone completely to seed). A legal colleague, with whom I discussed this recently, agrees. We used to rush out to buy it mid-morning on Fridays during the 'emergency' era, as if for oxygen (we don't touch it with a stick now).

So it's another historical falsehood to claim that 'Mbeki inherited this pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting, which Cameron and his disproportionately white male and gay colleagues knowingly deflected from themselves and towards Mbeki.'

Roberts refers to 'Cameron and his disproportionately white male and gay colleagues'. I deal extensively in my book with the way mostly white gay men in South Africa have led the charge in the fight against AIDS, which is to say have been at forefront in stoking the hysteria. Roberts rips this off without credit, but he does so weakly, without driving my point home, so it comes over like a cheap homophobic jibe.

Roberts writes that gays in this country 'knowingly deflected [this pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting]' from themselves and towards Mbeki'. That's a new one, and it's certainly Roberts's idea not mine. Naturally, therefore, there's no truth in it at all.

As evidence in support of his claim that 'Mbeki inherited this pattern of AIDS reporting', Roberts cites a single garish *Sunday Times* headline in 1985: 'Gay blood peril'. But since he wasn't around at the time, I can confirm that this sort of tabloid nonsense made no significant inroads into the national psyche. There were very few such articles. The 'pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting', which I chart extensively in my book, only really set in in the late nineties. I'm referring principally to tone. Of course there were plenty of reports of the imminent AIDS apocalypse among Africans, of millions of African AIDS orphans etc, but since they emanated from the white and Indian AIDS experts, Roberts wouldn't consider them hysterical but scientific.

If Roberts means a 'pattern' in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* sense of 'a regular form or order' and not some other thing, there was no sustained 'pattern of hysteria in AIDS reporting' directed at gay men before the end of apartheid. Nor does Roberts support his claim that gays 'know-

ingly deflected [it] from themselves and towards Mbeki'. He just makes it up because, being a casual liar, it's his habit to make things up.

'Meanwhile post-apartheid journalists continued to be as hysterical (but in different ways) as their apartheid predecessors. The hysteria shifted from gays to blacks.' A major original thesis of mine in my book is that the sudden, disorientating inversion of power relations in 1994 created the mass psychological conditions for hysteriform manifestations among whites in South Africa, and I argue this with reference to historical analogies and precedents. Here Roberts casually steals a piece of this important thesis of mine, without explaining how and what he means. He doesn't explain how 'The hysteria shifted from gays to blacks.' He never shows that there was any significant mass hysteria directed at gays, nor does he show how it's 'shifted ... to blacks'. But he likes my idea, so he steals it, and then buggers it up.

Yet again, because he likes it so much, Roberts is ripping off my original insight and presenting it as his own with his own feeble argument pasted on to it: 'It is obviously essential to defend gay and lesbian rights against irrationality and prejudice, but this ought to be done straightforwardly', and on the next page he repeats for the umpteenth time (Roberts seems to have a big thing about this),

in 1991, Cameron urged gay and lesbian activists to 'target an issue' and 'build a campaign around it. The issue must be attainable, it must be morally foolproof.' AIDS became that usable issue. This was the unacceptable step.

As if what's acceptable or unacceptable to Roberts is interesting to anyone. As if Mbeki thinks these thoughts.

Roberts cites Louis Grundlingh:

The association of black people with dirt, disease, ignorance and animal-like sexual promiscuity made it almost inevitable that black people would be associated with AIDS' [sic] origin and transmission.

I was surprised to see those words that I know so very well attributed to Grundlingh, so I checked Roberts's footnotes:

189 "*association of black people with dirt*": Louis Grundlingh, "HIV and AIDS in South Africa: A Case of Failed Responses Because of Stigmatisation, Discrimination and Morality", 1983-1994,

New Contree 46 (1999), 59, cited by Pieter Fourie, *The Political Management of HIV and AIDS*, 61. [...]

Sadly, I didn't find any mention of Richard and Rosalind Chirimuuta, the real authors of those words unforgettably written on the very first page of their introduction in *AIDS, Africa and Racism* (London: Free Association Book, 1987).

I have two copies of the book, one a first edition autographed by him, and I've both corresponded with and spoken to her. I quote the authentic original passage in *'Just say yes, Mr President'* (my interpolations italicized in parentheses):

The depth to which racist ideology has penetrated the Western psyche remains profound. The association of black people with dirt, disease, ignorance and animal-like promiscuity has in no sense been eradicated. When a new and deadly sexually transmitted disease, the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, emerged [*in the medical, and then the popular mind*] in the United States [*in the eighties*], it was almost inevitable that black people would be associated with its origin and transmission.

For some reason best known to him, although Roberts read this in my manuscript, he preferred to quote the plagiarized version in Fourie's book. This may be because in a book that is itself so heavily plagiarized, Roberts preferred the plagiarized version over the true original one, because he felt the plagiarized version would be more at home in his own extensively plagiarized book. But perhaps also because as usual Roberts was loathe to acknowledge my researches over the years in turning up this sort of stuff, which he took and used in his book uncredited, and the scheming thief thought that by citing Grundlingh rather than the Chirimuutas, he could put some get-away distance between his book and mine.

I delve deeply into the racism of AIDS ideology in my book. But after quoting Grundlingh, all Roberts has to say about this is, incoherently, because actually he's got nothing to say, because he doesn't know what to say, because he doesn't doubt settled orthodox scientific wisdom about the viral theory of AIDS, inter alia that came from Africans thanks to their contact with monkeys in the jungles, is:

The more healthy response, towards which Mbeki struggled in vain, would be to remove the historical inheritance of apartheid hysteria from the AIDS debate and to replace it with greater deliberation and rationality.

I must assure you that this is exactly what Roberts wrote. He wrote it, and he didn't think it was an extremely stupid thing to write. He thought it was a very clever thing to write, even if in practical terms it's completely meaningless. But if you're an intellectual it doesn't matter, just so long as your language is fruity and epicene and removed from the way ordinary people think and talk.

Here's another glistening Roberts nugget: Mbeki 'simply tried to do what was best for all people living with HIV/AIDS and to avoid the expansion of their number'. Comment is, as the saying goes, superfluous. When Roberts writes about AIDS, it must be 'simply'. He likes the word, and he uses it repeatedly, with 'merely' for variety. Let's not get all complicated. Let's not get all scientific and let's not get all ideological. Let's just simply quote bits of what other people write. And then merely order some more coffee.

In his next sentence Roberts steals another of my ideas, again messing it up: 'But still the hysteria of the AIDS-drug lobby targeted Mbeki, mixed with a zeal to fight against the apartheid-era stigma that said that AIDS victims deserved what they got.' In my book, another of my theses pertaining to the prodigious political advances of gay men with AIDS among white South Africans goes to ancient, deeply rooted ideas about homosexual intimacy and the Leviticus penalty for it. My original idea, not Roberts's idea, shows up like stolen treasure in the second part of his sentence.

I also deal with the general modern ideological tendency in the Western world and its medical system – at its zenith in AIDS – to relocate the causes of ill-health from political/environmental factors to behavioural ones. This element of my work also shows up uncredited here.

Lifting this from my book, without credit, Roberts quotes Achmat lying 'about the history of AIDS policy in South Africa' – concluding: 'I think the fundamental problem is our government and particularly our president's stand; he doesn't believe that HIV causes AIDS.' But here Roberts is lying, because in the next sentence he comments: 'To the old lie that Mbeki has said HIV doesn't cause AIDS' (etc). Achmat, though he tells lies as freely as Roberts does, did not lie on this occasion, because he did not say 'Mbeki has said HIV doesn't cause AIDS'. As I said, Roberts is the liar – both outright and indirectly: In the same paragraph, Roberts writes:

The fact is that Thabo Mbeki was charged with AIDS policy under Mandela. And South AIDS policy on the ground has not wavered with the vagaries of media hype. The policy assumptions have remained unwaveringly the same.

But Mandela never ‘charged’ Mbeki with directing AIDS policy; Mbeki just took control of it in second half of Mandela’s presidency, when he was de facto in charge of government in the couple of years before Mandela’s retirement, and felt Mandela wasn’t doing enough.

And yet again Roberts plays his same fake cards in suggesting that because ‘AIDS policy on the ground’ has not changed, and ‘policy assumptions have remained unwaveringly the same’, this means that Mbeki’s private thinking about AIDS has also ‘remained unwaveringly the same’, just like his.

‘To see that Achmat has lied, look no further than what his drug-lobby ally, Cameron, said of Mandela.’ Roberts lifts the Cameron quote from *Just say yes, Mr President*’ without credit, exactly as it appears, my cuts identical:

He more than anyone else could through his enormous stature have reached into the minds and behaviour of young people. A message from this man of saint-like, in some ways almost god-like stature would have been effective. He didn’t do it. In 199 ways he was our country’s saviour. In the 200<sup>th</sup> way he was not.

Nor does Roberts credit my manuscript for giving him his next quotation: Mandela explaining in the documentary *Nelson Mandela: The Living Legend*, broadcast on BBC One on 5 and 12 March 2003, why he didn’t make a fuss about AIDS in 1994:

Africans are very conservative on questions of sex. They don’t want you to talk about it. I told them we have got this epidemic which is going to wipe out our nation if we don’t take precautions. ‘Advise your children that they must delay as much as possible before they have sex. When they do, let them have one partner and condoms.’ I could see I was offending my audience. They were looking at each other horrified. I wanted to win and I didn’t talk about AIDS.

Apart from helping himself to my research, and copying and pasting it into his book, Roberts hasn’t even respected his stolen source. After the phrase, ‘each other horrified’, ending the penultimate sentence, I’d paraphrased a bit in my book, and then continued the actual Mandela quotation: ‘So he took his advisors’ advice to drop the subject, he said: “I

wanted to win and I didn't talk about AIDS.'" Roberts has deleted my paraphrase, to put us off the fleeing thief's scent; and then, without inserting ellipsis marks, he runs the final sentence starting 'I wanted to win' on from the penultimate one ending, 'each other horrified'.

The result of Roberts's tampering with his stolen source is that his book does not precisely reflect what Mandela actually said. Theft, fraud, what the hell.

In his footnote on *Business Day* political editor Karima Brown (an extraordinarily dim woman) and her stupid criticism of Mbeki as an 'arm-chair expert' for his decision to convene his International AIDS Advisory Panel, Roberts has taken another fly at Martin Welz and me. It's a total non-sequitur, but you're getting a feel for this person's sad mental processes by now:

if anybody posed as an expert it was noseweek editor Martin Welz, who wrote in a Foreword to Brink's selfpublished text, *Debating AZT: Mbeki and the AIDS Drug Controversy* (2000): 'Reading this debate about AZT between Brink, a Pietermaritzburg advocate, and Dr Des Martin, president of the Southern African HIV-AIDS Clinicians Society, leads one to reflect on the question: "what is an expert?" Dr Martin may have the credentials of expertise, but Brink has the intelligence, investigative zeal and adherence to principles of scientific enquiry that make for authority on this subject.' Welz never clarified the source of his own authority to proclaim Brink an authority--and Mbeki himself never made any such proclamation. He was satisfied that questions arose and he wished experts to canvass those questions thoroughly.

The childish egotist cannot grant that I did a hell of a job on *Debating AZT*. Welz's English counterpart the late great Paul Foot agreed with him. In fact Foot wrote a glowing piece about it for the investigative journal *Private Eye*, which he read to me over the phone while I was in Wales in mid-2001. It wasn't printed only because the London *Sunday Times* scooped the thing by running a major feature article arranged by me, taking the wind out of the prospective *Private Eye* piece a fortnight later. (I can't recall if I told Roberts this, but he certainly read Foot's review: 'Very good, convinced me completely'.)

Because he can't bear to hear anyone's voice but his own (all social get-togethers were basically Roberts holding court), it upsets him to think that Mbeki took *Debating AZT* very seriously indeed, so seriously

that he ordered an enquiry into the safety of the drug after reading it and personally researching the matter for himself further.

In a protesting-too-much manner, Roberts frantically tries talking down the importance of the book – after himself describing it to me as ‘very good, very important’ and describing my work generally to my friend in new York as ‘extremely important ... extremely significant’. He says ‘Mbeki himself never made any such proclamation’ that I’m an expert on AZT. Sure, but in the contentious subject of AIDS, Mbeki doesn’t make proclamations, he acts – and he acted on *Debating AZT*. A whole bunch of big-time scientists, clinicians and other academics thought *Debating AZT* brilliant. They all acknowledge that I’m ‘an authority on the subject’. I am, and I’m not at all shy to say so. I know more about this shit than just about anyone.

In a footnote referring to the same page, Roberts has: ‘192 “*intellectual superiority complex*”: Mondli Makhanya, *Sunday Times*, 24 September, 2000’. But Makhanya is not quoted on that page, possibly because for some reason Roberts decided not to proceed with his criminal design to copy and paste this editorial by Makhanya from my book, in which I quote it.

Roberts quotes extensively from the terms of reference of Mbeki’s International AIDS Advisory Panel meetings in May and July 2000, and from his opening speech, to shoot down Achmat’s claim that Mbeki ‘doesn’t believe HIV causes AIDS’.

‘So where does Achmat get his facts from?’ Roberts asks, accusing him of being ‘less interested in the facts than’ in attacking the ANC. Of course that’s not true. Not completely true. It’s Roberts’s idea of true. Because it’s true that Achmat isn’t interested in the facts, and that like Roberts he tells lies all the time, such as in declaring, in the passage Roberts quotes, that

The government’s policy, which was one of the best under Nelson Mandela, has changed to one of denial under President Thabo Mbeki. ... This is the worst catastrophe, it’s worse than apartheid.

As I describe in *‘Just say yes, Mr President?’*, Mandela took no interest in AIDS and AIDS policy while President. It was Deputy President Mbeki who ran the show as its fired-up cheerleader (Roberts knocks some of this off in his book, uncredited). But although he’s a vulgar demagogue, screaming and shouting, and continually lambasting the ANC for personal advantage, like a problem-child throwing tantrums, having had a terribly traumatized childhood, with no regard for any interest other than

his own narrow one in selling as much of the pharmaceutical industry's merchandise for it as possible, and no concern about the damage he might be causing the country, let's not falsely accuse him of directly wanting to injure the ANC, even if that's the effect of it.

Roberts's sub-heading 'What Mbeki really said: the true agenda of the Pretoria Panel' puts us on notice that he is going to show us that Achmat was untruthful in claiming Mbeki 'doesn't believe HIV causes AIDS', because he'll be demonstrating that Mbeki truly does believe HIV causes AIDS. As true's Bob. And by claiming 'What Mbeki really said', as if there's ever been any dispute about what Mbeki 'really said' on the record, Roberts suggests that he's about to elucidate some arcane messages that Mbeki had sent in his opening speech that we'd all missed up until now.

Roberts quotes Joel Netshitenze explaining why Mbeki convened his International AIDS Advisory Panel. He doesn't footnote his source for this quotation. That's because he stole it from me; my cuts in my book are the same as his.

'Mbeki had simply read enough to see that there were questions and he convened a competent peer review process to examine the questions,' Roberts writes, and it's a pity he was too idle to take the same trouble in reading enough to appreciate just how serious those questions were, which is to say fatal to the reigning germ/poison AIDS paradigm. Because had he done so, he wouldn't have misunderstood and misrepresented Mbeki's motives as he did. Simply.

Would it be overly pedantic to point out that there was no 'Pretoria Panel'? Because in fact there were two meetings of the International AIDS Advisory Panel in May and July 2000, the first held in Pretoria and the second in Johannesburg. Should we call the Panel's second meeting the 'Johannesburg Panel'? Should we call the internet session between them the 'Internet Panel in which the orthodoxy refused to contribute, and refused to answer a single one of the questions raised by the dissidents, like Christians saying, We believe you can die from having sex without a permit so fuck off'?

The Panel's terms of reference that Roberts quotes ought to have alerted him to how fundamental the questions Mbeki was raising were, going to the root of the HIV theory of AIDS – 'What causes the immune deficiency that leads to death from AIDS?'; 'What is the most efficacious response to this cause or causes?', and the killer question: 'Why is HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa heterosexually transmitted while in the Western world it is said to be largely homosexually transmitted?'

The questions were not only fundamental, they were obviously loaded, implying that Mbeki no longer accepted the closed orthodox explanation

of AIDS and considered the cause and treatment of AIDS to be issues open to scientific debate. But Roberts's characterization of the thing, 'Mbeki had simply read enough to see that there were questions', implies that the 'questions' are peripheral, that their answers might lead to a bit of government policy tweaking, not capsize the orthodoxy's ship completely.

Next, to disprove Achmat's claim that Mbeki 'doesn't believe HIV causes AIDS', Roberts proceeds to quote extensively from Mbeki's opening speech. In doing so, he completely missed the meanings Mbeki intended to convey with his use of complex African irony – but here either you get it or you don't. And if you don't, perhaps because you come from overseas, you can't be helped.

In his 'Letter from the President' in *ANC Today* on 28 September 2007, Mbeki quoted former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide PhD's 'University of South Africa doctoral thesis', entitled "Umoya Wamagama (the Spirit of the Words)", enjoining us 'Fully to understand and internalise our heritage' to 'dig deep and follow the lead given by Dr Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to appreciate the "additional layers of meaning (of words, phrases and expressions) [in the African languages]', rather than (merely) those which simply denote their meanings" [*Mbeki's round-bracket parentheses*]. Such meaning (per Aristide, quoted by Mbeki) 'transcends the literal language'. As I noted in the preface, Mbeki's English is characteristically inflected with the art of his mother-tongue Xhosa. But it's perfectly meaningless talk to Roberts, we're about to see.

'The following are direct quotations from what the President said to the Panel on that day (*italicized headings added*),' Roberts says, and one look at the '*italicized headings added*' is to see on the double that they are Roberts's glosses on what Mbeki said. The tragedy of it is that Roberts is too dim to pick up what Mbeki is really saying.

### ***No denial of death***

You will remember the letter we sent inviting you to this meeting. It included a quotation from a report by the WHO on the global situation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It said that of the 5.6 million people infected with HIV in 1999, 3.8 million lived in Sub-Saharan Africa, the hardest hit region. There were an estimated 2.2 million HIV/AIDS deaths in the region during 1999, being 85% of the global total, even though only one-tenth of the world population lives in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the report said there are now more women than men among the 22.3 million adults and one million children estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The ‘report by the WHO ... said’, ‘the report said’, and ‘estimated’ primes you: Mbeki is alluding to astonishing new claims by the WHO about a terrible new epidemic among black Africans. Mbeki is conveying: This is what we Africans are told by these white experts in Geneva about the terrible new epidemic among us, the terrible new epidemic that we didn’t know about before until we were told about it. The scale of which is guesswork. But Roberts reads this as ‘No denial of death’, by which he means you to understand that Mbeki swallows it whole, like he does.

***Acknowledgment of seriousness of problem***

It was this situation, communicated to us by organisations such as the WHO and UN AIDS, which clearly said that here we have a problem to which we have to respond with the greatest seriousness.

Again, Roberts is completely stupid to Mbeki’s multi-pronged ironic African communication style, his ‘additional layers of meaning (of words, phrases and expressions) [‘in the African languages’], rather than (merely) those which simply denote their meanings ... transcend[ing] the literal language’, his allusion in this sentence, as before, to the European doctors in Switzerland informing ‘us’ as Africans, that Africans actually have an awful problem on their hands, a problem with their privates, that they didn’t know about before.

Roberts reads this as Mbeki saying, Yes Baas, I acknowledge the seriousness of the problem you tell us Africans we clearly have (for which thanks, because, until you told us, we’d been unaware that we actually have this problem).

***Acknowledgment of death from AIDS***

And, of course, among the Sub-Saharan Africans are the South African Africans, with millions of people said also to be HIV positive and also many people dying from AIDS. The Minister has indicated our response to this, so I won’t go over that ground. But it is important, I think, to bear it in mind because some have put out the notion that our asking certain questions in order to understand better and therefore be able to respond better, constituted an abandonment of the fight against AIDS. ... This is obviously not an idle question for us because it bears very directly on this question: How should we respond? ... We were looking for answers because all of the information that has been communicated points to the reality that we are faced with a catastrophe, and you can’t respond to a catastrophe merely by saying I will do what is routine. You have to respond

to a catastrophe in a way that recognises that you are facing a catastrophe. And here we are talking about people – it is not death of animal stock or something like that, but people. Millions and millions of people. ... In the end, what I'm saying is that as Africans we want to respond to HIV/AIDS in a manner that is effective, a manner that does indeed address the fact of these millions of lives that are threatened.

Who could argue with that? Mbeki's ironically laboured, repeated mantra-like invocation of the 'catastrophe' language of the orthodox AIDS careerists in making their apocalyptic claims skilfully set up an incontestable warrant for convening the meeting that they'd strenuously opposed.

Roberts misses Mbeki's qualification and distinction: 'millions of people *said* also to be HIV positive and also many people dying from AIDS' (my emphasis). Mbeki would later repeatedly dispute the fantastic statistics. But Roberts represents Mbeki as having accepted the AIDS experts' claims that HIV-AIDS is decimating African South Africans, and Africans alone – not whites, coloureds and Indians.

Under *Commitment of resources*, Roberts quotes Mbeki emphasizing that the government was obediently spending money in response 'to the picture that is painted by these figures' – missing the significance of Mbeki's obviously sceptical choice of words.

Here's a beaut of a header:

***Catastrophic scale of problem demanded presidential attention***

It was because it seemed that the problem was so big, if these reports were correct, that I personally wanted to understand this matter better. Now as I've said, I'm only a fool and I faced this difficult problem of reading all these complicated things that you scientists write about, in this language I don't understand. So I ploughed through lots and lots of documentation, with dictionaries all around me in case there were words that seemed difficult to understand. I would phone the Minister of Health and say, 'Minister, what does this word mean?' And she would explain.

To the intellectual from Trinidad, unbelievably dull to Mbeki's deep African irony, this is evidence that Mbeki shuddered in contemplating the 'catastrophic scale of the problem', the problem of sex disease rife among the natives, on Roberts's version, and that he jumped into action

against the ‘Catastrophic scale of the problem’ – when Mbeki’s scepticism is perfectly evident to anyone familiar with his communication art.

Immediately below the quoted passage, Roberts claims: ‘Mbeki approached the matter with intellectual modesty’. Can you believe it?! The dullness of the real fool to Mbeki’s wit accounts for why Roberts thought Mbeki was speaking literally (‘I’m only a fool’), as if he was deferring to his betters, the self-proclaimed local and foreign AIDS experts that Roberts looks up to, who understand things that he can’t.

But Roberts is not only exceedingly dull; he’s grossly dishonest too, as we know – which is why he omitted mentioning in his book Mbeki’s formal acknowledgement that a bona fide scientific controversy existed concerning the ‘big ... problem’ according to ‘these reports’ of ‘the WHO and UN AIDS’, and why he also left out of his book the rest of Mbeki’s pointers in his opening speech that he no longer believed:

I am somewhat embarrassed to say that I discovered that there had been a controversy around these matters for quite some time. I honestly didn’t know. I was a bit comforted later when I checked with a number of our Ministers and found that they were as ignorant as I, so I wasn’t quite alone.

Mbeki’s reference to ‘these matters’ was to the fantastic claims ‘communicated to us by organisations such as the WHO and UN AIDS’ about the alleged terrible HIV-AIDS epidemic in Africa:

There were an estimated 2.2 million HIV/AIDS deaths in the region during 1999, being 85% of the global total, even though only one-tenth of the world population lives in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mbeki’s language concerning ‘the picture that is painted by these figures’ betrayed his scepticism; this line too: ‘It was because it seemed that the problem was so big, if these reports were correct ...’ The fool missed it, even as Mbeki highlighted another glaring anomaly concerning ‘the problem’, the one ‘communicated to us by organisations such as the WHO and UN AIDS’ – which is to say not any ‘problem’ self-evident to Africans themselves, but a ‘problem’ proclaimed by these foreign ‘organizations’. Read carefully what Mbeki said (it’s obviously not in Roberts’s book; he makes sure to leave it out):

the first report published in our medical journals in this country about the incidence of HIV among our people in this part of the world ... was published in the South African Medical Journal in 1985. Among other things, that article said that groups at

high risk of developing the acquired immune deficiency syndrome – AIDS – in the United States and Europe include homosexual and bi-sexual males; those who abuse intravenous drugs and haemophiliacs.

The article further says that AIDS has been reported in Central Africa. However, homosexuality, drug addiction or blood transfusion have not been reported as risk factors in these patients. It has therefore been suggested that the agent causing AIDS is endemic in Central Africa. However, our preliminary data show that although individuals with antibodies directed against HIV are to be found in South Africa, these positive individuals only come from a high-risk group comprising male homosexuals. Individuals who did not belong to any of the known high risks groups did not have HIV antibodies. Our data, says the article, therefore suggests that the agent implicated in the causation is not endemic in Southern Africa.

That was in 1985. And of course all of the other documentation that I've seen suggests that what was reported here in 1985 to be the risk group in this part of the world, remained the risk group in the United States and Western Europe with a preponderance of these infections being among homosexuals and therefore by homosexual transmission, as it is said, of the virus.

But according to these reports, clearly something changed here. In a period of maybe five, six, seven years after 1985, when it was said that such transmission in this region was not endemic in Southern Africa, there were high rates of heterosexual transmission. Now as I was saying, being a fool I couldn't answer this question about what happened between 1985 and the early 1990s. The situation has not changed in the United States up to today, nor in Western Europe with regard to homosexual transmission. But here it changed very radically in a short period of time and increased very radically in a short period of time. Why?

Of course, there's no intelligent answer to this needle-to-the-balloon question posed by the 'fool', namely why if there was no HIV-AIDS in South Africa in 1985 according to the medical authorities, just a few years later they claimed Africans, and Africans only, were riddled with it. As Mbeki himself said dryly, 'There has been this change, for reasons I can't explain but you, as scientists, surely would be able to explain.'

I attended both meetings – monitoring in the wings at the first, and as an accredited observer at the second – and the mostly white and Indian

'scientists' claiming Africans are suddenly riddled with HIV and AIDS were not 'able to explain' 'this change' as Mbeki asked them to do. Actually they didn't even try to 'explain' 'this change' as Mbeki asked them to do, because 'this change' obviously can't be 'explain[ed]' – except to admit that in reality there's been no such recent 'change', it's just nonsense based on worthless so-called HIV-antibody tests and computer models, and that Africans have been suffering and dying from the diseases of privation since the start of the colonial era. That's when things began to 'change'. But perhaps, since he's cleverer than us, we should ask Roberts to 'explain' the sudden 'change' a few years ago – how HIV-AIDS was virtually absent in South Africa in the mid-80s according to the white medical experts, and then strangely just as democratic African majority rule commenced how HIV-AIDS was ubiquitous among Africans according to the white medical experts.

Any thoughtful person is constrained to conclude from Mbeki's 'Why?' question that the entire sexually infectious HIV-AIDS model propounded by corporate pharmaceutical merchandise-promoting Western medical authorities has to be all wrong, is all wrong. But so intent on selling his sham line that Mbeki still goes for the idea of an epidemic of HIV-AIDS among Africans, like he does, Roberts completely missed the point Mbeki was making.

Mbeki also made plain his understanding that there's no democracy in science, and that a belief is not validated by a tally of raised hands like at a religious council:

Indeed it seems to be implied that one of the important measures to judge whether a scientific view is correct is to count numbers: how many scientists are on this side of the issue and how many are on the other – if the majority are on this side, then this must be correct.

And more than demonstrating his appreciation of the way science should work, but doesn't work in 'HIV/AIDS', Mbeki also (a) expressed his sympathy with the maligned dissidents, (b) reproved the orthodox contenders for their bid to entrench HIV-AIDS dogma and protect it from critical, even subversive, re-appraisal, and (c) made known that he didn't accept that the HIV theory of AIDS was 'absolute truth' beyond question like a religious creed, as all its promoters claimed it was:

Somewhat of a storm broke out around this question, which in truth took me by surprise. There is an approach which asks why is this President of South Africa trying to give legitimacy to discredited scientists, because after all, all the questions of sci-

ence concerning this matter had been resolved by the year 1984. I don't know of any science that gets resolved in that manner with a cut-off year beyond which science does not develop any further. It sounds like a biblical absolute truth and I do not imagine that science consists of biblical absolute truths.

Mbeki also recorded, in his artful way, that he did not doubt – for there was no reason to doubt – that a lot of Africans were dying before their time of disease:

There was this very strong response saying: don't do this. I have seen even in the last few days, a scientist [*Mark Weinberg*] who I'm quite certain is eminent [*note the allusion to Swift's A Modest Proposal*] who said that perhaps the best thing to do is that we should lock up some of these dissidents in jail and that would shut them up. It is a very peculiar response but it seemed to me to suggest that it must surely be because people are exceedingly worried by the fact that large numbers of people are dying. In that context any suggestion whatsoever that dealing with this is being postponed because somebody is busy looking at some obscure scientific theory, is seen as a betrayal of people. Perhaps that is why you had that kind of response which sought to say: let us freeze scientific discourse at a particular point; and let those who do not agree with the mainstream be isolated and not spoken to.

This is to say, from the outset, Mbeki has never denied widely prevalent AIDS-defining illnesses in South Africa; he has questioned the cause of the syndrome of about thirty unrelated diseases and conditions that the American Centers for Disease Control groups together as 'AIDS'. It's for this that he's been branded a 'denialist' by people with a professional or personal stake in the HIV theory – only he's clearly not denying anything. To be in denial, which is the state denialists are supposed to be in, is to refuse to face reality, to refuse to accept indisputable historical, medical or other facts. But Mbeki doesn't deny widespread disease and early death among the African poor; he questions whether their having made love with their sweethearts, or even their casual friends in some cases, is the proximate cause of it, as hundreds of eminent scientists and doctors do too.

Roberts doesn't talk to the many ironic meanings and oblique implications of Mbeki's loaded speech because they passed him by; but even if they hadn't, they have no place in his fake narrative concerning Mbeki the alleged fellow believer.

The phrase that I clipped from Roberts's cringingly embarrassing sentence 'Mbeki approached the matter with intellectual modesty' for the above discussion is 'and justifiable assertiveness'. Roberts's paragraph continues by quoting Mbeki 'in a subsequent exchange of letters with Tony Leon':

I am taken aback by the determination of many people in our country to sacrifice all intellectual integrity to act as salespersons of the product of one pharmaceutical company [*AZT manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline.*] ... I am also amazed at how many people, who claim to be scientists, are determined that scientific discourse and inquiry should cease, because 'most of the world' is of one mind ... The debate we need is not with me, who is not a scientist, or my office, but the scientists who present 'scientific' arguments contrary to the 'scientific' view expressed by 'most of the world'

Roberts doesn't footnote his source for this. No prize for guessing why. He's stolen it directly from *Just say yes, Mr President*, using his copy and paste buttons. And here we really have him with his pants around his ankles.

My ellipses (those three little dots to indicate material omitted) are in exactly the same place as his.

Not only are the words in the square brackets in the excerpt mine, because I wrote them, they even appear in italics in accordance with my personal writing convention. As I explain in the preface of *Just say yes, Mr President*:

Paraphrase and words inserted into a quotation to give sense to an excerpt appear between square brackets (phrases plucked and inserted from elsewhere in the same passage are indicated by inverted commas); any comment or explanation by me is italicised.

This is not a convention used by Roberts – except when he's copying and pasting my work.

What's more, the 'AZT manufacturer' wasn't then 'GlaxoSmithKline'. It was GlaxoWellcome, before the corporate amalgamation of GlaxoWellcome and SmithKline Beecham. But early in my book manuscript I refer to 'GlaxoWellcome (formerly Burroughs Wellcome, now GlaxoSmithKline, and from now on referred to by the company's current name)'. In copying my research work, Roberts has also made the telltale mistake of copying my decision to refer to the now defunct company not

by its formally correct name, but, for the sake of convenient identification, by the name of the currently constituted juristic person.

(I've since corrected my manuscript: In the manuscript in hardcopy and on CD from which he's copied and pasted, Roberts will find 'GlaxoWellcome' spelled with a gap between the two words – something I've since fixed (even if the South African subsidiary persistently misspelled its own company name in its press releases etc). Also the correct full name for 'Burroughs Wellcome' is 'and Company', now fixed too.)

Roberts may say he 'can't help' copying my work because he finds my writing so 'infectious', but I think this is going a bit far.

Those little dots were a major clue in Finkelstein's exposé of Der-showitz's fraud in the latter's book *The Case for Israel*, and we'll be hearing a lot more about them below.

'The fuss surrounding the [International AIDS Advisory] panel boils down to the objection that Thabo Mbeki ... sought to include ... voices that the AIDS drug-fundamentalists disliked, defamed and would rather have excluded from discourse on a major matter of public policy.' By defaming me, Roberts is trying to exclude me 'from discourse on a major matter of public policy', but his inconsistency in matters of principle never enters his head.

When Achmat and his TAC defame AIDS dissidents whom they dislike in order to exclude them from AIDS policy discourse and thereby dominate it, it's a bad thing; but when Roberts defames South Africa's leading AIDS dissident, in the view of the DA and TAC, in order to exclude me from AIDS policy discourse and dominate it, it's fine. No matter that all the AIDS dissidents disliked and defamed by the TAC, as Roberts puts it, hold me in high regard.

'Mbeki's sin was to reject a drug-based intellectual protectionism in favour of a free exchange of ideas on the proper solution to the AIDS pandemic, including but not limited to drugs alone. Mbeki had commented in the exchange of correspondence with the enthusiastic pro-drug polemicist, Tony Leon: "None of this bodes well for a rational discussion of HIV/AIDS and an effective response to this matter, *including the use of antiretroviral drugs.*" (emphasis added) [*Roberts's 'emphasis added'*]. Mbeki fostered debate to ensure policy rigour. That is good governance. It is also democratic policy formulation.'

Does this sound like a dicey Wall Street lawyer talking? The empty phrases, the twisting. The crook in the flashy suit. Mbeki is talking about 'including the use of antiretroviral drugs' as a matter for 'rational discussion of HIV/AIDS and an effective response to this matter'. He is refer-

ring to a particular subject for ‘rational discussion’, rather than Leon’s sort of irrational discussion, highlighted in Mbeki’s rebukes in that correspondence. For instance:

In your letter to me of June 19, you make the extraordinary statement that AZT boosts the immune system. Not even the manufacturer of this drug makes this profoundly unscientific claim. The reality is the precise opposite of what you say, this being that AZT is immuno-suppressive. Contrary to the claims you make in promotion of AZT, all responsible medical authorities repeatedly issue serious warnings about the toxicity of antiretroviral drugs, which include AZT.

Roberts’s gloss on Mbeki’s statement, in talking of ‘the proper solution to the AIDS pandemic, including but not limited to drugs alone’, is intended to mislead you into thinking Mbeki was saying he wanted to see the sick African poor treated both with ARVs as well as other therapeutic modalities, and that he considered this dual approach a ‘proper solution’. Only it’s obvious that’s not what he said or meant at all.

Don’t including but not limited Smart Alec American lawyers like this make you sick?

After the turn of the decade, Mbeki’s reference to ‘HIV/AIDS and an effective response to this matter’ was, if you’re awake, his tip-toe talk. It’s not an embrace of the American faith (the faith that you can die from lovemaking, especially if you’re African, and that drinking poison – in the case of AZT, a rejected experimental cancer chemotherapy – every day until you die is good for you). To say AIDS in a sentence does not mean that the speaker thinks AIDS is any more than a powerfully ideologically charged but useless American medical construct (except as a money-spinner). And similarly one may refer to HIV in the same way that one refers to tokoloshes.

‘Even at the heights of the furore, Mbeki never adopted an anti-pill fundamentalism to counter the pro-drug fundamentalism of the AIDS-drug camp.’ As I mentioned earlier, if Roberts was in business, he’d be in jail by now, because he’s a congenital cheat. Roberts casts my opposition to ARVs as ‘anti-pill fundamentalism’. He adopts the classic basically safe, uncommitted dodge of South African white liberals during apartheid, to make out that there’s a ‘sensible’ middle way through the political controversy started by Mbeki in Parliament on 28 October 1999; that he, Roberts, champions this ‘sensible’ middle course; and that Mbeki is with him on it, walking the same ‘sensible’ middle road between Achmat’s case for ARVs and mine against them.

The irony of it is that for all his coarse and shallow criticism of the English colonial mentality in South Africa (which indeed abounds), Roberts reverts to type as the quintessential, London-born Englishman striking a 'sensible' position on the 'methodical' provision of ARVs, and setting up a bogus polarity between uncouth extremists, between which he situates himself in the moderate, 'sensible' centre, just like moderate, 'sensible', non-committal white liberals during the struggle for national liberation.

In his footnotes, Roberts cites the TAC's definition of AIDS

denialism as 'the promotion of one or more of the following pseudoscientific views: ... the risks of antiretrovirals outweigh their benefits' ... Mbeki has expressed none of these views. His expressed views are, as appears from the main text, emphatically the opposite. ... he has sought regulatory vigilance against those who belittled drug safety issues in the case of antiretrovirals—hardly the same as saying that their risks outweigh their benefits. [*my ellipses*]

There's no need to reiterate Mbeki's repeated, clear, absolute rejection of AZT and its chemical relatives on the ground that these drugs are dangerously poisonous and 'harmful to health', and also because they can't even theoretically work as ARVs (as discussed, Mbeki's onto the triphosphorylation problem). The fact is, contrary to what Roberts falsely claims, Mbeki has indeed 'expressed [one] of these views', namely that AZT is, on an evaluation of the mounds of medical and scientific literature, 'harmful to health'.

At the 'heights of the furore', in July 2000, Mbeki was telling Leon:

AZT is immuno-suppressive. Contrary to the claims you make in promotion of AZT, all responsible medical authorities repeatedly issue serious warnings about the toxicity of antiretroviral drugs, which include AZT.

There was and is nothing moderate and sensible and centrist about Mbeki's opinion of ARVs. Like Salvarsan injected into Africans for syphilis, they are useless and extremely poisonous (this accounts for their subconscious appeal to white and Indian doctors, journalists and activists).

Roberts's claim that Mbeki 'sought regulatory vigilance against those who belittled drug safety issues in the case of antiretrovirals' is a fabrication. No one was raising 'drug safety issues in the case of antiretrovirals' in South Africa until I did in 1999. No one had 'belittled drug safety issues in the case of antiretrovirals' either. The 'drug safety issues in the

case of antiretrovirals' were not on the table until Mbeki's directive in Parliament that the safety of AZT be enquired into, having regard to the 'dire warnings that researchers have been making' about 'the toxicity of this drug', which I'd brought to his attention.

And Roberts's false assertion to the contrary, Mbeki was indeed 'saying that their risks outweigh their benefits' in his categorical statement that AZT, and by implication other ARVs in the same chemical class, were 'harmful to health'. And regrettably for the crooked lawyer from Trinidad, no amount of further weaselling can gainsay it.

Roberts claims, 'The fact is that Mbeki simply said: "Let us have a sensible debate in order to perfect the balance of these complementary instruments."' Did he? Actually this is Roberts attributing his own cretinous thinking to Mbeki. I've collected everything that I've been able to find Mbeki saying about AIDS and ARVs over the years, and I can confirm he never said such a thing. Roberts has fabricated this quotation; he's manufactured it out of nothing. The truth of it is that Mbeki has made his position very clear. He's 'anti-pill', and only a crook like Roberts would pretend that he isn't, and that people like me are senseless 'fundamentalists' because I get really deep into the fundamentals of the molecular pharmacology<sup>118</sup> of these drugs and explain why they're so bad. Roberts, on the other hand, is too lazy and too stupid to read the important papers that I've given him on the subject, original and in full, or synopsised, and this is why he doesn't understand what I'm on about, so reduces me to a 'fundamentalist'.

Roberts's quotation of Achmat shouting at Dr Tshabalala-Msimang – 'You exploit the hunger of our people by talking nutrition. ... You should take off your wig and sell it to feed the poor.' – is copied and pasted from *Just say yes, Mr President* as usual. As usual, Roberts provides no reference in his footnotes. The reason he doesn't is because as usual he will not acknowledge my work. As usual, the bumbling thief leaves a telltale clue to his theft from me. As usual, he copies my ellipsis exactly.

'Zackie Achmat lied about the state of his own health during the 2004 election campaign. While Mbeki had challenged the "hit hard, hit early" mindset, raising concerns about strong drugs and side effects, the drugs lobby claimed Mbeki was exaggerating.' Let's hold it right there. Achmat did not lie 'about the state of his own health during the 2004 election campaign'. He was silent about it. He fraudulently concealed it<sup>119</sup> 'during the 2004 election campaign' until some weeks after the election was over; but if we'd only be more careful with the truth, and not tell lies to peo-

ple, because we think it doesn't really matter when writing history, and anyway we've always got away with it before, just by using a posh accent, we wouldn't keep telling lies like 'Mbeki had challenged the "hit hard, hit early" mindset'.

We've already been through all this. Mbeki impeached AZT and similar drugs unequivocally. He had nothing to say whatsoever about it being a bad idea to swallow lots of these drugs in combination as soon as possible after being diagnosed HIV-positive, whereas it's a good idea to swallow lots of these drugs in combination later on instead. He never said anything of the sort. It's Roberts who's doing all the lying here.

And more stealing. Using his copy and paste buttons, Roberts lifts my edited quotation of a *Daily Dispatch* report on how Achmat was crippled by his ARVs from where I cite it in my criminal complaint against him to the ICC. Again my ellipses are copied by Roberts exactly.

If you try block-copying from the ICC complaint now you'll fail, because I've since secured it to prevent any more dishonest people like Roberts stealing my work, but the original version, online for quite a while, was not copy-protected in this way, because while the thing was still big in the news I wanted journalists to be able to copy bits to quote from it. I did not want writers copying from it for their books and then pretending that they got it from the original newspaper article in question when they hadn't, and they'd actually sourced their entire quotation in their book directly from me, with my edits, which is to say my work, without crediting me. Not only not crediting me, but pretending in their footnotes to have got the thing from the original news report, when in truth they hadn't, not having seen it, being the deceitful sort who tell lies all the time.

I'm disappointed to see Roberts write 'Ah, the stupid natives', because he's ripped the concept off from me in my book. It was a really nice sharply ironic bit, in different words, that we discussed and which he said he liked very much, and now I see how much. His fondness for my invention is shown by his repetition, elsewhere: 'Ah, the boundless stupidity of those millions.' My lines here relate to Mbeki, an aspect of white newspaper journalists' depiction of him in the AIDS controversy; and they bob up again in Roberts's references to Mbeki – the words changed, but my pithy, ironic meanings the same – as 'the Barbarian King' and 'the Callous Native King'.

This is my idea, my analysis, and the bastard's just stolen it. The sad thing is he's so clumsily and artlessly copied from me that he's spoiled the whole effect, and now I'm thinking I might have to prune one of my favourite lines.

Roberts claims that ‘The trope of the Callous Native King reveals why such vehemence has gripped AIDS discourse in the era of Mbeki.’ Only it doesn’t. The reason for this ‘vehemence’ is examined in my book, but Roberts found it too complicated even to summarize. Not knowing what to say because he’s totally confused, his writing becomes even more incoherent than usual. He irrelevantly goes on to cite the claim of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century white doctor that blacks have smaller brains and consequently suffer a ‘stunting of the intellect’, which has nothing to say to the point he’s trying to make about ‘why such vehemence has gripped AIDS discourse in the era of Mbeki’. But what it shows is that Roberts was regurgitating my original analysis: it highlighted and recharged white stereotypical perceptions both of African stupidity and African inhumanity.

Roberts’s quotation of Mbeki’s criticism of the TAC during his ‘Inaugural ZK Matthews Memorial Lecture’ at the University of Fort Hare on 12 October 2001 is copied and pasted straight out *Just say yes, Mr President* without credit.

Let’s have another look at it. I’m quoting here from my excerpt of the speech in my manuscript, not Roberts’s shorter one, which I’ve italicized to indicate what he’s quoted in his book:

Thus does it happen that others who *consider themselves to be our leaders take to the streets carrying their placards, to demand that because we are germ carriers, and human beings of a lower order that cannot subject its passions to reason, we must perforce adopt strange opinions, to save a depraved and diseased people from perishing from self-inflicted disease. ...* Convinced that we are but natural-born, promiscuous carriers of germs, unique in the world, they proclaim that our continent is doomed to an inevitable mortal end because of our unconquerable devotion to the sin of lust.

Mbeki’s statement is extraordinarily powerful, a ringing rejection of the African-promiscuity-sex-germ model of AIDS, made up, he suggests with chilly Xhosa disdain, of ‘strange opinions’ being pressed on him. If you listen carefully, you can hear Mbeki, an African, a Xhosa, a native, speaking to and commenting on imported Western Christian ideology generally, now secularized in AIDS.

But it goes right over Roberts’s head. He’s not listening, because the Harvard and Oxford educated foreigner began his book with an *idée fixe* about AIDS, and being clever, and educated at clever white institutions overseas, where everyone believes Africa is full of AIDS, nothing was going to change his mind, not even a stinging repudiation like this.

More than being clueless, because Roberts the foreigner finds Mbeki's talk incomprehensible, deep down Roberts thinks Mbeki really is crazy for talking this way, just as all the white liberal journalists said he was afterwards, because he's incapable of making any sense of it at all. We know this, because he doesn't comment on a word of it; instead he immediately commences with the following anxious reassurance (I quoted some of it earlier) that Mbeki isn't really mad as the white journalists claimed:

People tend to present the AIDS debate as though a mad president was reigned in by wise and sane colonial and international media and other interests ... But that is emphatically the wrong story. ... why [did] the natives continue ... to support both the ANC and Mbeki's AIDS policies? Were the voters suicidal or mad? As Cape Town academic Anthony Butler points out: 'Attributions of "irrationality" or "denial" ... no matter how many people hold them to be true do not constitute adequate explanations' ... meaningful analysis must instead embark, Butler cautions, 'with the presumption that South African policy makers are "other persons who are persons in much the same sense as we are ourselves"'.

Roberts doesn't even begin trying to 'embark' on any 'meaningful analysis' of what Mbeki was saying at Fort Hare; he doesn't try decoding it, because he really thought Mbeki barmy for speaking like this. Why, all educated people like Roberts know that Africans are riddled with HIV (the 'undetected epidemic [that] spread powerfully and ... flood[ed] into South Africa [thanks to the] rapid circulation of African populations'), in other words that they are 'germ carriers', and 'germ carriers' for the reason that they are 'natural-born, promiscuous carriers of germs' unable to 'subject [their] passions to reason' and are therefore making 'fewer changes' to their 'unconquerable devotion to the sin of lust', which is to say not undergoing the necessary 'behaviour change', which Roberts and Butler think they should, and consequently they 'contract' 'self-inflicted disease' being unable to 'subject [their] passions to reason' because, gambling unreasonably, 'Poorer Africans, the majority of the population, had made fewer changes because few could expect to reach old age, whether or not they contracted HIV', which is to say 'Poorer Africans' unreasonably made love and caught sex disease because they figured they were going to die of hunger early anyway, so they might as well have plenty of dangerous sex on the way and enjoyably die from it instead.

These are not ‘strange opinions’ to Roberts; he really believes this, and he says so out loud. And only a ‘mad President’ would doubt these things and say so out loud.

At this point in his book Roberts turns to heave at me, but we’ve dealt with all of this already as a warm-up run to our look at how Roberts cocks up his representations of Mbeki’s thinking on AIDS. But there’s just one point I’d like to raise here. Roberts says ‘While Edwin Cameron was happy to play the Infallible Pope and self-styled oracle among the evangelists of the TAC, Brink and his heretics lacked a pretender.’ I’m sure this is terribly clever writing, but unfortunately I don’t know what it means. Possibly because it means nothing. The late Professor Sam Mhlongo and I – we worked together closely – never needed anyone around us pretending to be anyone he wasn’t. We knew who was who and who thought what. Unlike Roberts we’re not bootlicker types.

Roberts thieved the ‘oracle’ bit from me; he liked it too, and laughed over my lines here in a discussion of them. He liked my idea so much he came back and just took it. Again artlessly, because without context the jibe looks feeble and pointless.

‘But the AIDS-drug lobby were not listening.’ ‘But ... not listening’ is another of my hallmark lines that Roberts ‘can’t help’ ripping off because he finds my writing ‘infectious’. There are four instances of this hook in my books, two in each of *Just say yes, Mr President* and *The trouble with nevirapine*.

‘In the end, because of Mbeki’s courageous flak-taking, black South Africans ... received a far more cautious and sensible anti-retroviral roll-out, compared with the frenzied drugs campaign that had been advocated by Achmat and Cameron at their most enraptured.’ In claiming that ‘black South Africans [now have a] sensible anti-retroviral roll-out’, Roberts is asserting his own approval of ARVs in the health system for the African poor as Mbeki’s. But Mbeki certainly doesn’t think that ‘black South Africans [now have a] sensible anti-retroviral roll-out’ as Roberts and Achmat do.

When Achmat began agitating for ARVs in 1998, it was not for a general ‘anti-retroviral roll-out’. Being scientifically illiterate and so ignorant of the AZT foetal toxicity literature, because he never got past Standard Six at school, Achmat wanted the government to provide AZT to pregnant African women. The government opposed this on cost grounds, and then, after I raised the toxicity issue, on drug safety grounds. The MCC and the local Cochrane Centre both hammed the enquiries that

Mbeki directed. The ship then carried on as if nothing had happened. With the help of the country's most brilliant judges, the TAC and other pharmaceutical interest groups forced the government to supply nevirapine to women and their newborn babies, and after that forced its political capitulation over a general ARV roll-out.

Mbeki failed to prevent AZT and other ARVs from being introduced into the health care system, because in the power-play over this his power to prevent it was limited by the Constitution. The TAC is about to force the provision of AZT to pregnant African women – Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang's ultimate horror.

The TAC and the pharmaceutical industry have got exactly what they wanted so far, and are poised to bomb and conquer this last town.

Roberts agrees that AZT for African babies is a 'sensible' idea. You certainly won't hear him say it's a terrible idea, because he has no principles, and only goes for the money. And saying AZT, a cell poison, harms babies is incorrect and not in accordance with the progressive white liberal consensus. Roberts, a calculating schemer, has positioned himself to appeal to this constituency for personal advantage. Truth and public welfare do not enter into his reckoning of what's best for him and his career, ever. He's simply not that sort of chap.

'... RW Johnson ... advocates the recolonization of Africa'. Roberts lifted this out of *Just say yes, Mr President* without crediting me for this find.

Lifting this out my book, uncredited, Roberts quotes Achmat: 'I'm going to live longer than Thabo Mbeki! I'd like someone to write on my tombstone one day, "Here's a man who lived longer than Thabo Mbeki."'

The theme of Roberts's section starting, 'the suggestion already made that Mbeki's AIDS policy shows not merely native unfitnes for govern-ance but native unfitnes to vote', is lifted from *Just say yes, Mr President*, in which I examine this aspect: the inverse correlation between white liberal media claims and predictions and election returns, having regard to Mbeki's position on AIDS. Like a burglar avoiding the alarm beams, Roberts studiously avoids copying my materials here, but he lifts my theme without credit.

On the following page, Roberts similarly conceals his tracks by referring to Achmat's charge that Mbeki is, in Roberts's words, 'a deliberate killer of sick South Africans'. This is lifted from my quotation of Achmat,

whom I saw and heard with my own eyes and ears shouting on the steps of the Cape High Court, ‘Mbeki is responsible for the deaths of thousands of people’ – recorded in ‘For very great is the number of the stupid’ in the prefatory pages of *Just say yes, Mr President* online.

Roberts’s footnote here is as rich as a thieves’ lair: ‘208: *A nice fat footnote*: Zackie Achmat at a public health conference on 25 March, 2003: “Murderer! ... Criminal! ... Resign! ... Manto go to jail!” Roberts doesn’t say where he sourced this, and the reason for this is that he ripped it straight out of *Just say yes, Mr President*, uncredited and plagiarized. I describe how at the conference in question ‘Achmat and his group’ were ‘chanting “murderer”, “criminal”, “resign”, “Manto go to jail”, and “Manto go home”’. Roberts has even copied the order I set the words in. I don’t know why he thought he’d put ellipsis marks in, because all he’s left out in his copying from me are my commas and quotation marks, and not any words. Maybe he thought this would make it look like his original research and writing, when he’s just copied from me. I see he’s tried further concealing his theft by capitalizing the quoted words that he got from me and emphasizing them with exclamation marks.

Next, Roberts is quoting Dr Tshabalala-Msimang and the TAC’s Mark Heywood:

‘I think when our president started talking about nutrition and poverty [at the Durban AIDS conference in 2000], the whole world was laughing’ said Tshabalala-Msimang, ‘but those people who said his hands were dripping in blood, I hope they can stand up one day and say they were wrong.’ *The Guardian* recorded ‘But Mr Heywood accused the Dr Tshabalala-Msimang of having blood on her own hands, saying she was condemning people to death by exaggerating the side-effects of ARVs and creating confusion about the best treatment options.’

Roberts has ripped this uncredited from the Epilogue to *Just say yes, Mr President* which I wrote subsequent to giving him the CD and then the hardcopy of the book manuscript. I distinctly remember giving him the Epilogue, because I specifically recall him remarking on how much he liked the great epigraphs that I’d picked to head it.

Five days before personally calling the Minister of Health a murderer, Achmat had personally led a TAC march to Caledon police station in the Western Cape in an effort to secure the arrests not only of the Health Minister but also of the Minister of Trade and Industry, alleging that the Minister’s had committed culpable homicide. Achmat alleged that “people are being murdered in South Africa by the Health minister every

day.” Erwin’s alleged crime was his failure to issue compulsory licences for generic AIDS drugs. The TAC charged both Ministers with “failure to provide adequate treatment, including antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV/Aids ... We further demand that the accused be arrested and charged with the offence of culpable homicide or negligently causing the death of ... many thousands of people who died from Aids or Aids-related illnesses and whose deaths could have been prevented had they been given access to treatment. ... We believe that many thousands of people can bear witness to these horrible crimes.” (Emphasis added). [There is no emphasis added.] Achmat’s protesters waved “Wanted for Murder” posters with Tshabalala-Msimang and Erwin’s heads on them. The British journal, *Lancet* reported: “S Africa’s AIDS activists accuse government of murder.” “Undertaker in chief” was the dread garland bestowed upon President Thabo Mbeki by the exuberant AIDS-drug activist, Charlene Smith (“Stop giving AZT to the damn mice and start giving it to people” she said on another occasion).’

Roberts has stolen this entire account from *Just say yes, Mr President*, down to copying and pasting my words, my editing ellipses, and my opening and ending editing cuts. Compare this excerpt from my book below with the bit Roberts steals and reproduces in his footnote above:

The TAC charged both Ministers with

failure to provide adequate treatment, including antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV/Aids ... We further demand that the accused be arrested and charged with the offence of culpable homicide or negligently causing the death of ... many thousands of people who died from Aids or Aids-related illnesses and whose deaths could have been prevented had they been given access to treatment. ... We believe that many thousands of people can bear witness to these horrible crimes.

Roberts lifts “The British journal, *Lancet* reported: “S Africa’s AIDS activists accuse government of murder.” from *Just say yes, Mr President*: ‘In the UK four days later *Lancet* reported: *S Africa’s AIDS activists accuse government of murder.*’ Roberts even steals my idea of making the headline read as part of the narrative.

Roberts continues right on with his shoplifting spree:

‘Undertaker in chief’ was the dread garland bestowed upon President Thabo Mbeki by the exuberant AIDS-drug activist, Charlene Smith (“Stop giving AZT to the damn mice and start giving it to people’ she said on another occasion).

Roberts's quotations of Charlene Smith are robbed uncredited from *Debating AZT*. In numbered paragraph 74, I quoted one of Dr Tshabalala-Msimang's warnings about AZT and Mrs Dimwit's response:

'The fact is that some of the mice [given AZT] have contracted cancer. It attacks bone marrow. It is very toxic.' To which South African AZT campaigner Charlene Smith, offered the glittering retort, 'Stop giving AZT to the damn mice and start giving it to people.'

In numbered paragraph 76, I wrote:

In the *Washington Post* on 4 June 2000, Smith reviled Mbeki as 'chief undertaker' for denying AZT to rape victims, and claimed, 'For years Mbeki has argued – erroneously and dangerously – that AZT itself is toxic.'

By the way, in case you think Mrs Smith is an unusually brainless person, I must reassure you that such thinking is typical over at the *Mail&Guardian*<sup>20</sup>: Earlier I quoted editor Ferial Haffajee's defence of AZT by blacking-out any information that might harm its reputation as a life-saving drug, because, she told me, this would damage the newspaper's 'brand', since 'Our newspaper has been at the forefront of the push for antiretrovirals in this country.' Chief Operating Officer Hoosen Karjiekier reminded me that 'We are proponents of AZT', and that to describe AZT as 'toxic' is 'dissent', and therefore not publishable in his newspaper. Chairman William Makgoba, then president of the Medical Research Council and now Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, earlier said much the same to me by email:

I do not intend to engage in nonsensical debates on AZT or other AIDS-related matters. I find the issues you raise a total waste of energy but perhaps more exciting for ignorant people in the field. ... Remember that I am the scientist and not you.

In *Just say yes, Mr President* I quote Makgoba warning South Africans not 'to have collaborated in one of the greatest crimes of our time' (Mbeki's genocide in opposing the provision of AZT to Africans in the public health system). This quotation shows up uncredited in the footnotes of Roberts's book.

So does my quotation of John Moore; Roberts writes in his footnotes that 'John Moore said that "a charge of genocide [against Mbeki] would not be inappropriate."'

And both of Roberts's Richard Branson quotes are lifted without credit from 'For very great is the number of the stupid' in the prefatory pages of *Just say yes, Mr President*' online on my website.

In the same footnote, Roberts copies and pastes my excerpt of an *M&G* editorial, copying my opening cut (I think we all end together):

The *Mail & Guardian* where Cameron's piece appeared had itself made this very accusation in an editorial of 21 July, 2000: 'if our government any longer hesitates and prevaricates on the issue of providing antiretrovirals to HIV-positive pregnant women, it should not be surprised to hear charges of genocide directed at it. For to fail to act right now against the HIV/Aids pandemic on the basis of best-available science and with all the resources we can muster will have genocidal results. Whether that outcome is the result of malevolence, of incompetence, of panic-induced denial, or of pig-headed obduracy among senior members of the government will scarcely matter. For they will have been warned often enough. Yes, history will then judge them harshly, as former president Nelson Mandela said in a closing speech to the World Aids Conference in Durban last week. But, before history has its turn, the rest of us will have a go at them — and our judgment will not be generous. A failure to act now is genocide.'

*Just say yes, Mr President*' put Roberts onto Pieter Dirk-Uys, repeatedly making the same hysterical genocide charge against Mbeki. I spend some time looking at the antics of this flapping buffoon in my book. Roberts picks up on this and takes it for his book, uncredited, but he cleverly uses a different quotation similar to those I have in my book.

Again lifting this out of my book, uncredited, Roberts quotes Achmat again: 'Just think: A whole generation of ten million orphans, without income or job security, knowing that their parents could also have lived had they been able to afford the AIDS drugs.' In his footnotes, Roberts cites as his source 'Hanlie Retief in *Rapport* on 10 February 2002.' Only that's not true, because Hanlie's piece in *Rapport* wasn't his source. How do we know? How do we know for sure? How do we know that my manuscript *Just say yes, Mr President*' was Roberts's actual, uncredited source?

I have the original hardcopy of the article in my research files. Even if Roberts had it too, it would have been useless to him, because the article

is in Afrikaans, and Roberts doesn't speak Afrikaans. I do, and I translated Achmat's lines into English, and included them in my book. Roberts has copied the lines I translated for *'Just say yes, Mr President'*, and he has copied and pasted them exactly as I translated them into his own book without crediting me.

By citing *Rapport* as his source, Roberts means to deceive you into thinking that in his researches for his book he found the original interview, read it, excerpted the bit he needed, and translated it. But none of this is true. His source was *'Just say yes, Mr President'*: he found it translated by me in my book manuscript on the CD I gave him, and the next thing he's onto his copy and paste buttons. He saw it there, liked it, ran off with it, and then lied about it.



## Re: Chapter 9: 'A clash of fundamentalisms 2: racial politics'

Roberts opens his Chapter 9 with two epigraphs, both equally dismal, but equally revealing of his own thinking on AIDS nonetheless.

He quotes John Illife talking the sort of talk Mbeki eschewed years ago at the time he took off and threw his little red ribbon into the trash, and reading it, you appreciate what's in store: a statement of Roberts's thinking on AIDS that he got from the newspapers, and not Mbeki's thinking on AIDS that Mbeki got from the scientific papers at the end of 1999.

I've looked Illife's book over – he's an American professor of African history – and his writing reads like anything written by Nicoli Natrass: it's a completely standard, uncritical AIDS orthodox airport thriller for the excitement of white readers with their fantasies about AIDS in Africa.

South Africa 'was a perfect environment for HIV', writes Illife, hence the 'major epidemic' – among the niggers. We know he means among the niggers, because he credits 'the township revolt of the mid-1980s' and 'the transition to majority rule', although quite how he doesn't say. The African revolution against white supremacist minority rule resulted in AIDS among Africans in South Africa! You get the idea, the white liberal one. The sort of stuff you'll hear at the University of Cape Town in one of Nicoli Natrass's tutorials on how AIDS among the blacks in the shacks a few miles from her charming suburban home is destroying the South African economy, or maybe how it will next year (she gives special classes in this).

And then, just to make sure you haven't misunderstood where Roberts is coming from, he quotes William Easterly:

Behind recent Western attention to AIDS is a tale of two decades of neglect, prevarication, incompetence, and passivity by all those same political actors and aid agencies.

On a personal note, I might just interject that while reading Roberts's AIDS chapters, alternately groaning, alternately laughing, I kept thinking, This can't get any worse, and on the next page it's reached a new nadir. I think Roberts exhibits his incredible stupidity in all its glory in this epigraph: his total failure to appreciate AIDS as an essentially neo-colonial project, just as Mbeki powerfully hinted at in his letter. What Roberts suggests is that Mbeki thinks, like he and Easterly do, that what South Africa needs is ever greater Western ideological, commercial and political penetration. Unbelievable. But this is Roberts. You're getting a sense of him by now, a poseur of the shallowest type. I'm sorry to say it does get worse, a lot worse.

Roberts doesn't leave it to suggestion; he's explicit now: 'a major AIDS crisis in South Africa was inevitable, given the post-war history of Africa and South Africa and the long incubation of the disease'. Roberts suggests it took the apartheid regime to set the stage for epidemic disease among the African poor, never mind colonial dispossession. Roberts believes, truly believes, because whites say so, and he believes what whites say, having certain personal issues with whiteness and blackness shall we say, that there is a new sexually transmitted disease afoot among Africans, and that it's raging among them in 'epidemic' proportions. He believes, merely because whites have said this, that this disease has a 'long incubation' period, which is to say normal, healthy looking Africans are actually walking death traps – 'germ carriers', as Mbeki puts it. Roberts doesn't think to seek a scientific reference for this 'long incubation' period or what it might be: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, or 50 years; for him it suffices if a white American has said it. Roberts believes anything white Americans in white coats say.

'... the AIDS epidemic began early in Africa', says Illife, whom Roberts quotes with approval, without thinking about what he says, because Illife is a white man and a 'scholar'. It originally came creeping out the jungles where monkeys live next to Africans. This is what Roberts thinks. It's what Roberts thinks, because it's what Robert Gallo the Pope of AIDS thinks. It is not what Mbeki thinks; we know this, because he's expressly rejected it, and Roberts even deals with this elsewhere in his book.

Roberts incidentally takes time out to champion not only 'sensible' ARVs for Africans, but DDT for them too. The ignoramus goes for poisonous industrial chemicals – banned in the North, but sprayed in the South. You can imagine him humming the (genuine) advertising jingle as he's typing: 'DDT is good for me.' Perhaps it would be better if we didn't get started on this. You'll have already realized, even before he started selling DDT, that like Achmat, Roberts is utterly and completely scientifically illiterate. This is why Roberts goes for DDT.

Roberts claims:

Blind pursuit of conventional wisdom in malaria had demonstrably caused a rise in malaria deaths. In that context it would have been almost reckless for Mbeki to dole out the orthodox chemicals and to disregard the toxicity literature in the AIDS case. Instead of acting rashly either for or against the Washington consensus, Mbeki – as always – sought to convene a discussion.

Really?

The ‘context’ to which Roberts refers is the recent reversal of the political gains of the environmental movement in getting DDT banned worldwide to prevent the further poisoning of the environment with it. Although the WHO supports the use of DDT, just as it supports the use of AZT, and its predecessor supported arsenic injections, it is ‘very much concerned with health consequences from use of DDT’, and is committed to ‘reduce use of DDT and eventually eliminate it, in accordance with the Stockholm Convention’ on the elimination of persistent organic pollutants (POPs), according to a statement made by its director of the Office on Public Health and Environment on 3 May 2007, a month before the publication of Roberts’s book. DDT is dreadful stuff, but Roberts, a scientific imbecile, is totally ignorant of anything about it.

Quite what Roberts’s logic is in declaring – after commending DDT – that ‘it would have been almost reckless for Mbeki to dole out the orthodox chemicals and to disregard the toxicity literature in the AIDS case’ is anyone’s guess. I just don’t get it, no matter how hard I try. I must allow, though, that Roberts’s logic is so sophisticated here that it’s beyond me. But I don’t think so.

Although Roberts is a Harvard and Oxford educated lawyer, he says ‘it would have been almost reckless for Mbeki to dole out the orthodox chemicals and to disregard the toxicity literature in the AIDS case’. I’m complimented by the free use Roberts makes of my words and my phrases, even without crediting their provenance, but I assure you that it wasn’t me who came up with the stupid phrase ‘almost reckless’, because it’s like being almost pregnant, and any lawyer knows that either you’re reckless or you’re not. The test is a clear one, and unless they’ve cheated their way through their exams, maybe by stealing the next guy’s answers (and we know Roberts habitually steals other guys’ work), all lawyers know it’s not possible to be ‘almost reckless’. You is or you isn’t.

Roberts claims, falsely, that upon encountering the facts about AZT (from me), ‘Instead of acting rashly either for or against the Washington consensus, Mbeki – as always – sought to convene a discussion.’ That’s not true. What Mbeki actually did, historically, and not according to Roberts’s literary imagination, was, after reading *Debating AZT*, look into the drug literature further, and then, when he’d satisfied himself that AZT was a harmful chemical, say so in Parliament in forthright, unambivalent and unequivocal terms. He did not faff about, as Roberts claims he did, more interested in pretty words than their meaning. He later convened a discussion of the entire AIDS controversy, the use of AZT specifically included. He never ‘sought to convene a discussion’. He ‘convene[d] a discussion’.

Roberts claims that it was (again) ‘in this context [*he’s referring to the failure of the WHO ... in checking the epidemic*] that Mbeki favoured African solutions to deal with the particular incidence of AIDS in Africa’. OK, but not what Roberts has got in mind: on the next page he’s falsely claiming, without any evidence for his false claim, which is to say he’s just making it up, that ‘An important aspect of what Mbeki meant by African solutions to AIDS was simply: the attentive grasp of actual conditions on the African ground as one imports Western medicine.’

You can tell when Roberts is lying when he claims what Mbeki ‘simply’ intended. Your red light flashes at this word, and it’s always reliable.

Roberts’s representation of ‘what Mbeki meant’ here is a fabrication. It ‘simply’ bears no relation to the historical record of Mbeki’s conclusions about and attitude to ARV ‘medicine’ for AIDS, evident from his clear statements about it.

Elaborating further down the page on what ‘African solutions’ Roberts says Mbeki had in mind, he claims ‘Mbeki noted’ that ‘African traditional medicine can also make a contribution’. In truth, Mbeki has never ‘noted’ this: that ‘traditional African medicine can also make a contribution’ to commercial, Western, patented, synthetic, pharmaceutical drug-based medicine. That is not his point of view at all.

The fact is Mbeki has rejected Western ARV drug medicine for AIDS in the clearest terms. He does not think it can be augmented by traditional African medicine, as Roberts falsely suggests it can – Roberts’s colonial, patronizing way of accommodating the fact that according the WHO about 80% of South Africa’s people utilize African traditional medicine as a first resort.

Unlike Roberts, Mbeki doesn’t consider African traditional medicine a second-rate, unscientific alternative or complementary medicine to Western ARV medicine for AIDS (based on an aggressive military model of germ invaders and violent counter-attacks to repulse them). Roberts is expressing his own condescending thoughts about African traditional medicine here, not Mbeki’s.

And by the way, the phrase Roberts uses, ‘Africans solutions’, is not Mbeki’s in the context of the AIDS treatment controversy, it’s Tony Leon’s.

‘Mbeki had only requested an avoidance of double-standards towards both traditional and industrial medicines.’ This is another of Roberts’s false inventions for his story. Mbeki has never articulated such a ‘request’ in respect of either African traditional medicine or in respect of Western pharmaceutical drugs such as ARVs. His involvement in the former has been to establish a Presidential Advisory Panel on Traditional Medicines.

His involvement in the latter went a lot further than ‘only request[ing] an avoidance of double-standards’. He condemned AZT outright in Parliament and ARVs generally in his letter to Tony Leon on 1 July 2000. Roberts seems to have a pathological need to tell endless lies.

Roberts lifts Mbeki’s letter to Clinton from my book, uncredited. The dissident scientists to whom Mbeki alludes, and whom Mbeki is defending in his letter, are my personal friends. They all rate my work very highly. Roberts never attacks them. But Roberts defames me as a tumbling clown. Even though he knows, because as Mbeki’s biographer I’ve told him, what Mbeki thinks of my work.

Roberts seems to have parroted Washington’s misconception that ‘pellagra [was a] black disease’ (it’s virtually absent in the US now). Whatever, this is wrong. I have a special interest in pellagra as a precedent for the infectious AIDS model, and I’ve obtained a copy of Elizabeth Etheridge’s expanded PhD thesis on the subject, *The Butterfly Caste*, and a key historical paper on it which I sourced and obtained from Yale. Suffice it to say that pellagra, a disease of nutritional deficiency blamed for decades on germs (like AIDS today), was a predominantly a disease of timber- and cotton-mill town poor-white labourers and their families. It was not a ‘black disease’. Roberts had no good reason for getting it wrong, because I discuss pellagra in depth in my book that I gave him to help him get it right.

You might have missed it, so just to make sure you get it, Roberts repeats himself: it’s the African people of South Africa who have AIDS, who (in Mbeki’s scathing words) are the ‘germ carriers’. Only Roberts says this in characteristically polite white liberal language, using words like lavatory spray, as white liberals do: ‘... the distinctly African dimensions of AIDS prevalence’. What Roberts means to say is that it’s rife among the coons.

This quotation, ‘Nicoli Natrass suggested that the most pernicious legacy of President Mbeki’s dissident [sic] [Roberts’s sic] stance on AIDS has been the erosion of the authority of science and of scientific regulation of medicine in South Africa.’ is ripped without credit from ‘For very great is the number of the stupid’ in *Just say yes, Mr President*’.

Roberts has copied from my excerpt of Mbeki’s Oliver Tambo Memorial Lecture in Johannesburg on 11 August 2000, both in *Debating AZT*, and a smaller cut in *Just say yes, Mr President*’.

Roberts applies a Fanonian analysis to impeach the role and behaviour of William Magkoba in the early days of the South African AIDS controversy as a colonial servant. If you're dazzled by the bright originality of this approach I'll be pleased. I'll be pleased because it's my idea, not Roberts's, and he's stolen it right out of *'Just say yes, Mr President'*. He's stolen my concept, my insight, and he's passed it off as his own.

While busy stealing this original idea of mine, he steals two others, leaving clues all over. He talks of

the cult that surrounded Nkosi 'Johnson', the rebaptised child-martyr whose body was made a battlefield in the cause of AIDS drug fundamentalism – and who was implausibly claimed as a 'friend' by Edwin Cameron and others

without telling you anything more to enable you to make sense of these seemingly strange perspectives.

Roberts doesn't explain how the child's 'body was made a battlefield in the cause of AIDS drug fundamentalism'; he doesn't explain what on earth he's talking about. You get the sense from what he writes that something horrible happened, but he doesn't say what. You're left to guess.

Was it a bad thing that the child was treated with ARV drugs and died on them?

Was it a good thing that he was treated with ARV drugs and died on them?

Should he have been treated with ARV drugs at all?

Should he not have been treated with ARV drugs at all?

Was his treatment with ARV drugs 'sensible'?

Was there anything about his treatment that wasn't 'sensible'?

Was it a good thing he wasn't treated with ARV drugs sooner rather than later, in terms of the now outdated 'brutal "hit early, hit hard" philosophy' – 'the then "standard of care"', now described as 'brutal', because it's now considered inhumane to give people, children especially, these drugs as soon as possible?

Was it a bad thing he was treated with ARV drugs later rather than sooner, in line with 'the treatment practices of medical orthodoxy in the new millennium', which is to say the modern sophisticated hit hard only later approach that Roberts goes for?

If it was a good thing, rather than a bad thing, that he was treated with ARVs in line with 'the treatment practices of medical orthodoxy in the new millennium' – finally piped through his nose after the drugs had destroyed his muscles and caused him massive brain damage, so that he

couldn't see, hear, move, or swallow – and that he then died on this new treatment modality, what conclusions should a reasonable person draw from the episode?

Is one supposed to write a couple of racy and also maybe tear-jerking lines about it, and move on, without thinking about it, and what to do about it so that, with one child killed for nothing in the most horrible way for the enjoyment of the white newspaper-reading public, it doesn't happen again?

Roberts cannot give you any answers, because the questions have never even occurred to him. That's how shallow an unprincipled, unthinking poseur he is. He's a total fake. A liar and a thief too, as already shown, but that by the way.

*Just say yes, Mr President*<sup>222</sup> contains an extensive account of the killing of Xolani Nkosi with AZT and other ARVs. I refer to the child as a 'martyr', and I quote an Irish activist friend of mine describing the white 'cult' that grew around the African child as he was being poisoned to death. These words just happen to bob up in Roberts's account. But more than words, he steals a concept played up in the book too:

The PANA report mentioned that 'a parade of friends, family and media' had been to visit the child, including 'friends such as Judge Edwin Cameron and Zackie Achmat [who stopped] by to lend support'. Friends? Puhleeze.

(My prose.) Roberts liked that bit, as well as my napalm lines that followed. We discussed them. He found them so appealing that he decided to steal a bit, and then again, being lazy and stupid and ham-handed, he broke what he stole, because Cameron never claimed Xolani as a 'friend', as Roberts suggests. It was the white journalist writing the PANA report who cast the relationship between the strangers in this way.

Roberts has copied and pasted this quotation in his footnote to the page under discussion from *Just say yes, Mr President*:

222 *All sorts of blushing and nervous coughing*: Edwin Cameron, interviewed by Gavin Evans, said: 'you have to put this down to sexual practice, but there is a lack of will about confronting this fact and its implications.' *Daily Dispatch*, "HIV+ judge wants Aids justice, [*sic*: no closing inverted commas] 13 November, 2001.

Roberts never got this from the *Daily Dispatch* as he pretends to have done. He got it from me. I read it in the *Daily Dispatch* while trying crime in the Regional Court in the Eastern Cape in 2001/2, and included it in my book.

In also copying and pasting this following passage from *Just say yes, Mr President*, Roberts leaves two clear fingerprints behind at the crime scene:

‘Mbeki was,’ Makgoba said, ‘emotional and irrational. This man will regret this in his later years. He displays things he doesn’t understand. ... I think we are just creating [an image of] ourselves as an embarrassment to the world. The scientific evidence about these issues is so clear that one is really surprised that we spend so much time and energy having a heated argument about something that is very straightforward.’

Roberts copies and pastes both my ellipsis and the words that I wrote and interpolated.

I’ve left the inverted commas in, to reproduce the passage in Roberts’s book exactly. This is to show you how, apart from looting my book for materials without crediting me for my hard work in finding them, and copying my own work on them, Roberts casually changes the start of the original quotation a bit, which is to say he doesn’t respect the integrity of his source materials (as we’ve already seen), and feels he can just tamper with and change them before including them in his book as and when he pleases. The correct quotation begins, as I have it correctly in my book manuscript: ‘I think the letter was emotional’. Roberts alters it to ‘Mbeki was emotional’. But that’s not what Makgoba said.

‘... Makgoba worried more over an irrelevant “embarrassment” than the true issue at hand, which were a life-threatening disease [*etc.*]’ Roberts, you gather, still truly thinks AIDS is a disease. And he thinks it’s a life-threatening one to boot. He doesn’t think that if you’re ill and you rest, get well fed and cared for, you usually rally back to your feet again, like what normally happens when you’re sick. Roberts thinks you’re a gonner if a white doctor says you’ve got the sex virus in you; and he thinks that if the white doctor says this you may add a few extra years to your life by swallowing certain lucrative, patented, synthetic, chemical poisons from overseas every day until you die. Put another way, Roberts believes that in order to live you must drink poisons that slaughter or maim every cell they reach. Most whites do too. It’s a civilized and educated thing to think. And this is why most whites think it’s ‘intellectually respectable’ to think this.

I went to the trouble of sourcing a hardcopy of Professor Jerry Coovadia’s fabulously frank racist speech about Africans on the occasion of his being awarded an honorary doctorate by Wits on 24 June 2003 (he’s an Indian who’s got rich and famous from treating the Africans he

despises with ARVs, and from marketing these drugs for the pharmaceutical industry) and had it telefaxed to me. I then redacted it and included it in *Just say yes Mr President* and in other documents I drew. Without crediting me, Roberts copies and pastes my work in mentioning Coovadia's reference to 'the unbridled sexuality ... of newly independent people ... especially the promiscuity of men'. Roberts copies my arrangement of these phrases and my ellipses precisely. He's a natural-born thief.

Roberts rips this off from *Just say yes, Mr President* without crediting me as his source for the report, the title, the newspaper, the author and the quotation:

The *Mail & Guardian's* David Beresford announced the Constitutional Court case that eventually compelled government to supply nevirapine for pregnant mothers under a headline suggesting that Mbeki 'lets AIDS babies die in pain'. Beresford explained: 'Campaigners against AIDS in South Africa will start legal proceedings this week to force the government to save thousands of babies from painful and lingering deaths.'

And in his footnotes, he copies and pastes this directly from my book, copying my cuts exactly:

A Sussex University economics graduate, seen during the years of struggle against apartheid as the ANC's arch-diplomat, Mbeki was widely regarded as sophisticated and cosmopolitan. Time and experience now offer, however, another perspective – of a man whose sensitivity on race points to a previously undiscovered psychological trauma which, while deserving of sympathy, makes him among the politicians least qualified to heal past wounds.

Roberts's dullness to the *essential* ideological nature of AIDS accounts for why he missed Mbeki's allusion to the controlling neo-colonial nature of AIDS in the African context as an ideology of racism, as political ideology, when he wrote in his letter to him ('emphasis[ing] Fanon's comment' in *The Wretched of the Earth*):

Colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle, loving mother who protects her children from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing

to commit suicide and from giving free reign to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, its ego, and from its physiology, its biology, and its own unhappiness which is at its very essence.

Look no further than the billions of dollars spent by the American government on teaching Africans not to have sex. Of course, because he isn't listening, Roberts completely misses the point, and goes off on an irrelevant tangent: 'Just as each native needs individual protection from him or herself, a bridle must be placed upon the democratically elected President who will otherwise hurt his own people.'

From what the 'native' supposedly needs protection, Roberts hasn't a clue – as we see from his further quotation from Mbeki's letter a couple of pages on in the book, in a context that again betrays his stupidity to what Mbeki is talking about. Mbeki:

What this means is that whether stated or not, colonialism/liberalism in South Africa sees itself as being blessed or cursed with a manifest destiny to control the elemental impulses of the native. The problem is that like all children, as they grow older, the natives must, at some point, seek to define themselves outside the parameters the colonial 'mother' might set.

Having just made the pointless point that 'a bridle must be placed' on Mbeki 'who otherwise will naturally hurt his own people'; mentioning Zapiro's artless cartoon of Mbeki as Solomon presiding over a baby cut in two; likewise Jonny Steinberg's racist white liberal statement that innumerable whites have emailed him to say 'our country is endemically brutal because it is black'; and also David Beresford's tragically mentally-impaired<sup>121</sup> headline 'suggesting that Mbeki "lets AIDS babies die in pain"', Roberts writes, 'The imagery deployed in disparaging Mbeki has origins as old as Negrophobia itself, older than slavery.' He quotes a 19<sup>th</sup> Century doctor on the alleged smaller brains of 'the Negro Race'; another on their low intelligence; and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1911 on how stupid and sex-crazed 'the Negro' is. But this is completely irrelevant. Nobody, but nobody, other than Roberts, suggests that Mbeki is unintelligent; on the contrary, everybody, his detractors included, remarks on how brilliant he is. Nor has anyone anywhere, other than Roberts, suggested that Mbeki must be 'bridle[d]'. So what on earth does Roberts think he's doing writing this? Does he have any idea? Is he hung-over?

And Mbeki was not making Roberts's clever point about how racist white doctors were – they still are, but unless they're explicitly so Roberts misses it; it seems to me Mbeki was laying bare the attitudes of the contemporary South African liberal white man to the South African black man and to his urge to control him to protect him from himself. As in white liberal AIDS talk and the sudden newfound white liberal concern for the wellbeing of Africans since 1994, and their desire to help them control their sex lives in the Age of AIDS.

The reason Roberts can't hear Mbeki is because he buys into this thinking, as is evident from all the orthodox AIDS experts and American liberal commentators whom he quotes and cites – Illife, Fourie and Epstein principally – as well as from his own pronouncements about the affliction of Africans with AIDS due to their inability to control themselves.

Roberts's myopia is pitiful. But it's quite understandable, because for all his talk of 'the native' (which rich concept, just coincidentally, comes up over and over again in *Just say yes, Mr President*), Roberts has no visceral identification with 'the native'. He certainly has a professionally expedient one, and maybe even a sentimental one in his yearning quest to find an identity on his father's ancestral continent, but it's not one he feels in his bones.

Rian Malan once remarked to me that 'The trouble with Cape Town is not enough blacks', and I knew immediately what he meant. Resettled here, after living all my life in Durban/Pietermaritzburg, and speaking Zulu, I miss the Zulu people like a lost love. And the Xhosa people on the barren outskirts of Cape Town seem hardly included in this apartheid-perfected city. These sorts of feelings are completely alien to Roberts when writing about 'the native'. And this is part of why he cannot hear what Mbeki is saying in his letter, and what he's implying concerning the imported American ideology of AIDS applied by liberal South African whites to Africans.

Even Roberts's use of the expression 'the native' is flat and brittle, and devoid of any ironic charge. He lifts his talk of 'the native' straight from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. But his prose never cuts like Fanon's does when he speaks like this – instead it has a feeble I'm in, you're out smugness. The reason is this. For anyone who doesn't know, Fanon was writing in the thick of the Algerian struggle against the colonial French; Martinique-born, French-educated, he was appointed by the colonial authorities to work as a psychiatrist in an Algerian hospital, but went native, identifying himself completely with the Algerian resistance and becoming a leading spokesman for it. On top of its acuity, you are scorched by the moral fury of his prose. You never think reading it that

Fanon's object was to show how clever he is, that like Roberts he was writing for money and a literary prize. Roberts's talk of 'the native', in Fanon's style, always feels second-hand and inauthentic, because he has no sympathy, no empathy, no deep love for 'the native'.

As for the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century doctors whom Roberts quotes giving the medical facts about 'the Negro', I think that one day people will be talking with similar disbelief and disgust about what passed for medical science in the Age of AIDS, in Africa especially – the medical science Roberts believes in implicitly. Former Harvard molecular biology professor Charles Thomas encourages people to 'keep everything ... They are going to be talking about AIDS for a hundred years.' Like we do now about the racial and genetic hygiene of eugenics – once high science taught as an academic discipline in the colleges and celebrated at international expert conferences, today universally recognized as the detestable junk it was.

Judge Cameron on the other hand possesses what he himself is not shy to describe as "natural intellectual gifts". This is lifted from *Just say yes, Mr President*' uncredited, and several other documents I've drawn. As I mentioned earlier, I read Cameron interviewed in the *Daily Dispatch* while I was working in the Eastern Cape in 2001/2. Cameron's laughable line went unnoticed by everyone except me. I noted it and I used it in my published and unpublished work. Now when you read my stuff you'll think I'm just copying Roberts. He's gone and stolen my firecracker and let it off.

Roberts doesn't credit me for finding this for him, but I put him onto Mbeki's speech in Parliament in which he said (Roberts quotes him),

Whatever the circumstances, and regardless of the regularity of catholic incantations about 'playing the race card', I, for my part, will not keep quiet while others whose minds have been corrupted by the disease of racism, accuse us, the black people of South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world, as being, by virtue of our Africanness and skin colour – lazy, liars, foul-smelling, diseased, corrupt, violent, amoral, sexually deprived, animalistic, savage – and rapist.

because I quoted the speech in which Mbeki quoted Professor Edward Rhymes on the racist stereotyping of blacks as 'rampant sexual beasts, unable to control our urges, unable to keep our legs crossed, unable to keep it in our pants' in my critique of the HSRC's 'HIV Prevalence' report, the one Roberts liked so much, remarking in Pretoria, 'When Brink

writes, you can't answer.' Roberts also quotes Mbeki quoting Rhymes in his book.

But Roberts quotes Mbeki quoting Rhymes for the bang, not for the gist of what he was saying about Africans being stereotyped as 'diseased ... violent, amoral, sexually depraved, animalistic, savage – and rapist'. This is because like the white liberals he criticizes, Roberts himself believes Africans, especially 'Poorer Africans' are 'diseased ... amoral, sexually depraved, animalistic'. They've made 'fewer changes' to their sexual behaviour, Roberts explains in his book, because being chronically hungry they've bargained on dying young anyway.

Roberts quotes GlaxoWellcome medical director Dr Peter Moore protesting like Gertrude in the e.tv documentary "The Truth on AZT" in December 1999: 'GlaxoWellcome is a reputable company. We do not lie to people. We do not lie to researchers, we do not lie to scientists, we do not lie to physicians and we do not lie to patients.'

This is after he'd said Mbeki had been 'gravely misinformed' about AZT, lying to everyone.

Even if Roberts saw the documentary eight years ago, which I doubt, his memory is not so sharp that he would have been able to precisely remember the drug company executive's serial lies so well. He wouldn't have written it down, because he didn't have his book commission yet. So where did he find this little jewel of a quotation?

I have a videotape of that documentary given to me by the producer, a friend of mine, and I personally transcribed that statement from it, and included it in *Debating AZT*. This is where Roberts saw it, liked it, and just helped himself to it, without crediting me as his source for it – in other words plagiarized it.

Roberts copies and pastes from this bit in Mbeki's exchange with Leon included in *Just say yes, Mr President*, without crediting me:

Let me assure you that as long as I have to occupy a decision-making position, so long will I take such decisions as may be necessary and morally defensible, whatever institution makes recommendations according to its mandate and possibilities. The idea that, as the executive, we should take decisions we can defend, simply because views have been expressed by scientist-economists, scientist-agriculturists, scientist-environmentalists, scientist-pedagogues, scientist-soldiers, scientist-health workers, scientist-communicators etc, is absurd in the extreme.

The point is very powerful, but it means nothing to Roberts, so let me explain it for him. Mbeki is not abdicating all decision making to technocrats in their institutions (perhaps he has some sense of the corrupting politics, commerce and sociology of applied science in institutions), and he acknowledges and asserts the importance of making up one's own mind about things, particularly when in a position of leadership and responsibility. It is not good enough to say, 'That's what the white doctors say, and so that's what I'll think.' As Roberts does.

Roberts quotes this, not as an enormously significant indication of the kind of man Mbeki is, the way he thinks and approaches things, but for its flash value. This is because Roberts himself is precisely the sort of person who goes with and believes what the authorities say, and his book abounds with appeals to authority as one of his basic tools of argument. It's a kind of power game he's got going the whole time. My dad's bigger than yours (in her correspondence with her 38-year-son, Mrs Roberts actually mentions what 'Daddy says...').

It goes without saying that this is a terribly childish mindset, and it probably has something to do with the way Roberts was raised as a child in Trinidad. But it also characterizes the white liberal approach to the South African AIDS controversy that Mbeki started, which has a lot to do with apartheid intellectual regimentation and the safe political and intellectual environment it created for most white liberals to operate in quite comfortably. Kept safe.

When Gallo, Coovadia, Gray, Venter, and other people of their intellectual calibre speak, mostly white and Indian, white liberals and Roberts bow together before them.

Roberts's copies and pastes this bit from Mbeki's correspondence with Leon in my book too:

In this regard, you accuse me of making 'a nonsensical comparison'. Since the issue of the rule of law is a matter of principle, I believe that it is fundamentally incorrect to argue, as you did, that AZT should be prescribed for rape, despite the fact that the existing legal procedures had not been followed enabling this drug to be registered and legally dispensed for this purpose. Strangely, you, the Leader of the Official Opposition, argue that my insistence on the observance of the rule of law is nonsensical.

Roberts comments:

Mbeki had pointed out that AZT had no US regulatory approval for use in rape cases. Leon flatly denied that. The company itself, Glaxo Wellcome, confirmed Mbeki's version and implicitly confirmed Mbeki's point: relative to the drug companies, Leon was not an effective opposition.

Roberts gets the history of the dispute, and how Mbeki won it, from *Debating AZT* and *Just say yes, Mr President*. But he doesn't say so.

I have to report that Roberts does not only steal from me. He also steals from Mbeki.

Reading Mbeki's letter to him, I was struck by a couple of delightfully pungent turns of phrase and made a note of them, which, as I mentioned earlier, I later transcribed to my notebook. I still have this note, safe and sound.

I was appalled to read two of these phrases strung together in Roberts's book without ascribing them, as if they were Roberts's literary inventions, and not Mbeki's. Only he strings them together maladroitly, because he has no sense of the music of English to match Mbeki's, not even close, and the way he does it wrecks the effect.

Mbeki's letter to Roberts was a private communication, which Roberts proceeded to quote in his book. I don't know whether Mbeki subsequently gave him leave to do this (the letter itself didn't, as far as I can recall), but I doubt it, because I've heard that Roberts didn't bother first asking Eusebius McKaiser if it was OK to publish his email correspondence in the book, and as we know Roberts didn't do me the same courtesy either in regard to my own work, published or in the pipe, or even our private communications as between erstwhile friends. This leaves me uncertain about the current status of the letter: whether it remains a private communication that Roberts has quoted from without the permission of its author, as is his habit, or whether Mbeki subsequently said, Fine, use it as you like, and quote what you want from it.

I'm not going to risk spilling anything Mbeki might have preferred kept private; so I charge Roberts with plagiarizing Mbeki's writing, and I'll furnish further and better particulars if and only if Roberts denies the charge. Then he can produce the letter, and I'll point the words out.

I'm sure he'll know what I'm referring to. But in the event that he really doesn't, perhaps because he steals without even thinking about it, and he's forgotten the phrases he stole from Mbeki, his publisher can ask me and I'll specify them.

It's not only our ideas he steals, he steals our favourite books too.

About a year and a half ago, I was vainly trying to convey to Roberts, who couldn't relate at all because he comes from another world and because his value system is very harsh American competitive, something of my spiritual identification with the communitarian nature and human connectedness of African culture, as opposed to atomized, materialistic Western. He had no idea what I was talking about, so with Noel Mostert's account in *Frontiers* in mind, I endeavoured to sketch Xhosa culture in the Eastern Cape: the democratic organization of Xhosa society and the sophistication of the legal system at the time the English invaded. Roberts's startling retort was to cite the conventional white caricature of Shaka's tyranny in Zululand as typical of African government, forcibly suggesting I was a weak-headed subscriber to the noble savage myth. I was taken aback by this remarkable point of view expressed by Mbeki's intellectual biographer, considering the distinctly African humanism that ubiquitously permeates Mbeki's writing.

I asked Roberts whether he'd read *Frontiers*, reputedly one of Mbeki's favourite books, and of course he hadn't. So I lent him my copy – a most precious inscribed gift to me from a very dear friend, an elderly Xhosa attorney in the Eastern Cape, a living encyclopaedia of Xhosa history and culture, which I pertinently told Roberts when parting with my treasured book.

When I asked for it back after several months, Roberts told me unapologetically, as if it was rather a joke, that he'd written notes all over it with his ballpoint pen (his habit with his books). He didn't offer to replace this really irreplaceable gift, and he's scorned my subsequent request that he do so.

He likes *Frontiers*, as Mbeki and I do, and he quotes Mostert everywhere in his book, as I do in *Just say yes, Mr President*'. And this is why he's taken my book and made it his. In criminal law it's called theft by conversion. You take possession of someone's goods with a good mind and then decide to keep them for yourself with a bad mind. It's like picking a book to take out from a library and then, just before having it stamped, deciding instead to take it out permanently, stuck under your shirt. In the district magistrate's court, such a theft would be punished with a fine and a criminal conviction recorded on a SAP69 form in triplicate with fingerprints taken by the police in the cells below for filing with the South African Criminal Record Bureau in Pretoria, so the prosecuting authorities can find out whether you do this sort of thing often when you're back in court again for stealing someone's else's property; so people can check up on what sort of morals you have and whether you're a trustworthy person before deciding to employ you or lend you money;

so other countries can decide whether you should be permitted to live there, being a person who respects the rights of others or a person who doesn't respect the rights of others; and whether you should be admitted to practice law as an honest person or barred as a basically dishonest one. Things like that.

Stealing is normal for Roberts. It seems from how often he does it, and from no matter whom, that he began stealing from an early age.

The boy who doesn't do his homework, because he's too lazy to do his homework, but still wants to be teacher's pet, and thinks he can be one by talking stupidly smoothly, because it's worked for him before, claims that

Mbeki's rigour on this point, for which he has been rather perversely condemned, is a vital resource of regulatory vigilance, scarce in Africa. The embarrassment of Virodene, which critics did not hesitate to lay at the ANC's door, was at least in part the result of the lax regulatory framework governing human participation in clinical trials, as had been laid down during the apartheid Sixties and not since reformed. In the aftermath of that debacle, Mbeki's Cabinet immediately set in train a process to modernise the protocols governing clinical experimentation on people. These new policies were at an advanced stage of drafting and discussion by mid-2000, when the AIDS drugs controversy was raging in earnest.

Sounds quite good, doesn't it? Con artists always do. They say the sort of things they bargain on you wanting to hear, maybe with your ears already tuned by what newspaper journalists write.

Every statement Roberts utters here is absolutely false; or false and misleading in the context; or is true on its face but falsely deceptive in the context; or comprises Roberts's ignorant opinion on the matter informed by the corporate-owned pharmaceutical industry-supporting liberal newspapers, such as the *Mail & Guardian*, the *Sunday Independent*, the *Sunday Times*, *Business Day* and all the rest of the dailies, and is not Mbeki's – and this in a book purporting to 'unravel' Mbeki's thinking.

'Mbeki's rigour' is Roberts's reference to Mbeki's assertion against Leon that since AZT wasn't approved in South Africa or anywhere else at the time for giving rape victims to protect them against the sex virus, it wasn't right that the drug industry-supporting Opposition should be demanding that the government buy the drug and provide it in the public health system for this purpose.

If you can just suppress your hurling over Roberts's prose – 'Mbeki's rigour on this point, for which he has been rather perversely condemned, is a vital resource of regulatory vigilance, scarce in Africa' – you'd think that what Roberts means, and Mbeki thinks, is that whereas in backward Africa, where backward Africans live, there's hardly any proper regulation of the sort of patented synthetic chemicals the drug industry sells as medicines, nearly all unknown to healthy human cellular metabolism, and nearly all toxic, some moderately, some extremely (as with AZT, nevirapine and other ARVs); whereas in the modern civilized Western world, the one Roberts feels most at home in, high class 'regulatory vigilance' is the order of the day, as you'd expect in modern civilized First World countries where whites live.

You only have to read my essay *Licensing AZT*<sup>122</sup> on how AZT got approved by the FDA in the US and then the rest of the world, and *The trouble with nevirapine*, ditto, to discover what an illusion this is, and how corrupt the Western drug regulation machinery is. The reason Roberts writes like this is because he defers obediently to the medical and scientific authorities. If you wear a white coat, he kneels before you (if your face is white). Hence his respectful nod at the drug licensing mob.

Roberts says:

The embarrassment of Virodene, which critics did not hesitate to lay at the ANC's door, was at least in part the result of the lax regulatory framework governing human participation in clinical trials, as had been laid down during the apartheid Sixties and not since reformed.

But the Virodene saga was never an 'embarrassment' for Mbeki; it was an 'embarrassment' for his ARV-promoting critics, who think it's embarrassing to administer anything but AZT and similar drugs to Africans diagnosed with the sex germ. The sort of people who think it's embarrassing not to give Africans AZT. Roberts stood blushing among them, mouthing off, not knowing what he was talking about, peddling a myth he'd read in the ARV-promoting tabloids in his *Sunday Independent* letter in October 2000: 'In 1998 the anti-Aids 'miracle drug' Virodene ... turned out to be a toxic industrial solvent. The government was correctly slammed for its undue haste and has plainly learnt from that experience.' Having just taken Makgoba to task for worrying more 'over an irrelevant "embarrassment" than the true issue at hand', Roberts flaps 'over an irrelevant "embarrassment" [rather] than the true issue at hand'. Don't ask him what it is though. Since Roberts, like Achmat, is a 'scientifically illiterate' person it would be idle to ask him if he knows what diethylformamide is; if he knows anything of the extensive literature on

it; what its unusual chemical properties are for keeping transplant tissue alive and as a reducing agent; and what therapeutic significance these properties might have for a sick person whose cells are highly oxidized. To Roberts it's a 'toxic industrial solvent', because that's what he read in *Business Day* or whatever.

Roberts opines: 'The government was correctly slammed for its undue haste and has plainly learnt from that experience.' Since Mbeki was right at the front of the drive to get diethylformamide skin patches clinically evaluated for their possible therapeutic value, as mentioned, Roberts means that Mbeki was 'correctly slammed'. And who did the 'slamm[ing]'? Tony Leon and liberal journalists, who went wild in their 'slamm[ing]'. For what transgression was this corrective 'slamm[ing]' of Mbeki and the government meted out? The government was 'correctly slammed for its undue haste'. What undue haste? How, what, where, why? Actually Roberts is unable to stipulate how Mbeki and the government displayed any 'undue haste'. Much less one meriting a correctly administered 'slamm[ing]'. You see, not having any regard for the truth, Roberts just rolls words off his tongue like hot potatoes. It doesn't matter if they bear no relation to the actual history whatsoever. The point is just to be heard, being a very important young man from overseas, and make very big money being heard.

Roberts's attribution of the 'embarrassment of Virodene' to 'the lax regulatory framework governing human participation in clinical trials' is unmitigated historical fabrication. If he'd followed my full account of the affair in my book manuscript (and by the way, although I hold no brief for Virodene, my mind changed the more I learned and understood about it from its original proposer, Dr Carl Landauer, and which I verified with other scientists), Roberts would have noticed that exactly the opposite was Mbeki's problem with the 'regulatory framework': it was being run by drug industry-supporting good ol' boys, who'd refused to allow clinical trials with Virodene notwithstanding the numerous recommendations of several highly qualified experts abroad. The Medicines Control Council blocked the conduct of clinical trials for arbitrary reasons that didn't hold up, and Mbeki saw through them.

Roberts wants his American readers to get a little thrill from his invocation of 'apartheid' to spice his romantic tale. Apartheid has nothing to do with it, but since truth and rigour and honest history aren't his strong points, this accounts for why he slips in it. His idea seems to be to set up a sort of good guys and bad guys scheme of his invention, because in reality the bad guys in his imaginary story, the MCC bosses were actually being too restrictive, not too lax; and he wants you to read that he and Mbeki are on the side of the good guys in the

‘embarrassment of the Virodene ... debacle’. Except he’s got the story completely wrong. With no reason to be, Mbeki was never ‘embarrass[ed]’ by Virodene; Roberts and the white liberal establishment were, and they’ve never stopped carrying on about how ‘embarrass[ing]’ it all was in the liberal newspapers and at their DA meetings.

Roberts claims that

Mbeki’s Cabinet immediately set in train a process to modernise the protocols governing clinical experimentation on people. These new policies were at an advanced stage of drafting and discussion by mid-2000, when the AIDS drugs controversy was raging in earnest.

The truth of the matter, for Roberts is going about fabricating history as usual, because he doesn’t hesitate to tell lies, is that Mbeki saw the game the drug industry cronies on the MCC were playing over Virodene, had a blue ribbon panel of overseas experts appointed to look into the way they did things, and had been for years, and then, when the panel reported what a scandalous state of affairs it found and recommended the immediate suspension of the MCC’s activities, was pleased to see them kicked out immediately, with their former offices secured behind them with new locks. And good riddance too. The ‘process’ had nothing to do with ‘modernis[ing] the protocols governing clinical experimentation on people’, no matter how groovy this sounds. They never changed.

Roberts has it completely wrong in claiming that ‘Mbeki’s Cabinet immediately set in train a process to modernise the protocols governing clinical experimentation on people’. And he has no excuse. He didn’t even have to go hunting for the facts by doing any research of his own, because they’re all in my book, and he could have just copied what I wrote, as he usually does, changing a few words here and there to cover his tracks. My immediate purpose in giving him my manuscript was to assist him get the story straight (and for as long as he was crediting me in the draft of his AIDS chapter that he showed me, I was happy). But Roberts is like the boy who fails the exam even though he’s stolen both the exam paper and the model answers, because he’s too lazy to look over the stuff he’s got before he starts writing and he prefers just waffling.

To read Roberts’s footnote ‘230 *The embarrassment of Virodene...lax regulatory...*’ (his ellipses; his orphan quotation mark at the end) is to see where he got his useless third-hand hearsay story from. He got it from his ‘anti-intellectual’ American Helen Epstein, whom he thinks so much of, because she writes so ‘lucidly’ about how ‘the patient slowly rots

alive' as his 'immune system begins to disintegrate', that he doesn't bother checking what she says. Here's the footnote:

[Medicines Control Council president] Dr. Rees told me that new legislation governing the ethics of clinical trials was now in draft form, and had been under negotiation for more than two years. It would be presented to Parliament soon, she said. I wondered whether the legislation had not come too late for the patients at Kalafong. Clearly it would be important to have such legislation in place before clinical trials of drugs that the government itself alleges can be toxic should be allowed to proceed. As it turns out, the ethical guidelines currently in force were drafted in the 1960s, a time when high ethical standards did not prevail in South Africa. This only deepened my suspicion that the Ministry of Health might have been distracted by the AIDS dissidents and was failing to expedite far more important issues.' Helen Epstein, 'The Mystery of AIDS in South Africa', *New York Review of Books*, 20 July, 2000. Epstein's jaundiced 'suspicions' are ideological gloss; the fact is that she reports an initiative swiftly taken to remedy a regulatory defect that was highlighted by the Virodine [*sic*] debacle.

Everything here's arse over tit. The Medicines Control Council never proposed legislation tightening the regulation of the conduct of clinical trials as a result of the Virodene affair, and none was ever 'presented to Parliament'.

I've already discussed and refuted Roberts's daydream about apartheid standards governing clinical trials that he got from his American 'anti-intellectual'.

The 'anti-intellectual' blames 'AIDS dissidents' for maybe 'distract[ing] ... the Ministry of Health', but she leaves it a perfect mystery in what manner precisely 'AIDS dissidents ... might ... have ... distracted ... the Ministry of Health'. Just as Roberts leaves it a perfect mystery how these 'jaundiced "suspicions" are ideological gloss' on the situation. He just uses words for their weighty clang, and never mind if what he's saying is completely meaningless. Or false, like 'an initiative [was] swiftly taken to remedy a regulatory defect that was highlighted by the Virodine [*sic*] debacle' – as if the lax regulation of drug trials was tightened up to fix a flaw permitting the harming of people in a case where they had been. All made up stories.

With the exception of ‘the recent Vioxx painkiller scandals [*sic*]’, the following information and analysis in Roberts’s footnote to page 229 is ripped straight out of *Just say yes, Mr President*’ and *Debating AZT*:

Many large healthcare disasters—from the recent Vioxx painkiller scandals to the earlier DES, Thalidomide and other scandals—have needed no conspiracy, just the remorseless logic of profit-seeking at the expense of consumers. [*sic: Roberts’s hyphens in place of em dashes*]

In my books I discuss ‘the earlier DES, Thalidomide other scandals’ extensively. I trace the history of the DES (diethylstilbestrol) disaster in *Debating AZT*, recount the thalidomide tragedy over several pages in *Just say yes, Mr President*’, and discuss both in *The trouble with nevirapine*. These are the big ones for me. I detail about half a dozen other drug disasters too, some recent, some less so, and I mention many others still. These are the ‘other scandals’ to which Roberts alludes. He’s got all this from me, uncredited.

Back to the main text of the book: Roberts writes that ‘Having contracted AIDS, [‘participants in the Usher cell trial’] will not receive compensation in the form of damages beyond their medical expenses’. Do you think there’s any hope for a writer who still thinks AIDS can be ‘contracted’, merely because ‘contracted’ is quite a thrilling-sounding word, like ‘life-threatening’, used further down the page? Roberts’s sudden interest in the abuse of Africans, including South African Africans, as pharmaceutical industry guinea pigs comes from reading chapter after chapter about this in *The trouble with nevirapine*. But you’d never know, because he never mentions it. Not once.

Roberts gets his entire Ugandan HIVNET 012 nevirapine trial story in his book and his footnotes from *The trouble with nevirapine*, uncredited – aside from an irrelevant quotation I left out, maybe to create the false impression that he’d researched the thing independently. He calls it ‘a stark case of regulatory chaos and collapse’, but never tells you how or why. The whole point of what he calls the ‘nevirapine debacle’ in his footnotes is not spelt out there either. So let me.

In the course of subsequent audits of the trial data, innumerable serious adverse events (serious toxic ill effects) and deaths among babies given the test drugs (nevirapine or AZI) were found to have gone unreported. A damning safety report by paediatric drug safety experts was torn up by the director of the Division of AIDS, who coolly wrote a pleasant one instead to send up to deceive the FDA. And as Roberts

says, because I repeatedly say it in similar words, the HIVNET 012 trial ‘formed the basis of the Constitutional Court decision that mandated nevirapine for use in mother to child transmission’.

Let’s get this clear. The HIVNET 012 trial during which, it was later discovered (although there were plentiful early reported indications) that numerous babies were poisoned, some killed, by nevirapine and AZT, was the basis of the Constitutional Court order won by the TAC that the government supply nevirapine to overwhelmingly poor African mothers giving birth in government hospitals and to their newborn babies – if the Minister of Health and her Director General and the country’s provincial Health MECs didn’t want to be sent to jail by these judges for contempt of court. Is this clear now?

Roberts says Fishbein was brought in ‘to administer the program [*sic*], without telling you what ‘program’, so you think it’s the HIVNET 012 ‘program’. You’re misled to the right answer, because the reason Fishbein, a top-deck ‘private sector outsider’, was ‘brought in’ was not because gee the NIH is so busy running all these clinical drug trials, it was because the HIVNET 012 disaster needed fixing somehow.

Looking at his footnote to his mention of HIVNET 012 in his book, you’re led to understand that there were ‘documentary, procedural (and thus regulatory) failings of the Uganda study’ – which I describe in detail in *The trouble with nevirapine*. Sure there were, but the real issue, as I mentioned, which Roberts naturally misses, being both lazy and stupid, was the evidence that nevirapine, an exceptionally poisonous chemical, poisons babies.

See, for Roberts it’s all games, as in his did/didn’t, right/wrong quarrel in his footnotes with his friend Joe Aman at Human Rights Watch (as if anyone, other than Roberts, gives a damn what this American thinks). With everything ‘precisely’ this, ‘precisely’ that, mindlessly waffling like this:

If the Uganda study was in fact under a cloud (as it still is), then patients were in effect in a treatment-cum-trial scenario, despite the impression they may have had that the Uganda testing duly underwrote the safety of their treatment regime.

Understand now? Because it sure beats me.

Roberts’s oblique reference to ‘devastating audits of the Uganda procedures’ is my point. This is what you conclude reading my excerpts and my painstaking analysis of these audits in *The trouble with nevirapine*: that the findings were ‘devastating’.

Roberts refers to ‘the nevirapine debacle’, but doesn’t tell you why HIVNET 012 was a ‘debacle’, where he learned it was a ‘debacle’, or

where you can also inform yourself about this ‘debacle’ as he did, namely in *The trouble with nevirapine*.

Roberts’s mention of the financial corruption of the IOM and its consequent green tick for HIVNET 012 is right out of the same book. He’s muddied the sacking of Fishbein, but he’s right, quoting me without referencing me, that Fishbein got his job back after a fight, but in a different department. It’s all in my book that Roberts liked so much, but is now totally silent about.

It goes without saying that Roberts doesn’t suggest that the Constitutional Court nevirapine interdict was ‘a debacle’, even if the learned judges are poisoning African children around the country every single day. Far be it for Roberts to accuse the Constitutional Court of having committed the most atrocious blunder in the history of the legal system since the advent of the democratic era. It would take some courage to level such a terrible charge at the learned judges.

Roberts has cut and pasted his excerpts of Mbeki’s letter to Clinton and other leaders from *Just say yes, Mr President*, uncredited. But being a believer in the articles of faith he cites listed by Helen Epstein, he misses what Mbeki was implying when he wrote:

Scientists, in the name of science, are demanding that we should cooperate with them to freeze scientific discourse on HIV-AIDS at the specific point this discourse had reached in the West in 1984.

Mbeki had plainly recognized that AIDS science had become AIDS religion; AIDS dogmas were religiously closed to discussion and not scientifically open to possible radical evaluation; and that the dogmas of AIDS were being defended in a characteristically Christian manner (Mbeki refers to ‘an earlier period in human history [when] these ... heretics ... would be burnt at the stake’). Epstein’s thinking, which Roberts asserts as immutable scientific fact (he talks elsewhere of ‘obvious orthodox truth’), is the thinking of 1984.

Being a slipshod author, Roberts claims, ‘The AIDS drug lobby argued that: “Africans with an AIDS crisis deserved some leniency in meeting US safety standards.”’ Unless Roberts meant to imply that AIDS bureaucrats in the American government are AIDS drug activists, it wasn’t ‘the AIDS drug lobby’ that argued this, it was none other than Edmund Tramont, director of the Division of AIDS in NIAID, a major division of the US NIH. Roberts found this line in *The trouble with nevirapine*, but in stealing it uncredited, he misattributed it.

Roberts writes, 'By raising questions about AIDS drug safety, the President had damaged the "reputation" of South Africa, Leon contended.' The funny thing is Roberts was talking just this way himself in 2000 in his letter to the *Sunday Independent* on 8 October, in which he 'contended' that Mbeki's

continuing personal musings [have provided] a year-long Christmas present to [the government's] detractors, both here and abroad. Much of this has been, frankly, Mbeki's fault.

But as the dust settles now and his government continues its multibillion rand assault on Aids, we must not forget that this ordeal was not only – or even principally – a story of presidential error.

After criticizing Leon for criticizing Mbeki, just as he, Roberts, like Leon, had done around the same time, Roberts proceeds to quote Mbeki's scathing speech in reply, which he lifts uncredited from *Just say yes, Mr President*. It's in *Debating AZT* too. Only now that he's being paid millions by banks and corporations, in one of which his well-placed 'best friend', as he describes him, happens to work, Roberts has changed his tune. Mbeki is no longer at 'fault' for his 'error' in indulging in 'continuing personal musings' about AIDS, causing tremendous damage to his and the country's reputation. This is no longer Roberts's view of Mbeki's involvement in AIDS. Roberts's new paid view, stated at the end of his second AIDS chapter, is that in his engagement with the AIDS orthodoxy, both professional and lay, 'Mbeki ... showed generosity of vision; an openness to contending views; [and] an embrace of principled positions amidst vast populist buffeting.' And when you're finished with it, could you pass the sick bucket please?

Since this is an expose of Roberts's fabrications and falsifications, it bears mentioning that he was already lying in his *Sunday Independent* letter in October 2000: 'Mbeki ... has told the world that a national programme of anti-retrovirals to halt mother-to-child transmission could result from pilot projects now in their final stages.'

In truth and in fact, the country's mother to child AZT pilot studies had been cancelled on Mbeki's orders exactly two years earlier on cost grounds. He'd thereafter twice condemned AZT as dangerously toxic. And there were no nevirapine mother to child pilot studies 'in their final stages', because as Mbeki had just told Parliament on 20 September, nevirapine had not been registered for mother to child transmission prevention anywhere in the world, and the WHO had yet to make any recommendation about the use of the drug for this purpose.

The ‘opportunistic commentator’ was just lying. His false claim quoted above about what ‘Mbeki ... has told’ was what he wanted Mbeki to be saying, but what Mbeki was not saying. Roberts’s way of just inventing things out of nothing, and for putting words in Mbeki’s mouth and ideas in his head according to his own convictions, would show up in his book seven years later. It’s an old routine of his.

And of course beyond the lie itself, Roberts was implying that Mbeki still believed, as Roberts did and still does, that a mother can kill her baby by bearing it, by delivering it and by feeding it naturally, thanks to an invisible monkey sex virus that emerged from Africa completely unnoticed, made a bang among certain unhealthy, inner-city American gay guys, and then bounced back right over the Atlantic to make its really big splash in Africa.

Especially South Africa. Why, the country was on fire with the sex plague, Roberts suggested in his letter, but Mbeki was behaving just like Nero: ‘Impatience with testing is a natural instinct which I personally share. It seems like mere fiddling while Rome burns.’ Roberts ‘share[d]’ the ‘natural instinct’ of the TAC, the DA, white doctors and the white liberal media in their impatience with Mbeki’s irresponsibility in questioning the reliability of HIV antibody tests in a time of national crisis – or to be more precise, the crisis among the Bantus, according the aforementioned.

Again, back to the book, its footnotes:

222 “*Mbeki was...emotional and irrational...*”: William Makgoba, quoted by Anthony Brink, *Just Say Yes, Mr President*. Makgoba’s comment followed Mbeki’s letter to world leaders on April 3, 2000 (see page 186 of the main text). In the journal *Science* (June 2000), Makgoba initiated the analogy with Nazi history that Cameron would later dignify: ‘When politicians want to really interrupt science in a manner that distorts it, I can only think of the history of Nazism. Every time this has happened, it’s pre-cluded disaster, regimes have collapsed, and people have died.’ In April 2000 Makgoba told the same magazine: ‘His credibility as an African leader may suffer from this.’

Although in fact he didn’t, Roberts pretends to have read the *Science* articles that he quotes from, the ones I did and which I quoted from and included in *Just Say Yes, Mr President*. He’s just copied and pasted from my work again. It’s called stealing.

Imagine how overjoyed I was to see Roberts at last, late in his footnotes, crediting my work for something he’s taken for his book. And making known that I’ve written something called *Just say yes, Mr Presi-*

*dent*'. He doesn't identify what it is – a little essay? It's not until his footnote to page 229, a few pages from the end of his second AIDS chapter, that you learn that *Just say yes, Mr President*' is an 'unpublished manuscript'. He doesn't mention that it's a very big one, and that it's his major source from which he's drawn for his book, and from more than any other.

Likewise, Roberts has copied and pasted from my edit of the Mbeki-Leon correspondence over AZT for rape in 2000 in *Just Say Yes, Mr President*'; and, as mentioned, he's taken the story of how Leon lost the quarrel from my book too.

In the end, at the conclusion of Chapter 9, Roberts abandons his transparently fake narrative about 'a clash of fundamentalisms', and starts over again. Since it hasn't worked, it won't fly – he just hasn't got the goods on me – Roberts gives up trying to pretend, in other words lie, that in Mbeki's view, I'm part of Mbeki's problem, and that I'm best rubbed out. Roberts ends by rounding on Cameron exclusively, as if Cameron is Mbeki's main antagonist, which he isn't (Roberts has the oddest fixation with conquering Edwin Cameron – it makes you think). But the soft fight he picks with Cameron, like bloodless bullfighting in France, concerns Cameron's rhetorical excesses, not any point of substance, not for helping the pharmaceutical industry sell its useless and deadly ARVs to the government against Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang's will and better judgement. This is because, like Cameron, but unlike Mbeki, Roberts is pro ARVs for Africans, publicly anyway. Roberts wraps up his chapter like this:

All in all, was it the sainted Cameron or the demonized Mbeki who showed generosity of vision; an openness to contending views; an embrace of principled positions amidst vast populist buffeting; and, in the end a democratic magnanimity towards a hard-fighting and even disingenuous public political opponent? You decide.

I'll tell you what I've decided. I've decided you're a first class bullshitter, and that's how you've got rich in our country without working.

'It would not be surprising,' Roberts writes in another chapter,

if Mbeki regarded [the 'plagiarist' William Mervyn] Gumede as a sad and meretricious national embarrassment. Such language would not be merely insulting but precise. ... The case of

Gumede [who 'had stolen whole phrases, paragraphs, facts and concepts from a whites-only panel of journalists'] presented not the perversity of a single black intellectual but rather a broader symptom of a challenge facing many new black professionals in a previously white world. This is what makes him a national embarrassment.

Yes, Ronald.

## Motive

During the Reformation, with the conflict still at full flame, and whole communities being massacred over the disagreements, a convinced and loyal young Catholic who believes in original sin and God and Jesus and everything sets out to provide a 'compelling account of the intellectual tradition' of a duke who, from what he said and did for a brief time before going quiet a few years earlier, has clearly lost his faith, even though this hasn't disturbed the running of his principality along Catholic lines in the least.

But the Catholic writer, who is a temporary visitor from a distant principality, is far too lazy even to read Luther's 95 Theses, and much too stupid to understand them, let alone anything more complicated than that. He's certainly not interested in the joking way in which the dogmas he believes in came to be formulated many years earlier by an unconvicted criminal along with an obvious mental defective from what you read and also hear him saying a couple of chairs down at the dinner table at a convention called by the duke, and who falls asleep at the convention with everything recorded on videotape for the duke to watch with keen interest afterwards.

Because of the way he was raised, he thinks he's so clever that he knows everything. He's got it all worked out. He's the clever boy. And he's got lots of books to prove it. No one can possibly teach him anything new, or rather, and this is much more important, help him unlearn some of the daft things he's been taught that have become foundational to his own worldview since he was about sixteen, when his basic articles of faith were announced by the unconvicted criminal at a press conference, such as that you can die from making love with a woman.

So the Catholic writer can't really understand what's on the duke's mind, and he can't possibly give an account of why the duke's no longer nodding at the Pope. Of course not, because he's too lazy and too stupid to find out why. So what does he do? Being a dishonest person, as well as a lazy and stupid one, who's in the past always got away with bamboozling people with flowery incoherent language forcefully articulated in a ruling class accent, he begins his 'compelling account' of the duke's thinking by claiming that the duke 'is not now, nor has he ever been', a despicable non-conformist. This is to say he's still a respectable right-thinking Catholic just like the Catholic writer is himself, and not a despicable non-conformist like everyone knows he is and angrily and hatefully says he is.

By beginning his paper with the most brazen and self-evident lie, obvious to everyone on all sides without exception, including people in

homes for the feeble-minded and even newspaper journalists, he's relieved himself of the hard work of having to suspend and revisit his own preconceptions and understanding in order to make sense of his subject and elucidate his puzzling 'logic'. Which is good, because he already knows everything and he's very comfortable in what he knows, particularly because his 'knowledge' (to which the duke refers in a pregnant, manifestly dubious way in a letter to him) comes from what civilized fair-skinned people working in extremely impressive institutions and having extremely impressive qualifications in another very rich principality across the seas say is obviously true 'knowledge'; and since they are naturally very intelligent, being fair-skinned, there can be no doubt about the 'knowledge' they proclaim as such, even when their top rankers are an unconvicted criminal and a mental defective.

And also, being a visiting foreigner, the Catholic writer is trying hard to make sense of everything in his new country, in which he sometimes feels a bit disorientated, being in a new country that he's visiting temporarily, with nothing in common with the local people whatsoever; and for these and other deep reasons that take a while to explain, this 'knowledge' from the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the foreign principality is at root an unfavourable account by them of the problems of the sun-tanned folk in the duke's principality, which the Catholic writer intuitively finds attractive, the way he was raised and educated. It characterises them and sets them in a certain order that appeals to the Catholic writer.

Although he knows some rich and powerful people in his new country, he's never set foot in the places the poor majority of the people live, much less revelled with jazz musicians and other cool guys in such convivial places, being both appalling and fearful places to him to be in. So his knowledge of the people is very thin indeed, made worse by the fact that his only knowledge of any vernacular tongue is Call the manager. And in the event of hesitation, I said call the manager.

The Catholic writer can't imagine for one moment that in the duke's reference in his letter to 'superstition' and to 'opinionated prejudice', the duke might be alluding to the Catholic writer's own 'superstition' and 'opinionated prejudice', because to him the things he believes are not 'superstition' nor are they mere 'opinionated prejudice'. The Catholic writer can't imagine this because all the things he believes about the problems of the people in the duke's principality are located in and sprung from the great sagacity of the very intelligent fair-skinned experts of the foreign principality, who are commendably civilized and who understand the workings of the world better than anyone, and certainly

much better than the dun people he's now living amongst for a bit before he moves on with his writing career in tatters.

After beginning his 'compelling account' by asserting that the duke has 'not now, nor has he ever been' a despicable non-conformist, the Catholic writer makes his case that the duke's still a respectable right-thinking Catholic, even though what has enraged everyone and attracted denunciation, anathematization and condemnation year after year is precisely the indications from what he's said and done that he's become a non-conformist, by quoting only the duke's public statements made while he was obviously still very much a Catholic, and an admirably devout and energetic one at that, before the sudden awful and infuriating lapse of his faith that he got from the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the foreign principality to explain the problems of his people. He doesn't highlight the duke's statements made in the time he was publicly doubting original sin and all those things in the encyclopaedias, written by the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the civilized foreign principality.

Such as that without the paid intervention of the professionals in matters of the spirit, who can get you excused for being born naturally wicked – and they have a whole impressive rigmarole filling their encyclopaedias to explain how they can get you excused – when you die, instead of just dying, you'll be permanently burned alive because you haven't been excused, and there's a horrible thought to keep the money rolling in.

The Catholic writer makes his claim that the duke has 'not now, nor has he ever been' a despicable non-conformist not only because he's a believer with the majority, but for another reason.

The political patron of the Catholic writer for the time being is the duke's chief courtier, who procures him a vast amount of money to write his book from some bankers, themselves hoping to win favour with the duke and/or his courtiers by dishing it out in duffel bags full. The chief courtier even provides the Catholic writer with an office in his official chambers and furnishes other material support; although it must be noted that the given office is walled off by bullet-proof plate-glass and every sort of security precaution under the sun from the office complex of the duke himself, and it's not as if the Catholic writer can just pop over whenever he feels like it to ask the duke something.

Now here's the interesting twist. The duke's chief courtier, who's been close to the duke for many years, even before he became the duke, doesn't at all understand why the duke doesn't still go, like he still goes, for trans-substantiation and purgatory and all that stuff, including Papal infallibility. Actually the duke's chief courtier is a convinced Catholic himself, and more than a year after the duke began letting on that he'd

left the ranks of the Catholic majority and no longer subscribed to their most hallowed truths, which were perfectly obviously true because they'd been pronounced perfectly obviously true by the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the foreign principality, he, the duke's chief courtier, is nonetheless still wearing the little red badge of faith that the duke long ago took off and dropped in the trash to be thrown out with the eggshells and the banana peels, and is still talking the selfsame excited talk just as excitedly as all the furious cardinals, bishops, priests, and pious laity talk, thereby helping to whip up the same excitement as all the furious cardinals, bishops, priests, and pious laity are doing, hearing which the duke can only be privately groaning. But what can he say? These are matters of private belief, and his chief courtier is anyway with the majority.

Like the Catholic writer, the duke's chief courtier has never looked at the 95 Theses, or anything else, or if he did he quickly found it all much too complicated for him and gave up trying to comprehend these critiques and what they might mean for his faith about the problems of the people of the principality according to the very intelligent fair-skinned experts of the civilized foreign principality, who first devised their dogmas to explain from a Catholic perspective why a narrow subset of dislikeable people were unwell in the inner cities of their principality, but who seeing their explanation take off like a rocket for so many interesting cultural reasons decided to export it to principalities overseas too.

This is not because, like the Catholic writer, the chief courtier only does things for money, not at all. He's not someone like that who only does things for money. He's been at the duke's side for decades and his heart is with the people. Except, and here comes another twist, the duke's people, native to the principality for ages, are not strictly his own people. His own people are relative newcomers, and have a vastly different culture, and although there's been the best harmonious political cooperation between the more enlightened representatives of the old and new people of the principality, there's also been friction and resentment and fear and even violence. Still there can be no question that the chief courtier's heart is with the people, because he's come through thick and thin with the duke in the duke's long-term mission to see the principality run in the interests of all its people, and not just the few fair-skinned people who'd been creaming it on their own for centuries until just a few years before he became the duke.

The chief courtier thinks deep down that the duke has made a terrible mistake, because how could anyone sensible doubt anything as obvious as original sin, the immaculate conception and all that, especially since

this understanding of how the world works comes from the very intelligent fair-skinned people of the principality overseas.

And indeed there's no question that the duke's open doubts have caused a lot of trouble, opening bitter rifts and generating a crescendo of protest like Indian Mynahs carrying on all at once in a fig tree at sunset; and did you know that the foreign principality's own duke took such offence at a confidential letter that our duke sent him privately in a diplomatic pouch, in which he conveyed his doubts in clear, strong terms, that he first just gave it to the newspapers to ridicule, even though it was a private, confidential communication sent in a diplomatic pouch, and then formally decreed the problems in our duke's principality as his very intelligent fair-skinned experts saw them as a threat somehow to the national security of his own principality, cutting \$245 million for the coordination of his principality's several security agencies to fight this threat. That's \$245 million not to fight the threat; that's \$245 million just to coordinate the fight against the threat with the billions already allocated to these security agencies, which always need new foreign threats to fight to stay in business. Since controlling and shaping information is basic to campaigns against foreign threats, purchasing what is called 'assets' in the media is part of the plan, and so obviously journalists, who are always poorly paid, get bought off with secret retainers, in other words regular bribes to help them pay their mortgages and Simon and Emma's school fees and also their braces, in the routine and time-honoured manner, and they accordingly round on our duke relentlessly, baiting and degrading him as much as they can to try to bring him down. What makes it a bit easier for them is that most of them are not part of the majority of the duke's people, but are either from the chief courtier's people or are from the fair-skinned crowd who used to cream it at everyone else's expense until shortly before the duke took power. And deep down they preferred it when the fair-skinned crowd was running the show, and also nothing annoys them as much as a bolshie kaffir who thinks he knows better than they do.

So when the chief courtier gets to hear about the Catholic writer from overseas, who has already ticked the duke off in a letter to the newspapers, he thinks maybe this Catholic writer, having shown in the newspapers that he's a good Catholic, can fix the problem of everyone attacking the duke all the time for privately not conforming, even though he doesn't talk about his lapsed faith any more and goes along with the mostly Catholic government.

And when the idea of a book gets raised about what the duke thinks about things, including original sin and how to cure it, he's all for it, because he reckons here's a good way of sorting out what he thinks has

been a whole lot of confusion – unable to imagine that someone as bright as the duke could possibly doubt original sin and the rest of it, since these are obvious absolute truths, coming from overseas, and he assumes there must just be some mistake in communication on the duke's part.

With the help of the chief courtier the Catholic writer gets hired by the bank to write the book; and right from the beginning the chief courtier takes an active interest in what the Catholic writer is writing, because he's dead keen to see cleared up what he thinks has been some unfortunate confusion caused by some unfortunate miscommunication.

But there's a complication. There's a turbulent lawyer persistently criticising the sale of indulgences. Actually he thinks the whole system is a load of shit, but he mainly focuses on the sale of indulgences, this idea that you have to pay your money over to a rich and powerful organization or else suffer eternal punishment, and you don't criticise something so fundamental to the fortunes of the Church and expect to get away with it lightly. So obviously he's attacked and insulted, and so often that everyone starts thinking he's nuts. The awkward bit is that it was after reading this turbulent lawyer's book criticising indulgences that the duke decided that indulgences were no good, and he immediately thereafter began looking at the rest of the Church's practices and the body of knowledge it propounds as absolute truth. And he soon realised too that the whole lot of it is all no good, even though it came from overseas, from the principality in which the very intelligent fair-skinned experts earn their living.

By chance the Catholic writer meets this turbulent lawyer, and gets to read his work; and he agrees jeez this guy really knows his stuff, and his arguments around his facts are as tight as hell. And what's more, people say he writes very nicely. He finds that not only did the turbulent lawyer start the ball rolling, he's written an account of the entire drama, looking at it from every imaginable angle. This is rather awkward for the Catholic writer, because that's pretty much the book he's meant to be writing, or rather a major chapter that, let's face it, everyone will be buying the book to read.

Also, even though the Catholic writer says he thinks it's very nicely written too, the Catholic writer is a convinced Catholic and consequently what the turbulent lawyer is saying doesn't really go in, because it's basic psychology that facts and reason never cut it against faith. And whereas the duke is a seriously brilliant intellectual with an extraordinarily piercing mind, the Catholic writer isn't even remotely in the same class, can't write even nearly as well as him, and in common with the chief courtier, isn't in the slightest bit interested in theology anyway. They just don't

have heads for the sort of stuff the duke finds so fascinating, being a seriously brilliant intellectual with an extraordinarily piercing mind. The chief courtier and the Catholic writer are comfortable with the absolute truths imparted by the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the foreign principality, because those truths seem self-evident to them in explaining the problems of the masses of the people in the duke's principality, as these problems are described for them – the chief courtier being of the newer people in the principality and the Catholic writer being a total foreigner. The Catholic writer does privately concede, though, that indulgences are no good, if only because the duke once ordered an enquiry into them, and the one thing our Catholic writer is always astute to do is stay politically onside, which is to say, in his case, on the side of the money.

At some or other stage the turbulent lawyer's name comes up between the Catholic writer and the chief courtier (who's met the turbulent lawyer too, and who told him with a friendly smile that he needed no introducing when they shook hands because he knew exactly who he was) and it's agreed he needs doing away with, because he keeps chirping about the same old stuff and more new stuff as it gets reported in the professional journals, and he's not shutting up. In fact he's so determined to blow this thing that he's hung up his bib and gown, and is going at it full-tilt, full-time, twenty-four seven.

And this is embarrassing to the chief courtier, because when it comes to the absolute truths that he knows about the problems of the masses of the people, and their basic cause, which is that they love each other too much according to the fair-skinned very intelligent experts in the foreign principality, he doesn't want the boat rocked – wisely perhaps, because the turmoil is always tremendous whenever absolute truths are questioned.

The reason for this, come to think of it, is that men fight and die over ideas much more readily than for merely physical things; you only have to ponder the Crusades, the Thirty Year War, the ideological conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all the thousands of martyrs to their various faiths, beliefs and convictions over the centuries, and so on.

It didn't even necessarily have to be said, because an unspoken understanding sufficed: the turbulent lawyer was a nuisance to be got rid of, and the Catholic writer's book would be a good place in which to finish him off. And it would be so easy. All the Catholic writer has to do is tap into the perception already created by the Catholic broadsheets that the turbulent lawyer is mad, and dust off and buff up that image a bit. Since the turbulent lawyer is so unpopular among the Catholics for challenging the absolute truths of the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the

overseas principality, nobody is going to come to his defence, which makes him a soft and easy target, he thinks. He thinks it will be like an invasion where you just march right in, you hardly need to fire a shot. And none are fired back either. This is what the Catholic writer thinks.

The Catholic writer has his own motives for taking care of the turbulent lawyer too. Being a very competitive sort of person, he perceives the turbulent lawyer to be a competitor in his project to write a 'compelling account' of the duke's opinions; and according to his ruthless, insincere, glaring and back-stabbing, completely selfish value system that he got where he came from and from the places he lived before coming to the duke's principality, including the principality where the very intelligent fair-skinned experts live, any sort of rival must be attacked and destroyed.

He worries that the first draft of his book that he submitted to the duke via the chief courtier is a bit of a flop really. It flounders, it doesn't fly. It's got no heat. There's something missing; the real story's so obviously missing: the story the turbulent lawyer has already told. So he devises a scheme to fix his problems with his book that isn't taking shape like it should; and his scheme is to invent a false narrative, which he populates with colourful characters, some real and some imaginary, in the form of several lunatics baying at each other, opposite sides of the same bent coin. Sort of like when a novelist writes a historical novel set in the French Revolution, and includes Danton and Robespierre and those real-life guys among his invented characters.

But the only person the Catholic writer writes into the turbulent lawyer's howling bedlam is the turbulent lawyer. He doesn't include the turbulent lawyer's dear friend, recently deceased, a senior medical professor whom he collaborated with in his work; and the reason he doesn't include this curly-haired professor among the lunatics is because the professor was tight with the duke, and he wouldn't want to offend the duke. He doesn't include the duke's late blue-eyed boy, so to speak, the rising star likely the duke's successor one day, who shared the duke's complete rejection of the Catholic religion too, but who left us on 9 June 2002 after being given a shot of strong medicines developed by the very intelligent fair-skinned people overseas, and died from an acute reaction to them. Nor does he include in the turbulent lawyer's mad camp any one of the hundreds of eminent experts in high places at the top of their game in other principalities, all of whose credentials are impeccable, and all of whom also think, as the turbulent lawyer does, that the Catholic Church is essentially a criminal organization whose vast wealth and power are built on lies, fraud, extortion, terrorism and murder.

And on this canvass of his imagination the Catholic writer paints the duke as a moderate sensible centrist Catholic, who, 'spare a thought', is only trying to sail his 'ship of state' through the 'crosswinds of ideological storm' that these vexing fundamentalists on both sides are whipping up to trouble him unnecessarily.

The Catholic writer thinks the turbulent lawyer's blood will add some lively colour to his otherwise dull painting, and this will help sell it to the fair-skinned people in the overseas principality where the very intelligent experts live, because that's where the money is.

Anyway, the chief courtier thinks the duke will be pleased with this scheme. He's only doing what he thinks is best for the duke. He also wants the duke painted as a moderate sensible centrist Catholic who thinks what all right-thinking Catholic people think, and who understands the world as the very intelligent fair-skinned experts in the foreign principality explain it, specifically the problems of the masses of the people, as the very intelligent fair-skinned experts describe them, and the solution to those problems, as the very intelligent fair-skinned experts prescribe them.

The chief courtier wants the duke's words and deeds at the time he was revealing his scepticism for the very intelligent fair-skinned foreign experts' explanations and solutions for the problems of the masses of the people recast as the sort of healthy inquisitiveness of a schoolboy on a frolic, thankfully soon back in line with his basher back on. Or simply collecting a few novel inputs as a token of his broadmindedness before merely carrying on sensibly with the same old Catholic policies exactly as before. He wishes he could tamp down all the fuss. He doesn't want any awkwardness, any disputations opened in which mighty forces are angered; there's been enough trouble already. Particularly since not only is the duke's scepticism of the self-evident absolute truths proclaimed by the very intelligent fair-skinned experts profoundly insulting to all right-thinking Catholics, but it's also threatening to the commercial interests of the Catholic commercial elites, and this is why their political representatives get agitated too, and even sometimes put their intelligence agencies onto fixing things with all their tricks.

And so, according to this scheme, expressly or tacitly agreed and understood, the Catholic writer turns out a book in which the turbulent lawyer is well and truly knifed, the blows raining down like in *Psycho*. And the chief courtier is satisfied by this.

Although he's trying to please his political patron, the Catholic writer's enthusiasm in this activity may further be explained by a tendency well known in criminal psychology, and one particularly common in the high

courts in which the most serious crimes end up. The turbulent lawyer has seen this often in such cases.

When a person busy robbing someone is done with stealing all his things that he likes, he sometimes feels he must kill the person being robbed, not because it's really necessary to kill the person, and indeed in these crimes it's not usual to kill the person, for it's a terrible thing to kill a person, but because for dark reasons boiling deep down in his criminal unconscious mind, the criminal sometimes feels the powerful urge to perfect his crime. This is partly to do with the fact that the criminal knows that what he's doing is wrong, and is opposed everything he's been taught about what to do and what not to do, and this conflict makes him feel bad as he's stealing; and killing the person he's stealing from is his peculiar way of trying not to feel so bad.

It's a kind of transference process that's commonplace in real life, and you can read it described in any psychology textbook; and it's particularly well known to people who know the Catholic writer, because of his pronounced habit of always pouring his bad feelings onto others, like in London in the olden days when they used to empty buckets of sewerage out of windows into the streets below. And then attacking the people he's dumped his manure on as unattractively smelly persons.

This is why the criminal sometimes has this urge to kill the person he's stolen from after stealing his things. One of the incidental advantages for the criminal of killing the person from whom the criminal has stolen what he likes, sometimes a few things, sometimes lots of things, is that the person is thereby silenced and unable to talk about the crime, and thus are the traces of the crime obscured and the evidence ultimately sealed. And for this helpful practical reason the guilty criminal feels much better too.

And of course in any sort of controversy you only have to discredit someone as completely mad, and you've effectively silenced him, because no one's interested in listening to a completely mad person – why should they, and who in their right mind would? – and the person publicly discredited as completely mad may just as well be dead, because in the public mind he's as good as dead. He's a non-person.

Only, as we said in the beginning, it's an awful mistake not to perfect the crime in this way good and proper, for if the target of the criminal in his robbery and attempted murder should arise from where he's fallen bleeding profusely, there's usually hell to pay afterwards. And just when the criminal is enjoying his spoils.

**Dr Essop Pahad, letter in the *Financial Mail*, 10 November 2000**

What follows is an excerpt from *Just say yes, Mr President: Mbeki and AIDS*, my book manuscript in preparation. The year is 2000, and a year has passed since Mbeki impeached AZT in Parliament; shortly afterwards announced his intention to convene an international symposium for the debate of the scientific controversies over the causes and treatment of AIDS in South Africa; and made several statements revealing his new scepticism of the American sex germ theory of AIDS:

As late as November, Essop Pahad still hadn't covered the intellectual distance that Mbeki had in seeing right through the AIDS scare. Responding to an editorial in the *Financial Mail* three weeks earlier under the fantastic title, *Until Mbeki believes, Aids will thrive*, the President's closest confidant wrote a surprisingly sloppy response on the 10<sup>th</sup>, referring to the 'unexpected cataclysm' – as if there really was something new on the go – and asking the magazine's editor:

accepting that HIV/Aids is a catastrophe in waiting, what have you done for your country in fighting it? Will the newspapers stand aloof as the horror mounts? There are, admittedly, some efforts, which are commendable. I like the permanent red ribbon on the *Sowetan*, and some sustained and systematic campaigning in other papers.

In Pahad's invocation of the breathtaking imagery of the contemporary sex-plague *folie* there wasn't any evidence of Mbeki's irony – with the result that he came through sounding as silly as Charlene Smith.



## Dr Essop Pahad, letter in the *Star*, 5 July 2007<sup>123</sup>

On 5 July 2007, responding to criticism of Roberts's book by journalist Patrick Lawrence, Pahad wrote another silly letter, this time to the *Star*. There are so many elements of it distinctly characteristic of Roberts's style of discourse, however, that it seems to me to have been written, or largely written, by Roberts as ghost-writer: It contains reckless claims that are plainly untrue; it attributes positions, statements, motives and deeds to Mbeki that manifestly aren't his; it uses emotively manipulative language; it employs Roberts's tell-tale smear tactics in which he displaces his own personal and professional failings onto his opponents; and it invokes Roberts's terribly feeble arguments to contend that, like Pahad and Roberts are, Mbeki is still a wide-eyed, red ribbon-sporting believer in the official American narrative concerning what ails impoverished, malnourished Africans in South Africa and the rest of the continent: 'HIV and Aids is ... one of our most pressing challenges ... a major scourge humanity faces ... Africa faces a catastrophe'.

How exciting. If only this 'catastrophe' that 'Africa faces' would finally arrive, this 'major scourge humanity faces' (excluding the humanity resident in America and Europe, where like whites and Indians in South Africa, the whites who live there are apparently more sexually disciplined, since there's no AIDS to speak of among them). We've been 'waiting' for this 'catastrophe' year after year here in 'Africa', this 'catastrophe in waiting' as Pahad called it in his letter to the *Financial Mail* in 2000, but other than to Africans being treated with ARVs it just never seems to come. It's always next year, or the year after that. The 'unexpected cataclysm' is forever being postponed, like the Jehovah's Witnesses' date for the end of the world.

Of course the oddest thing is that Africans always need to be told about this 'catastrophe in waiting' by whites and Indians and other foreigners including Trinidadians; it's not self-evident to impoverished, malnourished Africans that there's any 'unexpected cataclysm' among them, and that their health problems are primarily the result of making love sometimes, because they have deadly germs teeming in their black genitals, and that these health problems caused by these germs that they're carrying, teeming in their black genitals, are compounded by a lack of good food. Africans don't generally see it that way, apart from some less intelligent Africans in shiny shoes who edit and write for the basically white liberal, pharmaceutical industry supporting, bourgeois newspapers. They're big into babbling about 'the unexpected cataclysm', because when it comes to selling papers, there's never been a story like it; it's the biggest media item there's ever been.

As Roberts does in his book, Pahad (or Roberts) just dreams things up for his story: ‘It was President Mbeki who worked tirelessly to bring down the costs of the relevant drugs’ – ‘the relevant drugs’ being, in the AIDS context, ARV drugs. This statement is entirely false: false as a matter of fact, and false in what it implies, namely that even after October 1999, Mbeki has wanted the purchase price of ARVs like AZT reduced, has ‘worked tirelessly’ on persuading or otherwise pressurizing ARV-manufacturing pharmaceutical corporations to drop their charges and reduce their profits on these ‘relevant drugs’, so that the South African government could buy them as cheaply as possible, because he wanted to see ‘immuno-suppressive’ ARVs like AZT that are a ‘danger to health’ provided in the health system and given to impoverished, malnourished Africans. Talk about ‘peddling myth ... myths masquerading as fact’, an ‘attempt to pass off myth as reality, fiction as fact, and commentary as solid research’! Accusing others of his own glaring faults is of course one of Roberts’s stock-in-trade tricks in discourse.

Preceding this false statement about how hard Mbeki has worked to bring down ARV prices is a Roberts-style conflation of ‘fact’ with ‘myths’ and ‘commentary’ into ‘fiction’:

President Mbeki, as Ronald Suresh Roberts ably demonstrates, has never denied that HIV causes Aids. What he has said is that no substantive discussion about prevention can occur in the abstract outside of a broader discussion of poverty and underdevelopment.

Actually Mbeki never ‘said’ that. It’s a corruption of one of the terms of reference of the International AIDS Advisory panel (which Pahad implies Mbeki wrote himself, and probably did). And we all know perfectly well that Mbeki has never said, ‘I deny that HIV causes AIDS’, or similar. But he’s said as much, as discussed earlier in this book. Under the heading ‘Prevention of HIV/AIDS’ in the terms of reference is the proviso:

The discussions above should be underpinned by considerations of the social and economic context, especially poverty and other prevalent co-existing diseases and the infrastructural realities of developing countries.

The ‘discussions above’ concerned:

- What causes the immune deficiency that leads to death from AIDS?
- What is the most efficacious response to this cause or causes?

- Why is HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa heterosexually transmitted while in the Western world it is said to be largely homosexually transmitted?

and 'the role of therapeutic interventions', a reference to AIDS drugs. Notwithstanding the heading 'Prevention of HIV/AIDS', the 'discussions' concerned the very cause of 'immune deficiency that leads to death from AIDS', the best response to it, and why 'HIV/AIDS' was allegedly a gay phenomenon in the North and a straight one in the South. They did not concern 'prevention', by which Pahad means the 'prevention' of 'HIV/AIDS', a new sort of sexually transmitted disease.

More than the false statement in Pahad's letter about what Mbeki 'has said', is the false implication that Mbeki still thinks, as he and Roberts do, that there's a virus out there being spread by Africans with their infected genital organs that gets into their blood and eats away at their immune systems causing them to become ill – something that can be 'prevent[ed]' before it begins with the right public health measures, like free condoms. Only Mbeki doesn't think this at all; he stopped thinking this at the turn of the decade (having installed condom dispensers in his official residence, as an example, he later threw them out, as an example). For Mbeki chronic malnutrition and miserable living conditions suffices to explain the broken health of impoverished Africans, whereas Pahad and Roberts still think that it's primarily caused by a sex germ (since this is what the Americans say).

Next Pahad turns out another passage that has that weasel-like quality of Roberts's writing:

In advancing this particular articulation, the president was far from denying that HIV causes Aids. He was in fact seeking to introduce a serious debate over a major scourge humanity faces; and challenging orthodoxy that sought refuge in the assertion by pharmaceutical companies that they had all the answers (of course, at a price).

The trouble is, in regard to both content and style, this is exactly the way Roberts writes, and not the way Mbeki talks. It's replete with internal contradictions, fucked-up syntax, shallow, emotive political appeal, and obfuscation – all set in Roberts's standard faux academic style.

Mbeki was indeed 'challenging orthodoxy', the Western 'orthodoxy' Pahad and Roberts both subscribe to, that Africans are 'germ carriers', that they have greater sex drives than whites, have more sex with more partners than whites, and are consequently riddled with a 'major scourge'

of sex germs; and that without the pharmaceutical industry's ARVs they're going to die of this 'major scourge'.

The reason Mbeki 'challeng[ed]' the 'orthodoxy' was because he evidently started thinking about the tenets of the 'orthodoxy', and reading into the scientific foundations of the 'orthodoxy', after which he didn't find the 'orthodoxy' about the 'major scourge humanity faces' so convincing any more, and he repeatedly explained why not. This is what enraged the believers in the 'major scourge humanity faces'. Mbeki quit referring to AIDS as a 'scourge' – as if it were a Biblical plague visited on Africans for their sins, for loving each other too much – way back in 1999, last using this sort of language in Parliament when ordering an enquiry into the safety of AZT.

Here's another Roberts-style passage with more slick, tricky, emotively manipulative, non-committal and ultimately empty wordplay:

He was posing serious questions about the primacy of prevention and in so doing he was challenging the very hegemony of multinational pharmaceutical companies who have totally appropriated the discourse on HIV and Aids and subsumed it completely into the medical model.

This is the same lying claim that Roberts makes in his book – emphasizing 'prevention' over 'treatment', 'is precisely the thinking for which Mbeki's government had been pilloried' – and it's contradicted by the record, which shows differently.

The claim is substantially untrue. Mbeki began by forthrightly condemning AZT and similar ARVs as 'harmful to health' – being, as he later explained, 'immuno-suppressive' (and what moron wants an immune-suppressed person given an 'immuno-suppressive' drug?). In doing this, Mbeki went much further than 'posing serious questions about the primacy of prevention'; indeed, when impeaching AZT in Parliament he had nothing at all to say about 'the primacy of prevention', much less was he 'posing serious questions about' it. Certainly in raising the issue of the harmful toxicity of AZT and other ARVs Mbeki was 'challenging the very hegemony of multinational pharmaceutical companies'. Even more so was Mbeki 'challenging the very hegemony of multinational pharmaceutical companies' in convening his International AIDS Advisory Panel, because by doing this he was calling into question the integrity of its core business model, the HIV theory of AIDS, on the back of which the 'multinational pharmaceutical companies' marketed their drugs. Mbeki's numerous public statements recording his doubts about the HIV-AIDS model, and his reasons for them, amounted to much more than just 'posing serious questions about the primacy of prevention', as if he still

believed in preventing 'the spread of HIV', as the saying goes. This is nonsense.

By 2000 Mbeki had given up all talk of the 'prevention' of AIDS with sexual abstinence and condoms – his advice to the country on TV on 9 October 1998, when he was still being thrilled by the thought of a germ racing around between the sheets. From 2000 on, Mbeki was no longer insisting on 'the primacy of prevention' of HIV infection anymore, because he didn't buy the Americans' story about it anymore. Sadly, being much dimmer, and taking a different view of what Africans are like, Pahad and Roberts still do.

Pahad's letter goes on weakly:

Laurence certainly retreats into the fanciful when he argues that the establishment of the Aids Advisory Panel in 2000 is a 'clear sign of Mbeki's dalliance with denialism'. Surely it is not a mark of a denialist who wants answers because he understands that Africa faces a catastrophe which will lead to, in his own words '... the death of ... millions and millions of people ...'

Still believing, as Roberts does, in the American HIV-AIDS hoax, Pahad missed the rich irony with which Mbeki was speaking, just as Roberts did in his book. To read the whole speech<sup>124</sup> is to delight in the subtlety of Mbeki's dance around the official orthodox version – in the course of which he craftily unsettled things just a little bit by highlighting some basic, glaring trouble with it, and by implying that HIV-AIDS is a relatively new religiously-charged dogmatic view of the world rather than hard science.

As he was delivering his speech (I was present, observing his inflections, his tone, and his other cues), Mbeki was clearly no longer privately going for the orthodox Western story that 'Africa faces a catastrophe which will lead to ... "the death of ... millions and millions of people"', the one he'd sold the country on TV in 1998.

As for this 'catastrophe ... Africa faces ... which will lead to ... the death of ... "millions and millions of people"', would it be very impertinent to ask Dr Pahad, seven and a half years after Mbeki spoke (some of) these words – the words whose art Pahad missed and took literally – whether the 'catastrophe' has started in South Africa yet; and if not, when we might expect the show to begin? But if it has already begun, could he possibly show us the 'millions and millions' of bodies, the hospitals overflowing into the street, and the AIDS orphans swarming all over the place as a result of this 'catastrophe', this 'catastrophe in waiting', this 'unexpected cataclysm' or whatever other stirring apocalyptic

language you want to use like dim-witted doomsday Christians preparing for Rapture?

Like a fast-talking financial advisor separating a confused widow from her inheritance, Roberts has evidently got around Pahad and taken him in completely. Pahad refers to Roberts's tremendous 'intellect', this 'intellect' that 'causes unease', the 'intellect' of the 'radical intellectual' – just to be sure we get the message that Pahad thinks Roberts is a 'radical intellectual' (as he twice describes him) with a tremendous 'intellect' (as he twice describes it), who writes so 'ably' and so 'brilliantly'.

In addition to making false statements, as Roberts routinely does like a child who was never taught that lying and stealing are wrong, Pahad also uses Roberts's basic ploy of smearing his critics instead of responding to them directly. Without a jot of evidence, Pahad brands them all racists, simpletons and intolerant dogmatists:

These individuals appear threatened by radical intellectuals and seek solace in comfortable stereotypes and are reduced to reproducing them rather than debating the big ideas of the day. ... [They] seek to narrow the space to debate ideas in a book like *Fit to Govern*. ... Stifling debate by labelling the 'Other' whose very intellect causes unease is not in the best tradition of liberalism, which is open to diverse views and sentiments.

The particular critics Pahad is trying to put down in this unpleasant manner are those who have pointed out that in his AIDS chapters Roberts's claim that Mbeki still believes in the American HIV-AIDS theory is ridiculous on its face (I suppose that in Pahad's view, for pointing out that Roberts's case is flatly contradicted by the historical record, I'm a racist, a simpleton and an intolerant dogmatist too).

As Roberts himself makes a habit of doing, Pahad visits Roberts's own intellectual sins on critics of the book – whose chief objection is that, concerning Mbeki's thinking on AIDS, it's so obviously a pack of lies: '... you attempt to pass off myth as reality, fiction as fact, and commentary as solid research.' Thankfully, Pahad has some corrective advice for these mentally incompetent critics to heed in future:

Emerge from your ideological prison and explore ideas, engage in debate about policies and policy direction for this is the essence of democracy. Debate the critical ideas and propositions in the book by Roberts, for it is a book that gets under the skin of its detractors as surely as it got under yours.

I am releasing you from your dark ideological cellar now into the warm sunshine you'll find beaming out of Roberts's 'brilliantly' written

book. You'll find it full of the most wonderful 'ideas' – 'critical ideas and propositions' that have never occurred to you before about the South African AIDS controversy. You'll find it a model for the sort of 'debate about policies and policy direction' concerning AIDS in South Africa that I consider to be the very 'essence of democracy'.

Opening your mind to Roberts's most 'ably' presented 'critical ideas and propositions' will be an adventure, like at a Christian summer camp where you can happily 'explore ideas' for the very first time in your life, shown the way by this 'radical intellectual' with such an extraordinary 'intellect', by which I mean this 'radical intellectual' with such an extraordinary 'intellect'.

Do not, however, challenge my line. My line is this – and let me make this clear. The blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and they need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die. The President also thinks the blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and that they need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die. Any idea that you might have that he doesn't think anymore that the blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and that they need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die is wrong. This is the wrong line. Only a racist, a simpleton and an intolerant dogmatist would think this, and any such wrong thinking needs to be corrected. The fact that the blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die is not to be discussed. I would like you to 'engage in debate' about the 'critical ideas and propositions' in Roberts's book, but not about whether the blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die. You are not to 'engage in debate' about these 'big ideas of the day'. They are off-limits for debate. You are not to 'narrow the space to debate ideas' by raising questions about whether Roberts and I are right in thinking that the blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and that they need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die. Nor may you question our claim, the claim we both make, that the President still thinks the blacks are riddled with AIDS due to HIV that they got from sex without condoms and that they need strong drugs from overseas as well as some food to stay alive or they'll die. To challenge our claim in this regard is to 'narrow the space to debate ideas', and it cannot be tolerated. Do you understand me?

And if you charge me with making a whole bunch of shamelessly false statements in the newspapers, such as 'It was President Mbeki who worked tirelessly to bring down the costs of the relevant [ARV] drugs', as if he is in favour of them in the public health system, and you accuse me of 'peddling myth' and 'attempt[ing] to pass off myth as reality, fiction as fact, and commentary as solid research', of trying to 'peddle myths masquerading as fact', while Africans are being poisoned and killed by ARV drugs at a dreadful rate in South Africa and neighbouring countries, as recently published data suggest<sup>125</sup>, I'll have you expelled. And you'd better not even think of 'narrow[ing] the space to debate ideas' by suggesting that my clever boy from Trinidad is a fake, a con-artist, a liar and a thief, which is to say a low fellow.

## Appendices

### 1. 'Illiberal journalism creates its own monsters'

**Comment: Ronald Suresh Roberts**

*Mail&Guardian*, 24 August 2007<sup>126</sup>

In 'Illiberal journalism creates its own monsters', Roberts punts his book and the line he takes in it; and it's a cameo of his style of discourse, trying to be all things, committed to nothing, saying nothing of any significance, making repeated calls to authority, relying on people he declares to be authoritative, and persisting with his pretence, commenced in his book, that on ARVs there's a sensible middle road, and that he and Mbeki walk it together like two old friends.

The article's a total mess, replete with syntactical ruptures and non-sequiturs, but it's just the way he writes.

Roberts says 'a monster must be made of "Manto" because the Aids-drug lobby has no answer to the mounting scholarship that vindicates Mbeki'. For consistently warning against ARVs Tshabalala-Msimang been savagely demonized – but 'made' into 'a monster'? This is not true; she's been ridiculed, and her character recently savagely attacked. She's never been painted as a 'monster'. This is rubbish.

On what score is 'mounting scholarship ... vindicat[ing] Mbeki' according to Roberts? It's on 'Aids treatment' – so we see from the sort of 'scholarship' he's referring to, namely 'Philip Stevens of the London Campaign for Fighting Diseases, whom I quote in *Fit to Govern*' (we'll get to Stevens in a moment). What exactly is Mbeki's position on 'Aids treatment' that 'mounting scholarship' is 'vindicat[ing]'? Fortunately we don't need to rely on and trust Roberts here, because we have Mbeki's position on 'Aids treatment' expressed in his own words in two statements he made in 1999 and 2000, in Parliament and in a letter to the then Leader of the Opposition, Tony Leon, respectively, namely that there

exists a large volume of scientific literature [on AZT] alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health. These are matters of great concern to the government as it would be irresponsible for us not to heed the dire warnings which medical researchers have been making.

and

In your letter to me of June 19, you make the extraordinary statement that AZT boosts the immune system. Not even the manufacturer of this drug makes this profoundly unscientific claim. The reality is the precise opposite of what you say, this being that AZT is immuno-suppressive. Contrary to the claims you make in promotion of AZT, all responsible medical authorities repeatedly issue serious warnings about the toxicity of antiretroviral drugs, which include AZT.

But you'll never read Roberts quoting Mbeki having said either of these things. This is because, being a fraud and a fake, and anxious to stay on the safe side of American liberal political correctness in this controversy, Roberts is determined to present Mbeki's position on these drugs as being merely one of concern to see them provided to the African poor in a 'sustainable' manner. Here Roberts quotes the said Stevens. On what basis he calls him a scholar we're not told – perhaps because what Stevens says appeals to him (and we'll see the same trick Roberts plays to endorse people he agrees with later in the same article). Stevens:

Much of the opprobrium came from South Africa's refusal to adhere to the World health Organisation's Aids treatment model, which aimed to get as many people on treatment as quickly as possible, regardless of sustainability. Recognising the risk to patient safety, South Africa opted for a slower, more responsible development.

In fact this has nothing to do with Mbeki, who long ago handed over the running of the government's AIDS programme to Zuma (currently Mlambo-Ngcuka) and moved on to less hopeless battles. It was Tshabalala-Msimang, not Mbeki, who balked at the WHO imperatives, and she did so for reasons that both Stevens and Roberts paper over. At a media briefing at Union Buildings in Pretoria on 5 May 2005 she said, without mincing words, like Stevens and Roberts do,

I don't want to be pushed or pressurized by a target of three million people on antiretrovirals by 2005. WHO set that target themselves. They didn't consult us. ... It is not about chasing numbers. It is about the quality of health care we provide for our people. ... I will also continue to advise people on the side effects of ARVs. I cannot stand on a pedestal and say everything is hunky-dory. ... It is absolutely critical that our people know about the side effects, particularly because these are new medicines and not much is known about them. When we were being pressured to use ARVs we did warn about the side effects

and, when I get reports about the people on ARVs, nobody presents to me how many people have fallen off the programme or died because of the side effects. I don't know what happens to those who started on antiretrovirals. ... There was a time when we were told to give everyone ARVs and we resisted. We were right, I think. ... When it comes to talking about the side effects I will always do it. ... We must be upright and frank about informing citizens about the use of ARVs. ... I'm not happy [with reports of how many people are being treated with them, and will] interrogate [the statistics to establish how many people had died of ARV toxicity]. I will continue to educate the people in this country about the side effects of ARVs ... you know me, I tell the truth.

This has nothing to do with 'sustainability', whatever that trendy word beloved of NGO-types means (other than protecting their corporate funding). Tshabalala-Msimang is stating that the reason the government is resisting the WHO drive to get Africans on ARVs is that they are lethally poisonous. She did not say, as Stevens misrepresents her saying, which naturally appeals to Roberts, which is why he quotes him, that 'Recognising the risk to patient safety, South Africa opted for a slower, more responsible development.' Tshabalala-Msimang herself did not 'opt for a slower, more responsible development,' however nice those words sound. The ARV rollout decision by Cabinet was not supported by Tshabalala-Msimang, as she made clear at the time (in a telephone conversation with the late Professor Sam Mhlongo she was close to tears over it, he told me); and the Cabinet's decision had nothing to do with WHO targets, big or small.

Tshabalala-Msimang has made her absolute opposition to ARVs plain many times. Immediately after Mbeki's statement about AZT in Parliament, SAPA reported her saying after the session that there was indeed

a body of scientific research and information which indicated that AZT was a dangerous drug, and had not been designed for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Because it was unable to target only the human immunodeficiency virus when it went to work in the body, it further weakened the immune system. There was also a danger that ... mothers taking the drug might produce children with disabilities. Tshabalala-Msimang said her ministry would not like to look back ten or fifteen years down the line and find it had exposed the vast majority of historically disadvantaged people in South Africa to a dangerous drug. ... there was no data proving that AZT was of any use to rape victims.

Here's an excerpt from my book manuscript reporting what she said next:

On 16 November, a little over two weeks after Mbeki's address on AZT in Parliament, Tshabalala-Msimang backed Mbeki on the toxicity of AZT in an extensive, closely reasoned statement to the House. What was clear from it was that she was well on top of the research literature on the drug. Her main points were that AZT remained much too expensive for the government to buy for mass distribution whatever its merits; but moreover, it was a failed chemotherapy too poisonous for cancer treatment, and was itself a proven carcinogen in rodent studies – all as reported in the literature reviewed in *Debating AZT*. Some highlights:

AZT is a drug that was developed for use in chemotherapy for cancer patients. It was, however, never used in cancer patients because it was regarded as too toxic to use. Tests have clearly shown that rats that were exposed to high levels of AZT for prolonged periods of time, developed vaginal cancer. [*In fact, at human equivalent doses during pregnancy.*] This is a very serious finding. Other toxicological data exists with respect to AZT, including damage to nerves, muscles and bone marrow. All of this data needs to be assessed very thoroughly. ... As the Minister of Health I have a responsibility for ensuring that South Africans get appropriate and affordable healthcare. This responsibility extends to ensuring that no healthcare intervention has a long-term negative effect on people. With the evidence before me, I believe that the proper thing to do is to invite both the South African Medicines Control Council and a group of independent scientists, approved by Southern African Development Community health ministers, to review the use of AZT, and to inform me and other SADC health ministers of their position.

Although studies had been published supporting the use of AZT, she said, 'there are other scientists who say that not enough is yet known about the effects of the toxic profile of the drug, that the risks might well outweigh the benefits, and that the drug should not be used.'

After canvassing the most obvious shortcomings of each and every research report published to date on the claimed benefits

of using AZT in pregnancy to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV (MTCT), Tshabalala-Msimang emphasized that

there is evidence of the toxicity of AZT that has been published in scientific literature. For example, baby mice that were exposed to AZT through the placenta of their mothers, developed tumours. Over the past two years additional toxicological data has been published in the scientific literature raising similar toxicological concerns regarding MTCT exposure in studies performed in monkeys and in humans. ... [The] toxicity debates around the various drugs are particularly marked in the issue of MTCT. The toxic effects of the drugs in babies is doubled because they get their own dose of the drug, plus they get a dose from their mothers during labour and delivery.

And, more importantly, during gestation.

Tshabalala-Msimang cited the warning from history that I sounded in *Debating AZT*:

We have to bear in mind that drug-related horrors do occur. This is all too apparent when we remember that a drug called Stilboestrol, which was given to pregnant women and which for years was considered perfectly safe, was later found to cause vaginal cancer in young girls whose mothers had taken the drug. We have to be very, very careful. And so, from time to time, drugs that were considered to be safe, do get withdrawn from the shelves when side-effects are discovered. This is normal. It happens all the time.

She concluded by pointing out: 'This is a very difficult question that we are trying to answer as more research data becomes available to us. ... We simply do not have enough information ... on the appropriateness of the drugs to make any decisions that might have long-term health effects on the lives of children born to HIV-positive mothers.' As for the other use for the drug that the activists were clamouring for: 'AZT was not registered in South Africa or anywhere else in the world for use by women who were raped ... We have absolutely no idea of what the effects are, either short-term or long-term, of using AZT, a known carcinogen, on healthy people. The use of AZT [for HIV prophylaxis after rape] is, at the present time, illegal, aside from it being dangerous.' And she was struck by the fact

that ‘it is only in South Africa, and nowhere else in the world, that AZT has been registered ... to treat health care workers following needle-stick injuries. This concerns me.’ Especially since there was no good clinical trial evidence that it actually worked for ‘this purpose’, she said.

Tshabalala-Msimang has consistently expressed herself absolutely negatively in regard to AZT and other AIDS drugs since then – including, emphatically, on television, that she wouldn’t dream of swallowing AZT herself: ‘What it does, it suppresses the immune system. The very system we want to boost. ... I wouldn’t take AZT, I would not.’

But Roberts liked Stevens’s misrepresentation of Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang’s position on ARVs, which is why he was quick to follow tune and misrepresent Mbeki’s position of ARVs in his dishonest letter to *New York Times Book Review* writer and editor Rachel Donadio, in the same ersatz terms that Stevens contrived:

In my book I describe a clash of fundamentalisms in which frenzied denialists contest with AIDS drug fundamentalists while Mbeki wants reasoned debate for sustainable health and welfare infrastructure.

You notice how not only is just about everything Roberts writes stolen, the swag he steals and tries fencing on is fake as well.

Roberts calls Stevens a ‘scholar’ because he likes what he says, because it’s both untrue and politically safe, and therefore naturally appealing to him as a liar and a coward. So who is this guy? Roberts tells us that Stevens works for the Campaign for Fighting Diseases, a project of the International Policy Network, which

seeks to achieve its vision by promoting the role of market institutions in certain key international policy debates: sustainable development, health, globalisation and trade. IPN works with academics, think tanks, journalists and policymakers on every continent.

Do you really need to hear any more? About the Western corporate agenda driving and served by the Campaign for Fighting Diseases? Would you really be astonished to discover that one of its listed ‘partners’ is the pharmaceutical industry tool, The European Coalition of Positive People? See for yourself: ‘WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR SUPPORTERS’, it says on its website:

Abbott Laboratories, ... Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), ... F Hoffman-La Roche, F Hoffman-La Roche Employees,

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD),  
Pfizer, Pfizer Foundation, World Health Organisation (WHO)  
[*my ellipses*]

The high water mark of the 'mounting scholarship' vindicating Mbeki cited by Roberts is a piece of drug industry propaganda by a drug industry stooge. To Roberts, he's a scholar. Do you also rate Stevens a scholar? I think we can move on.

Roberts doesn't refer to any of the 'mounting scholarship' on ARVs in the scientific and medical press that 'vindicates' Mbeki's declared stance on ARVs. That's because Roberts wants to sell you a sanitized, politically correct American liberal version of what it is.

When Mbeki warned the country about the 'dire warnings which medical researchers have been making' about AZT, there was already a 'a large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health', which is to say should not be swallowed by anyone sensible, and a great deal more has been published; but Roberts doesn't go near this 'mounting scholarship' – the real 'mounting' scientific and medical 'scholarship', as opposed to corporate propaganda from pharmaceutical interest groups 'promoting the role of market institutions'. This is because, along with a lot of back-breaking work to plough through it all (believe me), it also takes some brains, and as is well established already, Roberts is both too lazy and too stupid to get into this stuff.

Next, in crooked hit and run fashion, like a slippery estate agent slipping in a line about all the palm trees going to be planted and the trendy coffee shop that's going into the ground floor of the industrial dump he's trying to sell off, Roberts is citing 'The liberal intellectual Helen Epstein, who covers AIDS policy for the *New York Review of Books*'. Having described her as 'anti-intellectual' in his footnotes, he's rehabilitated her to 'intellectual' status again, because he likes what she says in her new book, *The Invisible Cure: Africa, the West, and the Fight Against AIDS* (2007), advocating what she calls "African solutions". Sound familiar?

By describing this person as an intellectual, Roberts wants you to go with him going with her, as if this is where the clever money is. And here I must ask you to brace yourself for what's to follow.

In popping off his line "African solutions". Sound familiar?' Roberts implies that approaches to the prevention and treatment of AIDS-defining diseases such as TB that the 'liberal intellectual' contends for in her book, are in line with Mbeki's own ideas about the prevention and treatment of such typical manifestations of broken health among the African poor in South Africa.

First of all, the expression ‘African solutions’ is not Mbeki’s positive one, it’s Tony Leon’s disparaging one – used in his insulting reference to Mbeki’s alleged ‘near-obsession about finding “African solutions” to every problem – even if this means flouting scientific facts about AIDS in favour of snake-oil cures and quackery’. (Leon’s inverted commas are to belittle the phrase, not to signify Mbeki’s speech quoted.) Mbeki’s subsequent use of the phrase in his reply to Leon was by way of quotation of Leon’s contemptuous phrase.

It is appropriate therefore that the liberal intellectual should use Leon’s phrase (according to Roberts) in her prescriptions for how AIDS should be addressed in Africa, and that Roberts should like it too. I’ve not seen Epstein’s book yet, but I’ve read as many reviews of it as I’ve been able to find, as well as an opinion piece by Epstein on 25 August in *latimes.com* (the *Los Angeles Times* online), following its publication, in which she speaks for herself, so there’s no room for any misunderstanding of what her ‘African solutions’ might be. We’ll begin with the best evidence of Epstein’s construction of the prime cause of widespread poor health among Africans: her opinion piece.

The title ‘Africa’s lethal web net of AIDS: The quiet acceptance of informal polygamy is spreading the risk’ says it all. You see, it’s the different way those Negroes in Africa are sexually from Jewish American city liberals like herself, and from all other whites, she says – in fact it’s the different way the Negroes in Africa are sexually from all other people on earth:

southern Africans are more likely than people elsewhere to have more than one – perhaps two or three – long-term sexual partnerships at a time, and they may overlap for months or years. This pattern differs from the ‘serial monogamy’ more common in the West, or the casual and commercial sexual encounters that occur everywhere. ... This pattern of behavior ... serves as a kind of ‘superhighway’ for the spread of HIV.

That’s right, don’t adjust your set. The Negroes in sub-Saharan Africa in all their vast social and cultural variety – incomparably more different from one another than white cultures across Europe – all have one common failing as humans: they have bigger sex drives and lower sexual morals than whites and all other ‘people elsewhere’; they are more likely to have affairs, and, unlike when whites behave like the Negroes in Africa and also have affairs sometimes, the Negroes in Africa don’t only have affairs, they have multiple concurrent affairs (Epstein is clearly not talking about stable polygamous marriages; see also below). And unlike the Negroes in Africa, Western people tend to be faithful to their part-

ners; but when they do occasionally take lovers like the Negroes in Africa do, they enjoy their lovers one after another in a queue, rather than 'perhaps two or three' 'long-term sexual partnerships at [the same] time'. In this respect the Negroes in Africa are all the same, and different from all other humans. They are a fundamentally different sort of human from whites and all other people in the rest of the world. At their most basic human level the Negroes in Africa need taming and civilizing by American AIDS counsellors.

Roberts calls this woman an 'intellectual'. Would you agree with him that she's an 'intellectual'? If not, tell me: do you think his identification of her as an 'intellectual' possibly reflects on his own self-conception in this regard?

The Dublin *Independent* reviewed her book on 11 August:

Epstein's views are based on first hand experience. As a scientist she went to Africa in 1993 to test an Aids vaccine.

The vaccine was unsuccessful but while she was there she began to ask an obvious question: why has Aids spread so much faster in Africa than in the West? In particular, why has the disease been so explosive in southern and eastern Africa? The region has just 3pc of the world's population, but two years ago it had nearly 40pc of all HIV cases on the globe and it's probably even worse now. In some countries in the region, a third of all adults are infected.

Epstein discovered that the culture of this part of Africa is largely to blame, mainly for two reasons. The first is circumcision, which can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by around 50pc. But the culture of the region is against it.

The second reason is what Epstein calls the 'informal polygamy' that is common in the region, meaning that even if a man only has one formal wife he may have several informal wives, long-term relationships he has going at the same time. If he gets infected he therefore passes it on fairly quickly to the four or five women in his circle. And since these circles tend to overlap, the spread of infection can be very rapid.

In contrast in the West, Epstein says, unfaithful husbands tend to have serial affairs. They tend to finish with one extra partner before they start with another and these relationships may be quite lengthy. This slows down the number of people who are at risk, since Aids is usually transmitted by an infected person in the first weeks after they have contracted the disease.

In the West the spread is serial. In Africa it is exponential because of the polygamous behaviour of so many people.

Epstein argues that, while condoms and anti-retroviral drugs are needed, education and behavioural change will be much more important in the long-term. That's where the money needs to go, rather than just into drugs programmes that are so open to corruption on a grand scale and some of the corruption that is going on while so many people with Aids die in agony is truly sickening.

Now we understand why Roberts likes Epstein, and why at the end of the day he thinks it's right to call her an 'intellectual' and not 'anti-intellectual': he's right behind her in her call for 'behavioural change' among the Negroes in Africa as an 'African solution' to AIDS; and it follows that both Epstein and Roberts will think it a damn good idea for the American government to spend billions of dollars on training the Negroes in Africa to change their intimate behaviour, to 'cut back' on it, as Roberts approvingly quotes Oster putting it, and become more Godly like white Americans.

Oh, and being a Jew, Epstein wants all the Negroes in Africa's dicks clipped (she sees nothing obscene about genital mutilation; to her it's normal). Not that she's consciously thought about it, but if she did, she'd agree that the massive sensory diminution that follows is for the Negroes in Africa's own good. Since they're too randy, American doctors coming over with their scissors may even help American AIDS counsellors re-train the Negroes in Africa to cool it.

What do you think of recommending to Roberts that he have most of the erogenous tissue of his penis cut off to lower his chances of 'contracting AIDS' too?

Some people might find that it's the American liberal intellectual who is 'truly sickening'. And that her 'solutions' aren't 'African solutions' but Jewish solutions.

It won't surprise you to learn that in his review of Epstein's book for the white American liberal *New York Review of Books*, Roberts's other white American liberal hero William Easterly didn't think her 'truly sickening' at all; like Roberts he loved her to pieces.

I could be wrong about this, but I don't think 'behavioural change' (per Epstein according to the Irish *Independent*), 'behaviour change' (per Butler), or 'Poorer Africans ... cut[ting] back' on sex (per Roberts and Oster) and catching African men all over Africa and reducing their penises is what Mbeki had in mind when he spoke in his letter to Clinton and other world leaders in April 2000 of the need for 'specific and targeted responses' to the specifically African presentation of AIDS in South Africa (having just enumerated the ridiculous epidemiological

anomalies that betrayed his scepticism for the whole infectious AIDS shebang) and a couple of months later at the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in Durban in July heretically underscoring the centrality of poverty in the epidemic of broken health among the African poor.

Do you also think, like Roberts does, that in his letter to Clinton and other world leaders Mbeki meant Africans in South Africa needed to 'cut back' on sex, if they wanted to get well again and be healthy like rich whites, and, unlike whites, stop having so many lovers at the same time? And if he didn't, do you think Mbeki might consider Epstein a 'truly sickening' person too? And Roberts a 'truly sickening' person also.

Roberts concludes his piece by claiming that 'in *Fit to Govern* ... Mbeki's true logic stands un-suppressed'. This is say, like a cock on a dung-heap, Roberts stands on his misrepresentation of what Mbeki thinks about the sexually infectious theory of AIDS to account for the high burden of disease among the African poor and about the administration of ARVs to them – a matter treated at length in the main body of this critique.

Roberts compounds his lies in two respects: (a) by pretending that Mbeki is still a 'misunderstood' believer, which misunderstanding about his 'true' belief Roberts claims to have clarified for us; and (b) by persisting in claiming as his own, because he doesn't credit me as the parent of this brainchild, the core of it: 'Mbeki's stance on HIV/Aids has been misunderstood and in turn capitalised on by powerful individuals such as Supreme court of Appeal Judge Edwin Cameron (*M&G*, June 15)' in the words of the *Mail&Guardian's* Vicki Robinson, who in her review of his book, Roberts reports proudly, 'found "a convincing argument"' in this regard – my argument about the political exploitation of AIDS as ideology by gay men in South Africa, which Roberts stole right in the beginning and has treated as his ever since.



## 2. 'When saints are truly sinners', Roberts's letter to the *Star*, 28 August 2007<sup>127</sup>

I was going to point out that in his *Mail & Guardian* piece treated above, Roberts had robbed the concept of European-created 'monsters' from Sartre's preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, but before he could be caught out he acknowledged his source in the *Star* four days later.

What Roberts doesn't acknowledge is my examination, my deconstruction and my essential delineation in forceful terms of newspaper journalists' representation of Mbeki in reporting his involvement in the AIDS controversy, amounting to what Roberts calls a 'trade in stereotypes, the trope of Mbeki as Brutal Native'. That's exactly right, but it's my idea he's stolen; it's not his.

This is to say, in the discourse about Mbeki and AIDS Roberts gets the husk of the idea from Sartre and the kernel from me, but he belatedly credits only Sartre (I made my analysis before I'd read Sartre's preface). What chance that Roberts might one day credit me too for my analysis of how the media turned Mbeki into a 'monster' for his scepticism over the American AIDS theory? Roberts and I discussed the relevant passage in my book (I worried it might be too strong) and he remarked on how he liked it, and so he's stolen it.

Roberts writes:

Through this calculated trade in stereotypes, the trope of Mbeki as Brutal Native overtook the truth of a president determined, in good faith, to achieve better health care for all—a determination that has now given us a universally admired set of current policies on HIV/Aids.

Other than not being original, the first part is impeccable. But in the second part, after his em dash, Roberts persists in falsely claiming that Mbeki is happy with ARVs in the health system, as if he never explicitly rejected them on toxicity grounds (alluding also to their inefficacy having to regard to the triphosphorylation problem), after doing the hard reading on these drugs that Roberts is too lazy and too stupid to do too.

The South African government's supply of ARVs to Africans by the public health service may be 'universally admired' by people like Roberts who, in his case after some transient uncertainty, think they are 'sensible' medicines, that they are good for giving homosexuals and Africans; but Mbeki didn't wish them in, and Roberts's claim that it was thanks to Mbeki's 'determination' that we have them provided to the African poor in the public health system is a lie.

On ARVs, Mbeki was defeated. The late Professor Sam Mhlongo reported his rueful comments about this to me.

Roberts would have you believe Mbeki won, because the world that Roberts belongs to won.

### 3. 'Notes on a Theme: Functional Illiteracy in the Media Responses to *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki*', public address at Wits Business School, Donald Gordon Auditorium, 6 August 2007<sup>128</sup>

I can't do better in beginning this analysis than by quoting again the highlights of Roberts's talk here, which I posted as the third epigraph heading this book:

what I want to address tonight is ... the public protocols that properly bind healthy democratic discourse in a liberal democracy; the principles and procedures that separate liberalism from illiberalism and that help us to tell good journalism from bad. I will submit in some detail that these protocols are widely and systematically flouted by many media leaders today.

What are some of these protocols? Solid facts. Coherent logic. Accurate quotation. ... Respect the intelligence of the public: therefore do not seek to censor or obstruct or re-write the opposing view. Be happy for both views to be aired, so that the public can decide. Try to stay awake during the events that you intend to report upon. Do not plagiarise the work of others. These seem to me to be not only some good rules for journalism or intellectualism or scholarship, but also of common sense in any collective endeavor [*sic*]. ...

In a properly functioning literary culture, plagiarism is the cardinal sin, for obvious reasons. It is a theft from another writer and it is a fraud upon readers. It defeats the orderly circulation of ideas. It spells a lack of integrity. ...

I also remind you that in the context of the HIV/AIDS debate, President Mbeki asked: What do you do when senior academics and journalists refuse to read? This points to a systematic and deliberate degradation of public discourse. ...

And the discourse of Mbeki has been corrupted by ... a lazy, functionally illiterate dull drone of unexamined truisms. ...

The regurgitation of hearsay becomes an acceptable substitute for the investigation of facts. ...

... John Matshikiza ... has published almost compulsively harsh and personalised attacks on me in the *Mail & Guardian*. He has a right to attack me. I was given adequate opportunities to reply.

How the crimes enumerated by Roberts here are all his own hardly needs labouring:

- his extensive plagiarism of my ideas and my research, ‘widely and systematically’, and his commission thereby of ‘the cardinal sin’ in relation to the ‘good rules for journalism or intellectualism or scholarship’ in any ‘properly functioning literary culture’; and ‘for obvious reasons’, because ‘It is a theft from another writer and it is a fraud upon readers. It defeats the orderly circulation of ideas. It spells a lack of integrity’;
- his gross indolence in failing to research his book properly, his election to ‘refuse to read’ (even as he rebukes Kader Asmal and Peter Bruce for this) and to report anything inconsistent with his preconceived ‘knowledge’ (Mbeki’s pointed term) founding his thesis that Mbeki thinks like he does, resulting in ‘a systematic and deliberate degradation of public discourse’ concerning the marvel of Mbeki’s non-conformism in the Age of AIDS;
- his assertion of ‘Solid facts’ that manifestly aren’t;
- his repeated mental failure to argue with ‘Coherent logic’;
- his repeated moral failure to respect the ‘protocol’ of ‘Accurate quotation’ and his repeated resort both to modified and to entirely false, manufactured quotation;
- his determined endeavour to ‘censor or obstruct or re-write [my] opposing view’ – in all three respects;
- his attempt to discredit me with fabricated quotation, untruthful defamation, dishonest lampooning, and false intellectual characterisation in order to prevent ‘both views [from being] aired, so that the public can decide’ the merits of my case – and Mbeki’s case – against the use of ARV drugs, and the rest of the American HIV theory of AIDS;
- his failure ‘to stay awake during the events that [he] intend[ed] to report upon’;
- his endless ‘lazy, functionally illiterate dull drone of unexamined truisms’, one after another, and his ‘regurgitation of hearsay’ as a ‘substitute for the investigation of facts’; and,
- his ‘compulsively harsh and personalised attacks’ on me in his book, without affording me any, let alone ‘adequate opportunities to reply’.

Roberts says

as I began to work on *Fit to Govern*, I quickly realized that these basic principles have been very visibly and blatantly violated in

the reporting on Mbeki ... I give many detailed examples of such lapses throughout the book.

Apropos of the ‘reporting on Mbeki’ concerning his involvement in the AIDS treatment and aetiology controversies, the main ‘work’ that Roberts did here was to open the bound copy I gave him of my developing study of many years, *Just say yes, Mr President*, in which I comprehensively captured and critically analyzed this ‘reporting on Mbeki’ – focusing on his first term in the main text when he was at the centre of it, but with updates both in the epilogue and in the prefatory collation of foolish statements by newspaper journalists and others, recently retitled ‘For very great is the number of the stupid’. As I mention in the preface to the book manuscript,

This book’s focus on media representations of the controversy stems from Oscar Wilde’s remark: ‘There is much to be said in favour of modern journalism. By giving us the opinions of the uneducated, it keeps us in touch with the ignorance of the community.’ Certainly I can confirm from innumerable conversations with people all over South Africa that the colour of news reports and editorials on AIDS has perfectly reflected informed opinion here, by which I mean the thinking of the newspaper reading public, especially the formally educated classes, mostly white.

Change the odd word here and there, and the following passage reads like a confession by Roberts in the police cells:

If literacy is the window-dressing of thought, functional literacy represents its main struts and foundations. Functional illiteracy means, in the journalistic context, that although you possess the basic window dressing of literacy skills, you do not understand the need for solid facts, coherent logic or accurate quotation. You do not understand that if you are going to write credibly about a book, you really ought to take the trouble to read it first. ... In a media culture that has internalized functional illiteracy, journalism professors will be found making excuses for plagiarism or trying to win arguments bureaucratically—by excluding competing voices—rather than in the expected manner of intellectual contestation: by superior force of fact and logic. In the reporting on President Mbeki and in the reception of *Fit to Govern*, it is easy to demonstrate that sections of the South African media have indeed internalized entire aspects of functional illiteracy.

Likewise this one:

The chapters on AIDS ... in *Fit to Govern* demonstrate a similar pattern of radical incompetence and ideological fog, instead of factual reporting, on what Mbeki is supposed to have done and said in AIDS ... policy: the proverbial 'black spots' upon his Presidency.

Roberts argues:

Far from being a 'denialist', for instance, I point out at page 187 of *Fit to Govern* that it was Mbeki who broke the silence on AIDS in the mid-1990s ... Those of you who believe that Mbeki's 'denialism' is proven by the notorious June 2000 Pretoria AIDS panel will likewise be startled to read the speech that Mbeki actually made on that day, which I summarise at pages 191-194 of *Fit to Govern*. Mbeki's speech to the AIDS panel is and was widely available—and widely ignored—on the internet.

As discussed in the main section of this critique, the historical record shows that having been a fervent believer and proselytizer for the American AIDS system, Mbeki underwent a sudden, conspicuous lapse of faith. Which is to say, he chucked it up – as far as he was concerned personally anyway.

Roberts's style of contention in asserting the words and deeds of the former acolyte, when he still was one, as proof that he still is, is not just deplorably tendentious, it's grossly dishonest – only for Roberts it's characteristically so.

After every indication that he no longer believes – his letter to Clinton and other leaders etc – Roberts persists in presenting Mbeki as a believer like he is, betting the house on Mbeki's words in opening the face-off between the orthodoxy and the dissidents, including the radical dissidents, to show he's with the orthodoxy. The thing is so plainly laced with Mbeki's deep African irony. But the important young man from Trinidad without any reads it all as an affirmation of the tenets of his own loyal faith (that you can die in about ten years time from making love with a woman, especially if she's African). Talk about 'radical incompetence and ideological fog, instead of factual reporting'.

In a 'clear-cut' show of 'unrepentant functional illiteracy', of 'crass indifference to the protocols of competent' scholarship and of 'crass and clear-cut incompetence', Roberts claims Mbeki as one his own because 'my AIDS chapters ... make many points including the obvious one that Mbeki never denied that HIV causes AIDS'.

Roberts thinks he’s hit the jackpot when joyously declaiming (with an exclamation mark)

the AIDS drug lobby itself quietly admits, in its own more serious moments, that Mbeki never denied that HIV causes AIDS! ... For example the AIDS populist, Edwin Cameron, concedes in his memoir, *Witness to AIDS*, that ‘President Mbeki has never publicly stated that his view is that HIV does not cause AIDS’ (p117).

Well gee, during inflamed, politicized epistemological controversies, are you to be counted among the believers because you don’t shout from the rooftops things like ‘I deny that the Pope has the last word on anything’, or ‘I deny that without the professional services of his priests and the goods they’re selling I’ve had it.’? Are your many insolently doubtful public statements to be ignored, along with the crucifix in the rubbish bin? According to Roberts, yes.



#### 4. SABC television interview of Roberts after his Wits Business School talk<sup>129</sup>

‘What has been described as denialism has become part of conventional wisdom. So that to say that AIDS is a disease of poverty and [under-] development, Edwin Cameron would, did describe that as denialism in 2001. Of course it’s not. And everybody accepts including Cameron himself that it’s not. Another issue would be the use of antiretrovirals. Mbeki never denied, or Mbeki never said there was no role for them. He simply said what we need to do is find a proper balance of all these things [inaudible] and to find an overall structure within which all this stuff makes sense. That approach, the balanced approach, is now policy and is now the orthodoxy.’

Notice how the ‘opportunistic commentator’ has suddenly become a public commentator on Mbeki’s thinking about AIDS, since this is the only issue people are really interested in – and this is why the journalist asked him to speak about it.

The first proposition isn’t true: Cameron thinks he’s got AIDS (because, like Achmat, he’s a passive homosexualist) and he’s not poor, he’s rich. Cameron does not accept that ‘AIDS is a disease of poverty and [under-] development’; he thinks it’s caused by a sexually transmitted virus, which he says he got from receptive gay sex, and which he thinks Africans get from promiscuous straight sex. He thinks Africans have AIDS-defining diseases because they caught HIV from their sexual partners, not because they are poor and malnourished.

The second statement regarding the ‘issue ... of antiretrovirals’ is absolutely false too. Again the liar gives himself away, as he always does, by his use of the word ‘simply’ when he’s telling lies.

Before he read *Debating AZT*, Mbeki thought AZT was just too expensive. Then as he read it, and looked into the matter further, he changed his mind completely, and announced as much in Parliament. That Mbeki by then appreciated there could never be ‘a role for’ AZT and similar drugs was evident both from his statement in Parliament and his letter to Leon; because if you are thinking ‘proper[ly]’ you don’t give an ‘immunosuppressive’ drug to people who are immune-suppressed, or to people who aren’t but who are merely HIV-positive – because on ARVs they soon will be; and they’ll soon start getting sick (white doctors brilliantly call this ‘Immune Reconstitution Syndrome’: the better you get according to their tests the more seriously sick you become).

Not once has Mbeki ever said ‘what we need to do is find a proper balance of all these things’ (ARVs and, presumably, other treatment ap-

proaches) – nothing of the sort. Roberts is making it up, and his lying is on camera, recorded for all to see.

Not once did Mbeki ever say ‘what we need to do is ... to find an overall structure within which all this stuff makes sense’. He never ever said any such thing. Again Roberts lies, on film. Had a schoolboy written this in an exam, not only would he have been failed, his parents would have been called in, and he would have been suspected the next time money went missing.

In fact Roberts scholarship on Mbeki and AIDS is so egregiously bad that I would have no hesitation in recommending that he be awarded an honorary doctorate in letters by the University of the Witwatersrand, alternatively Cape Town, alternatively KwaZulu-Natal, so as to join the hallowed ranks of Dr Abdurrazack Achmat and Dr Pieter Dirk-Uys and those sorts of guys.

I think you’ll agree that Roberts’s line on camera, ‘an overall structure within which all this stuff makes sense’, is thoroughly revealing of what a fake he is. He seems to imagine that just because he’s wearing a clubby navy blazer over a white business shirt when mouthing this meaningless nonsense in his haughtiest telephone voice, he’s being impressive. In fact he shows that not only is he completely clueless, with nothing so say because he has no thoughts of his own, he’s an ‘opportunistic commentator’ writing for money.

Again, it’s no argument concerning what Mbeki thinks about the sexually infectious theory of AIDS and the treatment of broken health among the African poor with what he calls ‘immuno-suppressive’ drugs to say ‘That approach, the balanced approach, is now policy and is now the orthodoxy.’ As discussed in the main critique above, Mbeki has pertinently drawn a distinction between his own private thinking on AIDS and government policy on it. But Roberts obviously didn’t mention it. For had he done so, the reader would have been led to appreciate that Mbeki’s ‘Native Intelligence’ had led him to think very differently about AIDS than what about 99.999% of South African whites and their native servants think, whose opinions about the fundamentals of the sex germ theory of AIDS and its treatment with poison Roberts ardently shares.

This is to say, when it comes to AIDS, put to a choice between ‘the imperialist tradition’ and ‘the resistance tradition’, Roberts is to be found foursquare within the former, and snuggled up with ‘the colonial “mother”’.

5. 'Notes on a theme: The Aids-Drug lobby and the degradation of public discourse', public address at the University of the Witwatersrand, Geosciences Lecture Theatre, 30 August 2007<sup>130</sup>

'I want to talk tonight about the Degradation of Public Discourse [*sic*] in the AIDS policy context,' Roberts says early in his talk (and of course in his own mind he's not a major culprit). 'I intend to focus on the far more widespread and far more prolonged falsehoods that have authoritatively labeled [*sic*] President Mbeki an "AIDS denialist" or "AIDS dissident". And about this, he says, 'Let me be absolutely clear at the outset.'

Here and throughout his talk, Roberts copies and pastes from his book without saying he's doing so – a rather tacky thing to do, but then Roberts is not on the carpet for being a tacky person:

Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident or AIDS denialist. That formulation may comfort you but ought also to disturb because it sounds ominously like a reply to a McCarthyite House Committee on Un-Medical Activities. Mbeki's policy on HIV/AIDS is and always has been based on the premise that HIV causes AIDS. For the avoidance of yet further misunderstanding, it is worth setting out this premise as lucidly summarized by Helen Epstein in the *New York Review of Books* for 20 July 2000:

AIDS is caused by the HIV virus, which is passed from person to person through sexual fluids, blood, or blood products, or from mother to unborn child in the womb or through breast-feeding. The virus destroys the immune system that protects the body from infectious diseases. A person may live for ten years or more with HIV and have no symptoms, but eventually his immune system begins to disintegrate, and other viruses, bacteria, and fungi, which a healthy immune system would normally fight off, take hold. AIDS is the name given to the syndrome in which the patient slowly rots alive from these opportunistic infections.

This policy premise is now, and has through each year of Mbeki's Presidency and his Deputy Presidency before that, been backed by substantial spending and thoughtful policy initiatives.<sup>1</sup> In the 2007 budget, the Minister of Finance provided a further R1.7 billion and indicated that spending on dedicated HIV/Aids programme would exceed R5-billion by 2009/10.<sup>2</sup>

But surely we all know that Mbeki is a ‘denialist’? The problem here is the one that Mark Twain identified: it’s not what people don’t know that hurts them: it’s what they DO know that just ain’t so. We all, of course, think we know that Thabo Mbeki is an ‘AIDS denialist.’ And this false knowledge is what hurts us and has degraded our AIDS policy debates.

Gandhi observed that a lie can never become true no matter how often you repeat it, but Roberts seems to imagine that by reciting his incantation of the myths of AIDS, and his claim that Mbeki still believes this stuff, it all becomes true, like when he was repeatedly exclaiming about the gate guard in Long Street, ‘He hit me.’

At this point he lays into Cameron for having

actively and vividly propagated the Mbeki-denialism myth, *despite admitting that it is a myth.* [Roberts’s emphasis] I want to emphasize the disingenuousness of Cameron’s position in particular.

We’ve dealt with this argument already. But being such a manifestly specious argument, Roberts finds it necessary to state it twice in different parts of the same speech, like ‘He hit me’ and ‘He hit me’.

It’s pointless wading here through the murk of what follows: the manner and style of Roberts’s argument to convince his audience that Mbeki still believes, like he does, because the American government claims it to be so, that you can die from making love with a woman, particularly an African woman. Curiously, like a maladroit poker player grimacing at his bad cards, Roberts gives up his deep-down lack of conviction in the case he’s selling (that Mbeki still believes, like he does, that you can die from making love with a woman) by repeating:

We think we know that Mbeki is an ‘AIDS denialist’ but then the definers of ‘denialism’ give us no credible way at all to comprehend precisely what they mean by the important term, ‘denialism.’ As a result of this disingenuousness and obfuscation, the fictions peddled within the degraded discourse of AIDS-policy making are only now, and very belatedly, collapsing.

The grand sum of Roberts’s evidence for his contention that Mbeki has been misunderstood as a lapsed believer, when in fact he still believes fervently that you can die from making love with a woman, and that this misunderstanding is now clearing, thanks to his book, his tremendously important and influential book, is this:

[*Mail & Guardian* journalist Vickie] Robinson herself read *Fit to Govern*, where Mbeki's true logic is laid out. On June 15 she herself then honestly recognized in *Fit to Govern* what she called 'a convincing argument for how Mbeki's stance on HIV/Aids has been misunderstood and in turn capitalised on by powerful individuals such as Supreme Court of Appeal Judge Edwin Cameron'. I want to explore what went wrong and how it went wrong.

Are you also blown away by the crushing force of this argument?

'Instead of free and healthy liberal discourse, AIDS policy debates have been unhealthy and illiberal, even disingenuous. Ironically, this has fuelled some enormous untruths in the name of Unquestionable Truth,' Roberts says, and reading *Fit to Govern* and observing his 'illiberal, even disingenuous' style of contestation in asserting 'enormous untruths in the name of Unquestionable Truth', namely that Mbeki believes, like he does, that you can die from making love with a woman, particularly an African woman, one couldn't agree more (if Roberts ever tried hunting, he'd come limping home full of his own bullet-holes).

Here Roberts turns again to his copy and past buttons to lift from '*Just say yes, Mr President*' a statement by Edwin Cameron, in which he declares that judges like him are often 'public oracles'. In the footnotes to the text of his talk, Roberts cites the legal article in which Cameron made that statement, so you'd think it's his original research when in fact it was mine (I have a photocopy). Roberts got the quotation from me (the person who photocopied Cameron's article for me didn't include all the publication particulars; Roberts later found them somewhere and emailed them to me). Not only has Roberts copied my quotation of Cameron, and copied my editing cuts exactly, he's also copied my comment on it. In a dedicated paragraph of my book manuscript, I criticize Cameron for the 'presumptuousness' of this 'conceited rubbish' of his with some mocking humour. And agreeing with me, Roberts copies my point in his own words, even my tone, and my reference to the gods. He liked this bit of my book so much that without crediting me for my find he make it a theme of his talk. He likes my work such a lot that he can't resist walking off with it.

Roberts's citation of John Stuart Mill reads like Roberts sitting in a confessional in conversation with a priest:

bad arguments and good ones [should] contend openly, so that usable truths win out in free intellectual exchange. ... the censorship of peculiar opinions is [bad] ... Mill realized that the freed [*sic: free*] circulation of odd opinions benefited not only the

dissenter who expressed them but also the dominant view, which was kept fighting fit

It's plain from *Fit to Govern* that although he likes talking about them, Roberts doesn't share these values. Rather than entering into a 'free intellectual exchange' about these things, which he pretends to think is a good idea, he (a) falsely claims Mbeki still subscribes to the sexual transmission theory of AIDS as he does, when it's obvious to everyone that he doesn't, and (b) flails at me for my 'peculiar opinions', my 'odd opinions' that lovemaking is a good thing to do and that (like for all other mammals) is always perfectly safe unless her father or her husband has a gun; and that swallowing cell poison is a bad thing to do, as if Mbeki doesn't share these 'peculiar' and 'odd opinions' too; and he puts great energy into discrediting me with ridicule based on lies told on me for not sharing the American belief that sex is an unsafe activity to enjoy, merely because, with no evidence at all, the Americans say you can die from it in about ten years time.

Mill, he says,

saw that only where people understand the fact and logic of the opinion they hold can they truly be said to hold that opinion. If you hold an opinion but cannot explain why, you do not really hold the opinion you think you hold, he argued. ... Too many people hold what has become a politically correct and prescribed view, in sheer deference to assorted oracles, for reasons they do not trouble to understand, with the result that they do not truly hold the opinions they think they hold.

As I said, this is Roberts confessing his sins. Here's Roberts training his pistol at his own forehead. There's nothing he knows about AIDS that he didn't pick up from the newspapers, magazines and popular books. Before accepting Gallo's hypothesis announced at a press conference in April 1984 that AIDS-defining diseases and conditions are caused by a sexually transmitted virus, officially approved by the Reagan administration even before he'd published any papers, Roberts never took the 'trouble' to read let alone 'understand' the papers in which Gallo proposed HIV (then called HTLVIII) as the cause of AIDS the following month, nor any critiques of them. Nor has Roberts read the strongest evidence there is that 'HIV' is sexually transmitted: the Padian study, which provides good evidence that 'it' isn't sexually transmitted at all. Similarly Roberts has never read any of the scientific papers claimed to support the use of the exceptionally poisonous chemicals marketed by the pharmaceutical industry as ARV drugs, much any less critiques of

them, before deciding that these drugs are 'sensible' as he describes them in his book, their 'benefits ... outweigh[ing] ... their risks' as he puts it in his talk, which is to say they are, in his opinion, both safe and effective – rather than 'harmful to health' because they are 'immunosuppressive', as Mbeki has pointed out. (I've sourced hardcopies of all these papers and have studied them all closely. Like Mbeki, I made up my own mind after reading and evaluating the original papers.)

Roberts himself 'cannot explain why [he] hold[s] the opinion[s] he] think[s he] hold[s]' about sex being dangerous and drinking poisons being healthy. This is because like Achmat he's a scientifically illiterate person. Like the 'many people' he refers to, Roberts

hold[s] what has become a politically correct and prescribed view, in sheer deference to assorted oracles, for reasons [he does] not trouble to understand, with the result that [he does] not truly hold the opinions [he] think[s he] hold[s].

The point is easily proved. If you ask Roberts to describe what Gallo claimed in each of his four papers founding his HIV-AIDS hypothesis, if you ask him to identify, for instance, the papers on the basis of which AZT went to clinical trials and what they reported, and likewise the reports of the clinical trials, and what was wrong with all of these papers, he won't have a clue. He just goes by the 'politically correct and prescribed view, in sheer deference' to Gallo and the rest of the officially approved authorities. He ignores the unapproved authorities like Duesberg.

Trying to be clever, Roberts confesses some more:

The key terms of AIDS discourse: the 'denialist', the 'dissident', 'holocaust' and 'genocide' are precisely such morally charged terms, handed down to us by self-styled oracles, whose shell and husk remain among us, while all real meaning has fled from them. When there is denialism without denial, or genocide without mass murder, our moral vocabulary itself has become degraded, even as we join in a moralistic oracle-stoked campaign against these supposed evils.

If he considers 'denialist' and 'dissident' to be 'morally charged terms [bereft of] all real meaning', perhaps Roberts might explain one day why he applied both these expressions to me in *No Cold Kitchen*. And why, if he changed his mind afterwards and concluded that they are 'morally charged terms [bereft of] all real meaning', which is why in *Fit to Govern* he puts the words in inverted commas – he nonetheless smeared me as a denialist in December 2006 in his letter to Rachel Donadio of the *New*

*York Times Book Review* without putting inverted commas around the word. (Later in his talk he adds: 'In truth, "denialism" is not a serious notion but a degraded political slogan.') Would it be fair to conclude from this that Roberts is an unprincipled person with the personal moral and intellectual values of cockroaches and rats in the gutters?

Still in the confessional, Roberts continues pouring it all out:

If we cannot strictly and rigorously tell an AIDS dissident from a non-dissident and if—alarmingly—we even *cease to care* about the difference between a true AIDS dissident and a non-dissident, then we have left behind rational and humane liberal discourse and entered someplace else. A bad and illiberal place. Some may wish to believe that precise definitions are a luxury we cannot afford, given the crisis we face. [*Roberts's emphasis*]

He's quite right about the 'rational ... discourse ... he's left behind', and the 'bad' place he's 'entered' as a result. To avoid having to deal with Mbeki's 'alarming' scepticism for the West's AIDS project from the turn of the decade on – obvious to everyone but him – Roberts '*cease[s] to care* about the difference between a true AIDS dissident and a non-dissident'. He paints Mbeki as a faithful believer in the American sex-can-kill-you hoax – just as he used to be until the end of 1999, and just as Roberts still is. Yet everyone knows that Mbeki long ago abandoned the AIDS enthusiasts' language of 'the crisis we face' of sex disease among the African poor. He doesn't talk like this any longer, as he once did, because he no longer thinks like this, as he once did.

And then, instead of taking Cameron square on for the toxic chemical catastrophe he's helped bring on among the African poor, Roberts dishonestly suggests that Cameron's crime has been to attack Mbeki as a dissident without caring whether he's really a dissident or not.

This is how Roberts argues; and one wonders whether it wasn't perhaps this sort of incompetence and blithe dishonesty in argument for which he was caught out that was the real reason he left legal practice.

It's like contending that it was wrong of the apartheid regime to have imprisoned Mandela; it was wrong, because actually, in spite of what everyone thinks, Mandela believed in apartheid, and only a Mugabe-like person would say otherwise:

But this has been every true charlatan's argument down the ages: '... We do not differentiate who we fight because we can't tell who is a dissident and who is not.' That was Robert Mugabe at the height of his murderous Matabeleland campaign ... But it could equally have been the mindless AIDS-drug lobby

in one of its more fervent—and fervently ill-defined—rants against 'AIDS denialists.' [*my ellipses*]

Cameron, Roberts implies, is a 'true charlatan' like Robert Mugabe. Cameron's a 'true charlatan' like Robert Mugabe because he attacks Mbeki as a 'denialist' even though Mbeki is a believer like he and Roberts are. So who's the 'true charlatan' in this style of dishonest 'argument', actually?

Incidentally, in the light of his several statements and Friday letters in *ANC Today* about Zimbabwe, do you think Mbeki also despises Robert Mugabe as a 'true charlatan' and a 'murder[er]' as Roberts and white liberals do? Think about it a bit.

The trouble for Roberts is that having committed himself to one big lie at the centre of his book about Mbeki's thinking on AIDS since 2000, the more he goes on about it, the more ridiculously obvious a lie it is.

Implicitly claiming to be an exemplar of honest discourse, someone we should all look up to, someone we can all learn from, Roberts says,

It is precisely to preserve moral and political language from such degradation that Susan Sontag insisted: serious writers 'shouldn't just express themselves differently from the hegemonic discourse of the mass media. They should be in opposition to the communal drone of the newscast and the talk show.'<sup>5</sup> The voice of the AIDS-drug lobby has been by far the most bullying drone of our otherwise liberal and democratic era.

The latter point is not Roberts's, but mine, and you can read it in the preface to *Just say yes, Mr President*. The pity of it is Roberts's inability to practice what he preaches. In determinedly stabilizing the pharmaceutical industry and its interest groups' 'hegemon[y]' over AIDS discourse, his writing in his book is not just equal to ARV-promoting newspaper journalists', it's far worse. In no substantial sense is Roberts at odds with 'the AIDS-drug lobby', anyway. Roberts, Achmat and Cameron all agree that ARVs are 'sensible' drugs to have in the health system; all agree that the 'benefits ... outweigh ... the risks'. You'll never hear Roberts saying sick Africans can recover their health with good nutrition alone, without patented, synthetic, highly toxic chemical drugs. You'll never hear him say it's a lie that Africans who have been diagnosed HIV-positive will be kept healthy by ARVs (when in truth in dozens of papers doctors report the 'paradox' that they make them sick and die; they call it 'Immune Reconstitution Syndrome'). You'll never hear him say it's a lie that sick Af-

ricans need to take American and German ARVs to get better or they'll die (when in truth on ARVs sick Africans will surely die).

Roberts's fights with Achmat, with Cameron, and with the liberal establishment and its servants on this issue are like the playground rumbles of boys in primary school. They're of no consequence; nothing turns on them; they're wholly unimportant and have no policy implications; they're safe for Roberts personally, and for his career; they're all noise in place of serious engagement; and they'll all be forgotten tomorrow. If Roberts was interested in the substance of the AIDS-drug controversy as a policy issue, he'd have read into it and taken and asserted a serious position in it, as Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang have done, even if dangerous to his aspirations to crack it in the *New York Review of Books*. You can see how all Roberts is interested in is personal power, in showing he's better and cleverer than those he picks pointless fights with, fights in which there's nothing at stake. Everything he does is driven by his personal success ethic.

Roberts mentions two panel discussions 'at the recent Cape Town Book Fair' in June. In one, he says, the journalists participating

preferred the liberal model: one in which the free play of arguments and debates sets out to inform an intelligent population, empowering people to make their own intelligent decisions. But in the AIDS debate this excellent liberal principle has been systematically violated in a bullying and illiberal practice.

Again, if only Roberts practiced what he preached, and didn't himself do what he claims to disapprove.

This violation was well dramatized by the Book Fair panel on 'AIDS Denialism' ... On it sat the oracular Judge Edwin Cameron, along with Niccoli [*sic*] Natrass [*sic*], the DA-voting AIDS activist, as well as the Treatment Action Campaign's Nathan Geffen. ... They were convinced, in particular, of the sacred centrality of AIDS-drugs in a sustainable HIV/AIDS policy. The panel was certainly was not a forum for liberal democratic debate of a proper and balanced AIDS prevention and treatment approach.

Here again Roberts wants you to think that Mbeki shares his thoughts about 'a proper and balanced AIDS prevention and treatment approach', namely with condoms so we don't die in ten years time from lovemaking, and with ARVs given to the African poor along with some food. Roberts will never assert in public, like Mbeki did, that ARVs such as AZT are 'immunosuppressive' and 'harmful to health'. He'll never dis-

pute, as Mbeki did, that ARVs are indispensable for fighting AIDS. That would make him sound like an AIDS denialist. Do you see how greasy and unprincipled he is?

Although claiming to champion 'the liberal model' of discourse,

in which the free play of arguments and debates sets out to inform an intelligent population, empowering people to make their own intelligent decisions

and claiming further that 'in the AIDS debate this excellent liberal principle has been systematically violated in a bullying and illiberal practice', Roberts 'systematically violate[s] ... this excellent liberal principle' himself in his book with his own 'bullying and illiberal practice' of denigrating radical opposition to his thinking scheme (that he got from the newspapers, news magazines and popular books). It's not 'the liberal model' of discourse Roberts goes for when he moves from theory to practice; it's rather something closer to the 'propaganda model' described by Chomsky and Herman in their classic, *Manufacturing Consent*. Like the media in the US does, Roberts controls the limits of discourse about AIDS to protect the American consensus he shares (without knowing why) from being rocked by radical challenges. Both Roberts and the US media do this

through selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises. ... they permit – indeed, encourage – spirited debate, criticism, and dissent, as long as these remain faithfully within the system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus, a system so powerful as to be largely internalized without awareness.

In this manner Roberts 'defend[s] the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate domestic society and the state' (per Chomsky and Herman) – in casu, the gargantuan multinational pharmaceutical industry and its interest groups selling its wares for it.

Next, knowing he's been naughty in his book, with some withered vestige of conscience apparently troubling him, Roberts is deploring the intolerance of the AIDS promoters:

As on that panel, so too in the country at large: instead of liberal democratic debate, the AIDS-drug lobby are our self-styled oracles and Guardians of Truth. They have a self-appointed and illiberal mission to suppress whatever they deem to be her-

esy. Thus the TAC's Nathan Geffen, commented in *Business Day*: 'It is unfortunate that AIDS denialists continue to get so much space in the media. Their lies create life-threatening confusion.'<sup>6</sup> If Geffen is correct in his underlying approach, it must follow that liberalism is wrong, because liberalism wants bad arguments ('denialist' or otherwise) to fail in open debate. By the way: I emphasise that I personally am not now, nor have I ever been, an AIDS denialist.

If Roberts really believed this, he wouldn't have attempted to immolate me for my heresy in his book. He defends the right of Tine van der Maas to have described on a radio show how she healed gravely sick people with good nutrition alone (I know her well as a friend, and I've seen her documentary film); and he agrees with Jane Duncan of the Freedom of Expression Institute that it was 'illiberal' of gay constitutional law professor Pierre De Vos to have filed 'a complaint with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission' about it. But Roberts never defends me against the repeated attacks I've endured from the TAC and its fans among newspaper journalists for ventilating the research literature on the deadly toxicity of ARVs. On the contrary, he adds to them and puts his own boot in too (more kicks below). Roberts pretends to believe in a free exchange of ideas – as long as mine are excluded by dint of lies and ridicule. The reason Roberts wants my ideas excluded is because he can't face them. They are too radical. They make nonsense of much of what he believes. This makes what I have to say an affront to him (he thinks that to go to bed with a woman he's met, particularly if she's black like he is, is to enter the valley of death).

At this point, accurately criticizing 'the barbarous illiberalism' and 'intolerance' of 'illiberal AIDS activists, exemplified by Edwin Cameron' for their 'deeply undemocratic, unreasoning and illiberal conception of truth', Roberts claims Mill 'would instantly have recognized our AIDS discourse as an example, not of the liberal intellectual exchange he cherished, but instead of moral and intellectual despotism'. Not bad, if only Roberts observed Mill's principle himself, because moments later he's slunk back into the slime he's most at home in:

the AIDS-drug lobby remained unconvinced that native intelligence could evade the traps of the so-called 'denialists'. Confronted for instance by the evangelical Anthony Brink, the AIDS-drug activists are sure that Mbeki and the other natives would become 'confused' and fall under a spell. Hence the need to protect Mbeki and the natives as a whole from anything remotely resembling devil's advocacy.

In this vignette of his 'terribly shabby debating style', as Ken Owen calls it, Roberts suggests that I've laid misleading traps for Mbeki, Tshabalala-Msimang and other senior figures in government and the ANC in my writing about ARVs, and the HSRC's December 2005 'HIV Prevalence' study (all of which Roberts privately said he liked so much). Moreover, I've laid these misleading traps for them with religious fervour. This is to say my writing about these things is invalid because it's both false and crazy-religious. It's a bunch of religious ideas I'm selling. At best, though, I'm busy with a sort of 'devil's advocacy', offering a temporary distraction to the government before it carries on as before, thinking as before, surer than ever about the old way of thinking. Roberts suggests that neither Mbeki, Tshabalala-Msimang, nor any other senior figures in government and the ANC were persuaded by the medical and scientific literature that I brought to their attention – it was only my 'devil's advocacy', soon dismissed. Do you see what a shameless liar he is? You can just picture him as a boy caught with his hands full of stolen sweets, and telling the shop manager, 'I never.'

Roberts's suggestion that 'Mbeki and the other natives would become "confused" and fall under a spell. Hence the need to protect Mbeki' is revealing. Since one soon appreciates reading his book that Roberts has no convictions, no commitment, no loyalty, no involvement, and that his purposes are wholly mercenary, one gets the impression that his purpose in sprinkling it with quotations of impressive-sounding authorities is to dazzle and dupe the natives of the country he's visiting, like a colonial trader displaying his glittering trinkets with an eye on their land.

Still, he says, the case for ARVs 'ought itself to be challenged and fleshed out in open debate against oddballs and devil's advocates' like me: 'To shelter even a well-founded view from such free and robust debate would be a degradation of discourse in itself, Mill contended.' If Roberts's view is 'well-founded' – his public one that ARVs are beneficial drugs, rather than 'harmful to health' because they're 'immunosuppressive' as Mbeki has pointed out – why then does he work so hard to discredit me? It seems to betray his lack of conviction in his assertions, his intellectual whoring to get ahead as a writer. And on the *cui bono* test, it's the pharmaceutical industry and its interest groups such as the TAC alone who benefit from it.

Note that in this talk about 'the degradation of public discourse', Roberts has now completely abandoned his false charge against me levelled in his book that I'm as guilty of it as the 'AIDS-drug lobby' is. Since he can't find any evidence against me, it's just the 'AIDS-drug lobby' now that's guilty of 'the degradation of public discourse' about AIDS.

After rehashing Easterly and Epstein in his book, as he did a couple of weeks earlier at Wits Business School, Roberts then says: ‘One might, for argument’s sake, want to agree that anybody who truly denies the existence of a raging and fatal disease ought indeed to be shut down.’ (Mill would disagree, he says.) But as Mbeki’s intellectual biographer, Roberts is still talking about ‘a raging and fatal disease’, a disease construct that Mbeki saw through years ago, which is why he doesn’t talk this sort of AIDS enthusiast language anymore, ever, just as you never hear him talking about the stain of sin, or everlasting damnation without the salutary ministrations of the Church’s priests. Mbeki doesn’t dispute that there is a high burden of disease among the African poor, but unlike Roberts he attributes it to malnutrition caused by poverty. Poverty, you’ll recall, he named as the world’s leading killer at the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in Durban in July 2000, citing the WHO as his authority for this. The AIDS experts and activists were furious. No, they all spluttered, it was AIDS spread by Africans having sex without condoms.

Here again Roberts insists that Mbeki is still among the flock of the faithful:

The problem is, as I shall demonstrate, that the AIDS-drug activists have been laughably vague in defining the ‘denialism’ that they have nevertheless attacked and stigmatized in their opponents, including the President of the country. In actively suppressing a vaguely defined heresy of ‘denialism’, they have in fact shut down all manner of non-denialist and healthy and necessary debates along with (or, rather, instead of) their ill-defined heresy.

Roberts repeats his claim that Mbeki is a believer, on the evidence presented in his book, which he lays out again: ‘Cameron never bothered to check whether Mbeki, whom he attacked as “denialist”, ever indeed denied there was “any role for pills at all.”’ In truth, as we know, Mbeki was explicit in his condemnation of ARV ‘pills’ in 1999 and 2000. Roberts would have you think that Mbeki’s position is that although ARVs such as AZT are ‘immunosuppressive’ and are ‘harmful to health’, a matter about which ‘researchers’ have been issuing ‘dire warnings’ in ‘a large volume of scientific literature’, he nonetheless thinks that there is ‘a role’ for these drugs, which is to say that it’s a good idea to give them to impoverished sick Africans regardless of the fact that they are ‘immunosuppressive’. But this is obviously not Mbeki’s view at all; it’s Roberts’s view. This is what Roberts thinks, not Mbeki.

And, as mentioned, in Roberts's view of what constitutes 'the liberal model' of discourse about AIDS, namely 'liberal democratic debate', 'healthy and necessary debates' don't include debating the scientific evidence for the existence of 'HIV'; whether, if this miniature demon really has been isolated, it's transmitted in lovemaking; if so, whether it really does selectively destroy CD4 blood cells; and if so, whether ARVs shouldn't be abrogated like trepanation, cupping, bloodletting, mercury and arsenic. Instead, because these are unhealthy and unnecessary debates in Roberts's view, he resorts to aggressive insults and ridicule to violently stamp such challenges out, to keep these issues from being aired, debated and considered by 'an intelligent population, empowering people to make their own intelligent decisions'. He force-feeds his dogmatic opinions about AIDS in Africa, its nature, its cause, and its treatment, because he considers the dogmatic opinions he holds, which he got from the newspapers, 'obvious orthodox truth'. Roberts does not want any 'free play of arguments and debates' about the fundamentals of the AIDS causation and treatment controversies. He 'sets out to inform' readers what he personally thinks, and wants them to think the same without asking any difficult questions.

Roberts quotes from his book some more (we've already refuted the arguments) and here he provides the hard proof himself that he was putting words in Mbeki's mouth in his book to mislead his readers into thinking that his own (public) views about the merits of ARVs are Mbeki's too:

The fact is that, at all stages of the degraded AIDS policy debate, what Mbeki very simply said was widely ignored: let us have a sensible debate in order to perfect the balance of these complementary instruments, *including pills*. [Roberts's emphasis]

Gone are the inverted commas now, because Roberts's allegation in his book, "The fact is that Mbeki simply said: "Let us have a sensible debate in order to perfect the balance of these complementary instruments"" was utterly false. Mbeki never 'simply' said it. And he never 'very simply' said it either. As mentioned above, you can always tell Roberts is lying by his use of the word 'simply'. The fact is Mbeki never said this at all, neither 'simply' nor 'very simply' – nor even convolutedly. Roberts simply fabricated it. Like a novelist, he simply composed a nice-sounding sentence according to his own fancies, and simply pretended Mbeki spoke it.

Roberts claims that in terms of the TAC's definition of 'denialism',

‘(1) HIV does not cause AIDS, (2) the risks of antiretrovirals outweigh their benefits and (3) there is not a large AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa.’ Mbeki has expressed none of these views. His expressed views are, as detailed in *Fit to Govern*, *emphatically the opposite on each of these specific points* [Roberts’s *emphasis*]: ANC and government policies have since 1992 been premised on HIV as the cause of AIDS; Mbeki has sought regulatory vigilance against those who belittled drug safety issues in the case of antiretrovirals—hardly the same as saying that their risks outweigh their benefits; and the entire point of the Pretoria Panel was that, given the enormous AIDS problem, business-as-usual was not an option—precisely the opposite of any denial of the scale and calamity of the problem.

As discussed in detail in the main critique, Mbeki has explicitly, pointedly and repeatedly doubted the HIV theory of AIDS, and he’s pertinently bifurcated his private thinking about AIDS and government policy; so there’s Roberts’s first fallacy in the can. His ‘expressed views’ on ARVS do not accord with Roberts twisted rendition of them, which is to say Roberts is lying in claiming that ‘Mbeki has sought regulatory vigilance against those who belittled drug safety issues in the case of antiretrovirals’. This is false because, as mentioned above, nobody was ‘belittl[ing] drug safety issues’ in 1999 when, at my instance, Mbeki ordered an enquiry into AZT. He never said that he merely ‘sought regulatory vigilance’ against such non-existent people ‘belittl[ing] drug safety issues’. But do you see how in trying to be clever with his wordplay, by stringing meaningless words together in Cameron’s manner, Roberts trips himself up as the liar he is? And since Mbeki never merely said he wanted a closer watch over ARV toxicity, the second part of Roberts’s false claim collapses into the sinkhole of the first false premise. Only a stupid liar would contend that, in describing AZT as ‘immunosuppressive’ and ‘a danger to health’, Mbeki did not mean that its risks outweighed its benefits. Only a stupid liar like Roberts.

I refer you to the discussion in the main section of this critique for the treatment of Roberts’s contorted allegation that

the entire point of the Pretoria Panel was that, given the enormous AIDS problem, business-as-usual was not an option—precisely the opposite of any denial of the scale and calamity of the problem.

The fact is, when he called the conference, Mbeki was onto the missing virus problem, and was well au fait with the scientific literature on this.

He'd studied it and made up his own mind. Unlike Roberts, Mbeki did not stick with 'a politically correct and prescribed view, in sheer deference to assorted oracles' such as Robert Gallo; he read into the scientific literature himself. That's why he called the conference, and that's why he personally invited the scientists who'd authored peer-reviewed, published papers pointing up the missing virus problem in high class journals (and wouldn't you love to know more?). Mbeki did not call the conference because of the 'calamity of the problem [*sizi*]', namely the 'calamity of the problem [*sizi*]' of 'raging and fatal disease' among 'Poorer Africans', because they failed to 'cut back' on their orgiastic sex lives and were spreading a plague among themselves with their filthy black sexual organs. But Mbeki's rich, subtle African irony in his opening speech in this regard was lost on Roberts. Fool that he is, he took Mbeki literally. (Had Roberts met Mandela, and been told, 'It's a great honour for me to meet you' – Mandela's trademark line, said to a friend of mine, then working as a gardener at a hotel – Roberts would have told his mother, 'Nelson Mandela told me how honoured he was to meet someone as important as me.')

Roberts quotes Cameron claiming that AIDS dissidents of all types

'unite in claiming that, if it does exist at all, HIV has not been shown to be the cause of AIDS.' ... only Cameron's very last sentence purports to say anything potentially definitive on the meaning of 'denialism'. And it is demonstrably incorrect, because the most ferociously fought difference between local 'denialist' Anthony Brink and the global patron saint of 'denialism', Peter Duesberg, is precisely over Duesberg's acceptance (which Brink rejects) that HIV exists but is harmless. The dissidents therefore hardly 'unite' even on this point. And Mbeki belongs, I yet again emphasize, in none of their fractious camps.

It is not 'demonstrably incorrect' as Roberts claims; it's demonstrably quite correct: the AIDS dissidents do 'unite in claiming that, if it does exist at all, HIV has not been shown to be the cause of AIDS'. That's exactly what we say, all of us.

As I've mentioned, I've never even discussed the HIV isolation issue with Duesberg, let alone 'ferociously fought' with him about it. This is fabrication.

Repetition may have a point in propaganda, but for Roberts to 'yet again emphasize' that Mbeki is a believer like he is, stamping his foot like when he was a child and Mummy was saying No, is just wishful thinking

having regard to the record of whose ‘camp’ he was in before 2000 and after it. Consider something that’s never occurred to Roberts:

It’s well known that Tshabalala-Msimang and Mbeki are close. She’s consistently rejected ARVs in forthright terms. Her many statements to this effect up to November 2000 are noted in *Debating AZT*, and since then in *Introducing AZT*. If her rejection of ARVs was at odds with Mbeki’s opinion of these drugs, rather than consistent with his statement in Parliament and in his letter to Tony Leon, he’d have pulled her up. Likewise, the late Peter Mokaba was very close to Mbeki – his crown prince. He too was vociferously opposed to the poisoning of the African poor with ARVs (he’s quoted in *Why do President Mbeki and Dr Tshabalala-Msimang Warn Against the Use of ARV drugs like AZT?*) and he discussed his opposition to ARVs with me. In newspaper interviews and in discussions with me he was also clear about the missing virus; like Mbeki he understood the problem precisely (and who do you suppose put Mokaba onto it?). Had he been speaking out of line with Mbeki’s position, Mbeki would have checked him too. Like Tshabalala-Msimang still does, Mokaba was speaking Mbeki’s mind.

The rest of Roberts talk, his torrent of verbiage, is a rehash of his book’s arguments and claims, and of quotations lifted from my work without credit – even my characteristic turns of phrase – but as I’ve canvassed them in my main critique, here’s a good place to wish Roberts goodbye. In the memorable words of President Robert Mugabe, ‘The game is up, and it’s time for you to go.’

## Addendum

### 1. Mbeki's 'Castro Hlongwane' bombshell

I mentioned my concern in the preface to this book that my disclosures about Roberts's fraud might cause Mbeki some embarrassment, but my worry was entirely allayed two days after completing it. On 7 November Mark Gevisser released his biography *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2007), and in it he tells the remarkable story of how in June, in the month that *Fit to Govern* was published, Mbeki moved to set the record straight concerning his thinking on AIDS – phoning him 'late one Saturday night' to ask whether he'd read 'Castro Hlongwane, Caravans, Cats, Geese, Foot & Mouth and Statistics: HIV/AIDS and the Struggle for the Humanisation of the African'. Gevisser responded that indeed he'd seen it, and enquired whether Mbeki was its author – to which Mbeki replied that it had been written by a 'collective' of ANC leaders. Asked whether it represented his views, Mbeki confirmed that it did.

Circulated as a discussion paper at a meeting of the ANC NEC in March 2002, 'Castro Hlongwane' is a radical, uncompromising analysis and repudiation of the American-invented African HIV-AIDS paradigm, both on medical and ideological grounds (Google it).

'The following day,' Gevisser writes,

a Presidency driver delivered a hard copy almost twice as long as the one circulated in 2002, with citations from publications as fresh as August 2006. Mbeki had never previously contacted me unsolicited, and my reading of this unusual interaction was that he wished the record to reflect that – despite his near-silence since it was initially distributed – he still held to the views expressed in 'Castro Hlongwane', which clearly remained a living, breathing document on his desktop. ... There is no question as to the message Thabo Mbeki was delivering to me along with this document: he was now, as he had been since 1999, an AIDS dissident.

This explains why at the launch of *Fit to Govern* at the Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria on 22 June, arranged by the book's sponsor, Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad, Mbeki was rather less enthusiastic about it than its author, and why he didn't also rush over to the podium to join Roberts, Pahad and the other speakers all gushing over how marvellous it was (Mbeki did diplomatically autograph some copies of

the book on request). Plainly put, concerning his thinking on AIDS – the big issue that *Fit to Govern* promised to explain – Mbeki thought the book total garbage.

On Monday morning, 19 November, having couriered a hard copy of *Lying and Thieving* to Mbeki in Pretoria via his Cape Town office the week before, as a courtesy in anticipation of prominent reporting about it in the weekend papers, I was delighted to learn how it had gone down.

## 2. More evidence of Roberts's plagiarism turned up – and the editor of *Fit to Govern* Dr James Sanders agrees

In 'A plagiarist defrocked? How Ronald Suresh Roberts plundered Anthony Brink's research'<sup>121</sup>, posted on Politicsweb on 23 November, Dr James Myburgh examined by way of textual comparisons seventeen clear-cut instances of Roberts's plagiarism of my work, and found further evidence of it. (The title of Myburgh's piece is a play on Roberts's illiterate description of William Mervin Gumede as a 'defrocked plagiarist', ignorant of the meaning of 'defrock'.)

It may be relevant to note here that Myburgh and I are politically opposed, and he's no friend of mine in my specific field of struggle, namely exposing the murderous frauds and criminal depredations of the multinational pharmaceutical industry in our country; on the contrary, while employed by the DA as a researcher, Myburgh worked closely with AZT promoter Tony Leon, making his arguments for him in his dispute with Mbeki over the drug at the turn of the decade.

In *Lying and Thieving* I describe how Roberts ripped off

my edited quotation of a *Daily Dispatch* report on how Achmat was crippled by his ARVs from where I cite it in my complaint against him to the International Criminal Court. Again my ellipses are copied by Roberts exactly.

Going to the original press report, Myburgh confirms this – and found that in typing it up, I made three transcription errors:

According to the original article Achmat had referred to keeping quiet for 'three more whole weeks.' The 'more' was dropped in Brink's transcription. The original article also referred to bringing 'the side effect' (not 'effects') under control, and Achmat said his depression was the worst 'he's had in recent [not 'two'] years'. All of these small errors are carried over into Roberts's book.

Concerning my complaint that Roberts had also copied and pasted my work in analyzing, editing and excerpting passages from the Mbeki/Leon correspondence over AZT for rape in mid-2000, Myburgh spotted similarly:

In his footnotes Roberts states that 'The block quotation from Mbeki lower down the page and the one on page 230 ('Let me assure...') are also from Mbeki's side of that correspondence.' Once again a vague reference is given without specific dates.

However, what gives the game away are two minor errors in Brink's transcription of Mbeki's letter. In his letter to Leon on August 5 Mbeki wrote:

Let me assure you that as long as I have to occupy a decision-making position within **our politics**, so long will I take such decisions as may be necessary and morally defensible, whatever institution makes recommendations according to its mandate and possibilities.

The idea that, as the executive, we should **not** take decisions we can defend, simply because views have been expressed by scientist-economists, scientist-agriculturists, scientist-pedagogues, scientist-soldiers, scientist health workers, scientist-communicators, etc, is absurd in the extreme. [My [Myburgh's] emphasis]

In transcribing this letter Brink omitted the 'our politics' and the 'not' (both in bold.) Roberts carries both these errors over into his book. What is surprising is that Roberts – given an office in Tuynhuys and full access to parliament – appears to have never bothered to read the full and original version of the correspondence. Instead, he seems to have simply relied on Brink's partial extracts for his account. Is it a sign of functional illiteracy to fail to read correspondence before writing and opining about it?

I thank Myburgh for identifying these errors, and I've fixed them in the manuscript of *Just say yes, Mr President*. Of course they remain uncorrected in *Fit to Govern* as further evidence of Roberts's stealing of my work, in black and white for all to see.

On 21 December, under the title (I translate) 'Editor confirms plagiarism allegations'<sup>132</sup>, *Die Burger* published a report in which Dr James Sanders, researcher for Anthony Sampson's *Nelson Mandela: The Authorized Biography*; author of *Apartheid's Friends: The Rise and Fall of South Africa's Secret Service*; and editor of Roberts's *Fit to Govern*, said

Although I'm not a plagiarism expert [Myburgh's] seventeen instances are pretty shocking. ... [They] certainly look like plagiarism to me. ... I sure would like to hear Roberts's responses to them.

Plagiarism, he pointed out, was

taking someone else's work and presenting it as your own. This includes copied quotations and key points. ... As an editor one must trust the writer, but what Roberts did was lazily copy and paste.

Plagiarise my research work and my ideas in other words, even as he was breaching his editor's trust and defaming me with his lies.



### 3. The mind of a rogue at work: how Roberts developed his dishonest denigration of Brink in *Fit to Govern* from draft to draft

On 1 March 2007 Roberts sent his first ‘final’ draft of *Fit to Govern* to Dr Pahad to vet, and a day later to his editor and his publisher. In this draft we find the hard evidence that Roberts’s source for his account of nevirapine’s dangerous toxicity for African mothers and their babies; the fatal flaws in the HIVNET 012 clinical trial claimed to support its use; and the corruption in the official investigation that followed, is the book manuscript he described to me as ‘Rigorous, your best book.’ A footnote acknowledges this by mentioning my name, but not the title of my work, *The trouble with nevirapine*: ‘<sup>619</sup> Anthony Brink [...]’ (Roberts’s square brackets and ellipsis marks). In the footnotes to the published book, this credit to me is missing; Roberts has deceptively removed it.

Roberts acknowledges that ‘Brink commands the relevant literature with ... visible ease’, and he credits my ‘ferocious if fact-based polemic’ and ‘the irrefutable rigour that he displays in dissecting the toxicity, fraudulence and sheer weirdness of much early “scientific” work in the AIDS arena’.

Footnote 527 comments in still-friendly, deferential fashion, ‘On the funding, the unanswerable facts are assembled by the despised “AIDS denialist” Anthony Brink, the honorary nigger of the Great AIDS debate’.

Footnote 553 shows that Roberts was Hoovering up my research work, but at least crediting its provenance at that stage: ‘Cameron quoted by Brink, 107—and see the CD’. ‘107’ is the page number of the hard-copy of my *Just say yes, Mr President* manuscript, and ‘the CD’ is the disc I gave him with the manuscript burned on it as a Word file. To conceal that I’m his source for the Cameron quotation, however, Roberts removes this credit from the footnotes of his published book.

Nothing significant changes in his draft of 6 March. But by 17 March Roberts has decided that my polemic is not ‘fact-based’ anymore; now it’s just ‘ferocious’. My ‘irrefutable rigour’ has been downgraded to ‘rigour’, which is to say my analytical reviews may be refutable if you look at them hard enough. And no longer do I ‘command’ the ‘relevant literature’ with ‘visible ease’; all that’s gone. Instead Roberts begins ridiculing me with the first appearance of his ‘intellectual electricity’ lie. Since on his new lying version I’m becoming ridiculous, he can’t acknowledge that my ridiculous work has been his principal source, so I’m nowhere to be found in his footnotes now; I’ve been completely purged.

In Roberts’s 7 April draft my ‘rigour’ has gone back up to being ‘genuine’, which is to say he wants it known that he considers me a genuinely

rigorous researcher and writer. But I'm still nowhere in the footnotes (I get a desultory mention late in the footnotes of the published book, as discussed in the main text above). Ten days later, on 17 April, 'genuine' has gone, and I'm back to being rigorous only; and we have Roberts adding his new lies about my having missed the satire in the *Onion* piece that I sent him, and writing to him angrily about it.

In early May Roberts discovered that I'd juxtaposed his superlative praise for my work against his dishonest belittling of it to *New York Times Book Review* editor and writer Rachel Donadio in my compendium of quotations *Introducing AZT*, posted on my [tig.org.za](http://tig.org.za) website. I have it that although he was enraged and embarrassed that others might have seen this, he didn't deny my reports of the good things he'd said about my writing (he denied them only much later as 'unmitigated fantasy' in his complaint to the Press Ombudsman about the *Weekender's* 17 November front-page headline story about his plagiarism of my work). I'd bargained on Roberts desisting from mischaracterizing me on seeing his hypocrisy and unprofessionalism pre-emptively exposed, but I was wrong; instead of backing off, he redoubled his attack with his malice multiplied, removing his vestigial concession to my analytical 'rigour' and adding his maniacal 'Man-Man of Miguel Street' image of me in an attempt to annihilate me completely as a lock-up mental case.

Such is the professional integrity of Ronald Suresh Roberts.

#### 4. Roberts's responses to the charges in *Lying and Thieving*

News of this book was broken in *Die Burger* on 10 November, under the title (translated) 'Mbeki book a fraud'. Sent a list of examples of his plagiarism for comment before the story went to press, Roberts didn't respond and turned his cellphone off to evade further enquiry. His reaction to Gevisser's revelations about how Mbeki had put his AIDS dissident views on the record for incorporation in *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* was that Mbeki had read *Fit to Govern* before publication, but not *The Dream Deferred*. True – only we know from Gevisser what Mbeki's negative reaction to *Fit to Govern* was after reading it.

In a second article in *Die Burger* a week later, Roberts said (I translate):

He's currently getting legal advice on the allegations. 'If anyone, other than Brink, who's in any case a bit mad, says I committed plagiarism, I'll sue him.' He rejected the allegations and said he can disprove each and every so-called example of plagiarism. 'The plagiarism stuff is pure junk. The interesting thing is that he says I fraudulently twisted Mbeki's views on AIDS.'

Roberts responded more fully in an article he wrote for *Die Burger's* sister newspaper *Beeld* on the same day, under the title (I translate), 'The President is not, and has never been, an "AIDS denialist"'. But instead of dealing with the specifics of my fabrication and falsification charges, he opened with a decoying smear (I translate):

The same opponents of Mbeki who present him as an intolerant autocrat surrounded by yes-men like me now present him as a prisoner of a conspiracy by me and Essop Pahad to rewrite his views. From this comes Brink's extremely defamatory suggestion that I fraudulently misrepresent his views on AIDS. As expected only Mbeki's most extreme and ridiculous opponents take his suggestion seriously.

Here Roberts meant his enemy Myburgh, who'd reported the story on Politicsweb. But it wasn't true; *Mail&Guardian* editor Ferial Haffajee agreed on her ThoughtLeader blog on 15 November that Roberts is 'a peddler of lies' in propounding that 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident', and Roberts didn't mean to include her as being among 'Mbeki's most extreme and ridiculous opponents'. As for my plagiarism complaint, several national newspapers took my 'suggestion seriously' enough to report it prominently – among them the *Weekender* on 17 November, which led the week's edition with a front-page headline story about it, accompanied by a companion piece putting

up five plagiarism examples; and over the same weekend the *Sunday Times* flagged the story at the top of page 2, covered it in a major article on page 5, and mentioned it in two further articles on the leader pages as its big story of the week too.

Roberts's first ploy to avoid addressing my claims was to cast my exposé of his fraud as an empty attack on him, Mbeki and Pahad from the right. As if I'm right-wing.

His second was to make me out as a liar, alleging that I'd claimed to have moved Mbeki both to deny HIV causes AIDS and the existence of AIDS itself – when I've never done this.

He protested that I'd accused him of fraudulently denying that a shift in Mbeki's thinking on AIDS took place (indeed I do); but my problem with claiming Mbeki to be an AIDS dissident, he said, is what Mbeki told the London *Financial Times* on 3 April 2007, as if it swings the issue in his favour and shows that Mbeki has never changed his mind.

It's clear at glance, however, that Mbeki was on the spot in the interview, being asked about the most divisive, controversial and politically damaging policy issue of his Presidency, and he wasn't about to fan the flames with anything as provocative as a statement of his personal thinking about AIDS as set out in 'Castro Hlongwane'. So instead of talking about his own thinking, he started with the calming remark that AIDS policy in South Africa is actually quite old, going back to 'about 1998' (before the trouble started), and it hasn't changed since. Which is true. He then alluded to various causes of 'immune deficiency', emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to the matter – thereby side-stepping all the problems with the HIV theory of AIDS that he'd previously identified, to furious general reaction. And he concluded by pointing out that he's never denied the connection between HIV and AIDS. Which is true again: he hasn't. And to anyone hip to what so-called HIV antibody tests really indicate – non-specific immunological activity – there is indeed 'a connection' between being HIV-positive and getting sick sometimes that has nothing to do with being infected by any virus. But it's rather complicated and Roberts wouldn't understand.

To my extensive charges of fabrication and falsification of the historical record of Mbeki's personal and political involvement with AIDS, this is all Roberts had to plead.

Concerning my complaint that he'd plagiarized my work on dozens of counts, Roberts went nowhere near them, because he couldn't. Instead, he derided them as 'paradoxical and comical', and disingenuously relied on a report in the *Citizen* in which I was misquoted about the nature of his plagiarism, namely by quoting my work and then removing the quotation marks. In fact I never said this, and as Roberts commented in

*Beeld*, 'nowhere in his book does he claim this'. Exactly. What I told the *Citizen* reporter during the telephone interview was that after reading my work Roberts repeatedly quoted from it in an early draft that he showed me, and then later removed the passages concerned (which he was quite entitled to do). I immediately noted this error in a post on [lyingandthieving.com](http://lyingandthieving.com), and Roberts read it – he was checking the website constantly – but he deliberately persisted in building his defence to my plagiarism allegations on the foot of this inaccurate report. As for the rest of my plagiarism charges, they were all 'manifestly false', he said, and 'sometimes comical', which is to say not always 'comical' but only 'sometimes'. Again, this is all he had to offer: a bare denial, which criminal lawyers know to be the only defence to a stonewall case.

He'd handed the matter to his lawyers, he said, but it was just bluster and bluff, and for obvious reasons their guns have been silent: Roberts had just taken a pounding in the High Court in his case against the *Sunday Times*, in which the judge found that everything he objected to as defamatory was perfectly true, and what's more he was found to be an unreliable witness in multiple respects; and he cannot afford another judgment against him certifying that he is indeed a plagiarist, and a fabricator and falsifier of history as alleged. Also, whereas he can duck and dive unaccountably and get away with false counter-strikes against me in the newspapers and on the blogs, he'd be forced to face and stand cross-examination on the fine particulars of my charges in a court of law. And of course, since the *Sunday Times* defamation case cost him about R2 million in legal fees, he has neither the stomach nor the means for another such unhappy escapade. Particularly because, as one of his former best friends exclaimed to another after reading this book, 'It's all true, isn't it?!'

Finally in his *Beeld* piece, Roberts insinuated that my recollections in *Lying and Thieving* are untrustworthy because I confused the *New York Review of Books* with the *New York Times Book Review*. Sure I did, and when a reader pointed this out to me, I fixed it immediately. But it wasn't a failure of memory, it was a slip in the writing – and, I'm pleased to say, in a book written in four months, during which I was in Europe on two extended working trips, it was the biggest and only error Roberts could finger.

In the *Weekender* report of 17 November Roberts responded with insulting obfuscation and some feeble confession and avoidance: I had a 'gargantuan self-regard', he said, in claiming – he claimed – 'whole areas of insight (the idea of Kant and Hume's racism and Fanonian medical analysis) as his own personal property'. Which of course is untrue, and

wasn't the point of my complaints about his copying from my book here at all, but you can dig yourself out of this without my help.

Moreover, he said,

Brink claims intellectual property, not his own, when he speaks of stolen quotations from third parties. This is not language written by him, nor over which he holds copyright. At times he appears to seek credit for transcription or translations.

In reality, nearly all my charges of plagiarism relate to his plunder of my research work uncredited, and not to copyright infringement, which is something different; but at the border between the two things, the one an offence against academic and professional ethics, the other illegal, Roberts frequently copies not just the quotations I'd researched, collected and included in *Debating AZT* and *Just say yes, Mr President*, but also my editing, redacting and phrase rearrangement of many of them, which is to say my intellectual work, and therefore my intellectual property. (I record here that I changed my mind about criminally prosecuting Roberts over this, because in the massive media coverage my revelations enjoyed, my principal purpose in exposing Roberts as a major literary crook had been achieved.) Roberts more or less admitted that he copied my transcriptions of television programmes uncredited, and similarly my translations of Afrikaans quotations in press reports, but suggested that there's nothing wrong with doing this.

In the *Sunday Times* article Roberts denied having mimicked my style in his draft written after reading my work, and called my account of this 'loony fiction. I certainly do not write like he does.' He's correct on the latter score, because having cut the bits that I suggested were unsafely close to my personal writing technique, there's no remaining similarity in our writing to be seen.

Roberts likewise even denied 'there was a friendship between the two of them', spitting profanities like an unfortunate touched by Tourette syndrome: 'Crap. Period. Crap. Crap. ... I talked to him and listened to his views and I did it sceptically.'

My statements in *Lying and Thieving* that Roberts believes African women, particularly 'Poorer African' women, spread AIDS, and not white women, and that in his view white women are therefore safer sexual partners were 'completely mad. It's most outrageous.' But as he makes clear in *Fit to Govern*, indeed Roberts thinks this.

On 21 December, in 'Editor confirms plagiarism charges', *Die Burger* reported that Roberts had declined to deal with the '17 examples discussed in detail by James Myburgh on his blog, Politicsweb' (I'm translating), nor with

more than 40 more from Brink's *Lying and Thieving* already sent to him on 9 November by email for comment. Roberts undertook to respond to each one individually. After repeated further enquiries, Roberts recently demanded that *Die Burger* 'stop harassing' him, and said he didn't wish to engage any further over the allegations. He persisted with his position that 'none of the allegations qualify as plagiarism'.

Roberts's reaction to *Lying and Thieving* on his ThoughtLeader blog on 15 November made basically the same points that figured in his *Beeld* piece two days later – with one further element:

As I point out in *Fit to Govern*, Brink habitually attributes the full and varied range of his own views to the President, among others, and this has seen him get into trouble before. After he claimed in a letter to a prospective supporter that Mbeki had instigated the formation of his TIG as a counterweight to the TAC, the Presidency responded: 'A statement from the president's office said Mbeki has "declare[d] his views on Aids and anti-retroviral treatment, and the claims in Advocate Brink's document of secretive counter-mobilisation, intimate friendships and his special influence on the thinking of government leaders do not, we believe, deserve a response."' *Mail & Guardian*, 25 March, 2005.

Perhaps it's time to look at this.

On hearing from the late Professor Sam Mhlongo in 2002 that Mbeki desired an organized effort to get the facts on ARV toxicity publicized, I formed the Treatment Information Group. I mentioned this in a funding proposal that I'd been invited to make by a third party later on, and the document was subsequently leaked to the TAC and reported by its fans at the *Mail&Guardian*. In late 2007 I learned that the author of the 'statement from the president's office' about this was none other than Roberts himself, ghost-writing for then Presidential spokesman Bheki Khumalo, as he frequently did. It's so obvious now, with its twisting misrepresentation, its false exaggeration, its ignorance of the facts, and its extravagant, put-down tone – all in Roberts's fingerprint style. The statement clearly wasn't written on Mbeki's instructions, and I knew it immediately; only I wrongly believed until recently that it had been written by Murphy 'The TAC is the conscience of the nation' Morobe.

I met Roberts the day after the *Mail&Guardian* report, and told him all this, but he kept quiet about his role in the thing; and then three years later he quoted his own fake statement against me, to make me out as a

liar or a nut, pretending it to be Mbeki's office talking. This is how Roberts works.

Roberts had a further go at me in his next spattering blog post on 21 November, 'Gevisser on Aids: a complicity of opposites', but his more thoughtful readers noted that they found his sprawling claims unconvincing. Only a few aspects warrant comment: 'Mbeki has never denied that the pandemic exists', Roberts wrote, evidently not having bothered to read Mbeki's 'Castro Hlongwane' critique of the 'so-called "pandemic" [of] HIV/AIDS' at the very head of the piece. To read Roberts's blog writing, to see his devious and specious arguments being made, is to watch the walls of his trench collapsing in on him:

Meanwhile, those who deny that a pandemic exists (the 'denialists' in a strict and defined sense) are enraged to find that Mbeki's emphasis on poverty does not mean he buys into their denial that HIV causes Aids and that the pandemic exists. Such types as Anthony Brink have rather implausibly begun to squeal that Mbeki's logic, as outlined by me with Mbeki's approval, is racist. Ho hum.

This is to say that on Roberts's version, (a) Mbeki is a 'denialist' per Roberts's definition, having regard to what he says about the 'so-called "pandemic" [of] HIV/AIDS' in 'Castro Hlongwane'; (b) Roberts expounded Mbeki's 'logic' on AIDS in *Fit to Govern* with Mbeki's 'approval' (a flat-out lie); (c) Roberts and Mbeki's 'logic' on AIDS are identical, and that on AIDS Mbeki is a conformist like Roberts, and not a recusant (another lie); and (d) I consider Mbeki to be a racist (imagine that!). Do you see how in battle Roberts goes to pieces, closing his eyes and firing randomly over his head in all directions at once?

Again, Roberts zoomed in on another misquotation to demonstrate my 'stagger[ing] mendacity' and 'blatant ... dishonesties'. A letter I wrote to the *Sunday Times* was butchered in the editing room, giving Roberts his opening to attack me as an 'abject liar' – even though my original letter had been online on this book's website before the mangled version was published. But winning points is Roberts's game, not telling the truth.

Much the same lines were recycled in Roberts's next blog post on 26 November, 'Aids, poverty and racism: A further complicity of opposites'; and in his further posts under this title he repeated his earlier attacks on me, adding falsely that I'd 'sexed up [my] initial allegations, unsupported by examples' in the botched *Citizen* report, and

If Brink believed himself on the so-called plagiarism, he would not have needed 376 pages of obfuscation and personal attack

to pad it out. He also lied to the *Weekender*, claiming that he introduced Christine Qunta and I [*sic*], when in fact we met twelve years ago.

Apropos of the second claim, the two may have first 'met twelve years ago', but indeed I suggested that since he was unhappy with his erstwhile attorney Roberts should migrate to Qunta, who was acting for me, and he did so. I did not lie to the *Weekender* here.

And then, on 28 November, Roberts kicked lower than ever, before finally falling completely silent, posting on his blog under the title 'Aids denialist Brink's loony letter to Mbeki' an apologetic letter I'd written to Mbeki four days after being burned in the *Mail&Guardian*.

Having repeatedly rejected the use of the expression 'AIDS denialist' in his book as a 'smear-word' and a 'tired label', now he embraced it – invoking the *Mail&Guardian's* favourite soubriquet for me as a 'loony' too, after having twice deplored it in his email to me as 'gross unfairness'. In his descent into ugly, dishonest verbal flailing, you could read his fatally cornered desperation.

As Roberts shamelessly states, I'd given the letter to him to deliver to Mbeki, under the impression he'd given me that he was flying up to see him (in fact he was on his way to see Pahad). On his return from Pretoria to Cape Town, I enquired whether he'd delivered the letter as he'd undertaken to do, and he told me he had – when in truth he'd stolen it, opened it, and kept it, unbeknown to me throughout the almost two years that I thought we were friends. And then, with nothing to say to refute my lying and thieving charges, he put it on the internet to embarrass me – thereby confirming that he's a liar and thief as charged. I think Roberts's actions here are as clear an indication as can be that he's a liar and a thief of stunning depravity, and that he cannot be trusted by anyone with anything, on anything, ever.



## 5. How Roberts wrote *Fit to Govern* to order, chopping and changing his manuscript on Essop Pahad's secret instructions, and prostituting his 'intellectual independence' to mining capital

Interviewed in *Die Burger* on 15 June 2007, the day before *Fit to Govern's* release, Roberts spoke about his 'experience with Mbeki' as he wrote the book (I translate):

Where Gordimer constantly tried to exercise control over the wording of his book [*No Cold Kitchen*], Mbeki 'didn't try changing a jot or tittle of the manuscript'. 'Mbeki acted like a stereotype of Gordimer, and Gordimer like a stereotype of Mbeki.'

The lies seethe out of this statement like eels from a drowned dog; and it illustrates how Roberts constructs false histories in public places to smear people he's turned against, and, more importantly, how he exaggerates and says things that are true only in the narrowest sense to generate impressions that are completely false.

The truth of it is that Nadine Gordimer never 'constantly tried to exercise control over the wording' of Roberts's biography of her at all. In mid-2004, she asked him to omit a couple of awkward details from a close-to-final draft. When he disregarded her request, she groused to her foreign publishers, who took her side in the disagreement and dropped his book and him with it. Spinning the thing dishonestly in characteristically freak-out overdrive, Roberts cried foul to the London *Guardian*: 'Nobel writer Gordimer, champion of free speech, is accused of censorship' bellowed a yellow headline on 7 August 2004<sup>433</sup>. 'She is supposed to represent freedom of speech,' Roberts pouted in the piece, 'but she wanted complete control, tsar-like, which would have turned the manuscript into pious crap.' What Roberts meant to convey was that Gordimer had tried dictating how he should write, and this offended him because he's a highly principled writer, who guards his literary independence at all costs. In repeating his lie about Gordimer three years later in his interview in *Die Burger*, and by comparing her unfavourably with Mbeki, who'd given him free reign, he said, Roberts was suggesting that he'd written *Fit to Govern* independently without any interference: no one was telling him what to write and what not to write. Oh ja?

Thanking his corporate funders in the 'Acknowledgements' section at the beginning of *Fit to Govern*, Roberts wrote:

It should be emphasized that these funders made no attempt to influence my work and that my intellectual independence was contractually protected. The views in this book are mine alone.

He reiterated in a post on his ThoughtLeader blog on 16 November:

paragraph 4.1 of my funding agreement with ABSA provides that ‘The Author must exercise due, proper and untrammled [sic] professional and aesthetic judgment in all matters concerning the Book in a manner intended to maximize the independence and broad intellectual credibility of the Book.’

Referring in this connection to ‘the self-serving expectations of some money-givers and the servile behaviour of some takers’, Roberts wanted you to understand that as a ‘taker’ of R1 431 000 from ABSA bank – and another million or so more from other corporate and individual funders – his own ‘behaviour’ wasn’t ‘servile’. But it turns out that Roberts’s ‘behaviour’ was exceedingly ‘servile’. And ‘the views in this book’ weren’t ‘mine alone’ either. The reality is that in writing *Fit to Govern* Roberts prostituted himself like a slut under a bridge.

The very purpose of the book project was to stabilize capital. It was conceived by Geoffrey Rothschild, formerly chairman of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE Ltd) and now its director of Government and International Affairs, to explain Mbeki to the world, and to the business world in particular. It seems capital wanted and needed a less intellectually mysterious and oddly free-thinking President, and Rothschild thought a book mapping the inner workings of the mystery-man’s head would help allay uncertainty, boost confidence, and thereby improve the business climate – especially concerning that really bothersome issue, Mbeki’s independent thinking on AIDS: his rejection of ARV drugs and the pharmaceutical industry’s basic business model that Africans are sexually promiscuous ‘germ-carriers’ (as Mbeki disdainfully sums it up), who need its patented merchandise to stay alive.

Rothschild took his book proposal to Minister in the Presidency Esop Pahad, who thought it a fantastic idea. The reason he thought it a fantastic idea was because he too was hassled by Mbeki’s troubling intellectual adventures with AIDS. Like Roberts, being much too lazy and much too stupid to read and understand the critical scientific literature that Mbeki had read, had circulated, and had synopsisized in ‘Castro Hlongwane’ on the obvious basic trouble with conventional American thinking about AIDS, Pahad figured that Mbeki had just been misunderstood, that there’d just been some confusion, and that Mbeki really did still believe that his fellow Africans, but not whites, coloureds and Indians, were riddled with a deadly sex-germ, just like all sensible whites, coloureds and Indians including Roberts believed they were.

As is now generally known, Pahad was so excited by the prospect of having Roberts clear everything up for us that he took the book proposal on as his special pet project, providing Roberts with a government-issue notebook computer and printer, an official email address, and even an office in his Ministry. Best of all for Roberts he got ABSA bank to pay him a fortune to write the book in a contract that even a first-year law student can tell you was ultra vires and illegal. Not content to cheat its shareholders, ABSA thought it would cheat the South African public too by laying off the cost of paying Roberts's mortgage and daily restaurant and liquor bills onto the South African taxpayer. It did this in a scam on the Receiver of Revenue by faking in the contract that Roberts was a salaried employee in order to claim all the money it was paying him as a deductible expense incurred in the production of income. For his part, Roberts didn't mind at all being hired by the bank as a salary-man to write his book, just as long as he got the big dough.

After Roberts finished the book, it would appear that Pahad also used the muscle of his office to improperly squeeze another 500 grand from the retail corporation Edcon, owner of CNA newsagents and bookstores, which it paid to Roberts in June, the month the book came out. Sadly the cash was spent almost immediately: Roberts had his lawyers' bill in his failed defamation case against the *Sunday Times* to settle, and he had to give his cast-off wife and her children a big fat payoff to make them all go away.

Being ultra vires and illegal, again, Edcon's donation to Roberts obviously had to be disguised. In a crooked trick the judges call in *fraudem legis*, fit only for declaring a swindle and setting aside, the deal was cloaked in a suit of ostensibly respectable clothes: Edcon dissembled that it was paying Roberts for the exclusive right to market his book for three months, with an option to extend. It pretended that it was concluding a regular commercial transaction, that it was purchasing a real right, and that it was paying for value received. It did this to hide that it was giving its money away unlawfully under improper political pressure.

The gaping holes in the ruse are many. The deal was unprecedented in South African publishing history. Roberts was the author, not the publisher of the book, and under his publishing contract with STE Publishers he had no right to stipulate where and how his book was to be sold, which is to say he had no rights to sell to Edcon for the exclusive retailing of his book. That right was the publisher's, but STE never saw a dime – and was damn bitter about it.

Probed on the deal by *Die Burger*, Edcon head of corporate affairs Mpho Makwana took the 5<sup>th</sup> and responded with a furtive brush-off (I translate from the report on 17 November):

‘Edcon has a commercial and confidential agreement between the writer, the publisher and the distributor, as explained when the book was launched.’ [STE’s Reedwaan] Vally said there was a deal between STE and CNA in terms of which CNA got an exclusive right to sell in return for a massive marketing campaign. Roberts denied that CNA or Edcon paid him a massive sum for the exclusive right to sell his book for an agreed period.

To do the sums is to understand why the ‘agreement’ had to be ‘confidential’: it wasn’t ‘commercial’ at all. When news of Roberts’s lying and thieving in *Fit to Govern* reached STE a couple of days after *Lying and Thieving* was released online – a reprint was wisely put on ice – it had published just 8500 copies, most of which had been sold by CNA at the cover price of R150. So Edcon’s payment to Roberts translated to about R60 per copy, wiping out the company’s profit on retail sales of the book. Concerning Edcon’s claim to Vally that there’d be ‘a massive marketing campaign’, there wasn’t any beyond the normal publicity and a little table for the book in CNA shops. As was to be expected, Roberts denied to *Die Burger* that he’d received the payment for the exclusive retail right.

In view of Roberts’s repeated public declamations of his ‘intellectual independence’, followers of his ThoughtLeader blog will therefore have been intrigued to see one John Savaga persistently accusing him of having cut a chapter attacking the Oppenheims from his book. Roberts denied having done so, but truthfully so for once, because there never was any dedicated Oppenheimer chapter; instead Roberts rounded on the Oppenheims throughout the manuscript. For interesting reasons not relevant to detail here (and having nothing to do with Mbeki), Pahad didn’t like this at all. He didn’t like Roberts attacking his Oppenheims. And so when getting his successive drafts back from Pahad, after submitting them to him for censoring, like in prison, Roberts was struck by the fact that the one thing Pahad really gunned for was his criticism of the Oppenheimer family; and the drafts were accordingly returned peppered with Pahad’s disapproving annotations to indicate the cuts that he wanted made, nearly all relating to these rich whites who’d made their unbelievable monopoly fortune from the most vicious exploitation of the country’s African people.

Evidently Roberts was insufficiently diligent in complying with his master's instructions in this regard, because when Pahad saw the final draft about to go to press, he had the Chief Director of his Ministry in the Presidency, Louis du Plooy, email his publisher an insistent demand a few days before the printing began<sup>134</sup>. It reads exactly like this:

To: Reedwaan

Hello Reedwaan

The following are Minister Pahad's comments on the most recent version of the book. He has repeated some of the comments and would now like to urge, in the strongest terms that the following be addressed immediately:

- 1) P 26 & 27 agree with Reedwaan delete Oppenheimer quote
- 2) P 34, & p 35, Keep the Luthuli quotes but delete the rest including the Oppenheimer quote on p 35.
- 3) P. 73 Delete reference to Helen Suzman 8 lines from the bottom;
- 4) P 79 11 lines down, delete reference to Oppenheimer, and instead say De Beers-Anglo-America
- 5) Delete reference to De Beers and just keep Lumumba quote., and in the quote towards the end of the page, delete reference to Jonathan Oppenheimer – as the point has already been made;
- 6) P 151 Delete the reference/comparison – “Reagan-Thatcher-Suzman-Oppenheimer”
- 7) P. 162 Delete reference to Oppenheimer;
- 8) P. 163 delete sentence “The handsomely .... Of an ancient problem”.
- 9) P 241 delete Oppenheimer – has already demonstrated that he was opposed to the universal franchise
- 10) P 242 Just give the Mandela quote – delete the line before
- 11) P 242 – the reference to Oppenheimer in square brackets in the Mandela quote – if this is not in the original quote from Mandela it should be removed – the square brackets suggest the author's inclusion in an original quote.

Below the eleventh item there's a twelfth handwritten one: 'Gumede', along with several other notes on the page too.

Did Roberts say, Sorry, Essop, you just can't do this? You can't tell me what to write or what not to write. I expressly guaranteed my 'intellectual independence' to the bank when it was agreeing to pay me to write the

book, and it's actually illegal for you to interfere with my performance under my contract in this way. If news gets out that I'm unlawfully changing what I've written because some politician wanting to keep it sweet with the Oppenheims has told me to, it might sue me for breach of contract and ask for all its money back, since obviously the 'broad intellectual credibility of the Book' will then be floating in the lavatory. In fact, I feel so strongly about people like you trying to censor my writing, 'constantly tr[ying] to exercise control over the wording of [my] book', I'm so very highly principled about things like this, that I even go running to the newspapers to complain about it.

No, Roberts did not protest against Pahad's unlawful interference in his contractual obligation to the bank to

exercise due, proper and untrammelled professional and aesthetic judgment in all matters concerning the Book in a manner intended to maximize the independence and broad intellectual credibility of the Book.

Nor did he phone up the newspapers shrieking over Pahad's censorship of his book. Instead, he went back to his manuscript and without a whimper cravenly hacked out everything he'd written about the Oppenheims that Pahad said he didn't want.

As I mentioned in the Preface, Pahad could easily have told Roberts to lay off his attempts to discredit my research work by attacking me dishonestly in the book manuscript, and his censorship of Roberts's unfriendly references to the Oppenheims confirms it.

But to be fair, Roberts seems to have resented Pahad's expurgation of his book manuscript, because after *Fit to Govern* was published, and his writing was no longer subject to Pahad's oversight, Roberts had a sudden petulant go at the Oppenheims in his first ThoughtLeader blog entry on 13 November – like a boy after his last day of school defiantly lighting a cigarette outside the school gate in front of his masters.

Two weeks later, in his glee at having successfully repelled the charge that he'd cut a non-existent Oppenheimer chapter from his book, Roberts made the mistake of overreaching himself. In a post on his blog on 26 November he wrote: 'First, I was not "told" by anybody to make any changes to my book.' This lie – laid bare in this chapter – was followed by another: 'Second, the suggestion that Gevisser had much more access [to Mbeki] is comical', i.e. untrue. But Gevisser did indeed have 'much more access' to Mbeki: he interviewed him face to face for more than twenty hours, with two of them spent on the subject of AIDS alone; he conducted further interviews by email; and he had telephone conversations with him, during which, inter alia, Mbeki enquired with interest

about how his book was progressing, and in the final instance phoned him in June specifically to correct Roberts's false claim that he's not an AIDS dissident, the next day providing Gevisser with a comprehensive dissident manifesto that he'd been writing and developing, hitherto unseen by anyone else in its updated form. On the other hand, Mbeki never gave Roberts a single interview for *Fit to Govern*, either in person or by email, and apart from his 27-page letter in February 2006 (I have it), providing a couple of comments on Roberts's first draft, but more importantly talking to the themes he hoped the book would examine, Mbeki's only act of approbation or disapprobation concerning the book was in the latter direction, in his approach to Gevisser when *Fit to Govern* came out in June the following year.

Indeed Mbeki 'didn't try changing a jot or tittle of the manuscript' as Roberts stated in his interview in *Die Burger*. The reason for this is that Mbeki was not involved in the writing. Replying to a post on his blog on 23 November 2007 that he'd never even interviewed Mbeki for his book, Roberts – trying to be clever, and pretending to be Mbeki's familiar – lamely deprecated the value of interviewing his subject, and confirmed: 'When we had chats, I didn't pretend they were work.' Although he'd suggested in his letter to Mbeki on 22 February 2006 that an interview by email – in what he said was JM Coetzee's preferred style – would be useful, none took place. Consequently, generally speaking, but specifically concerning Mbeki's thinking on AIDS, *Fit to Govern* was no more than a mix of Roberts's own conventional, media-framed understanding, prejudice, preconception, myth, ignorance, and fantastication. Point is, after reading Roberts's first draft, and then writing his letter to him, Mbeki took no further interest in the progress of the book until he saw the sickening final product. This is because the book was Pahad's project. And it was Pahad who oversaw it and ordered all the changes to it accordingly.

In the first newspaper article about his lying about me and his lying about Mbeki and his thieving from me and his thieving from Mbeki that appeared in *Die Burger* on 10 November 2007, Roberts said – truthfully here, lying there – that (I translate), 'Mbeki read and approved *Fit to Govern* before it was published.' But far from approving it, Mbeki's response upon reading Roberts's lies about his stance on AIDS and ARVs was to torpedo it behind the scenes by putting the truth of the matter on the record for publication in Gevisser's book due for release a couple of months later. On his blog on 26 November Roberts repeated his lie that 'I authoritatively laid ... out ... Mbeki's Aids-policy analysis and logic on the themes of poverty and race', as if his claims about these things in his

book were approved by Mbeki and therefore 'authoritative'. When expecting what he stole from me, they were just his inventions.

Actually, complying with his contractual obligation to write *Fit to Govern* independently and without interference to 'maximize the independence and broad intellectual credibility of the Book' was the last thing Roberts was concerned about, because even as he was signing his contract with ABSA he was lying about his availability to write the book, and he proceeded to breach the contract straight away. As Myburgh pointed out in his piece 'A Plagiarist Defrocked?',

The contract Roberts signed with ABSA on January 13 2004 for the writing of the Mbeki book required that he 'devote himself to the Book full time until the Completion Date and refrain from taking up any other employment or doing anything else which will have a negative effect on the Author's ability to comply with the provisions of the Timetable and in particular to complete the Book by no later than the completion date.' In return ABSA promised to fund Roberts with a R1,2m sponsorship which would run from 15 December 2003 (backdated) to March 31 2005, by which time the manuscript was supposed to be complete.

However, Roberts – who was still working on his biography of Nadine Gordimer – was only able to produce a rough draft by the end of March 2005. This initial version (then titled 'Fit to Rule?') had no AIDS chapter to speak of, just an assemblage of long and mainly irrelevant quotes. The extension of the ABSA sponsorship was dependent on Roberts producing a proper section on HIV and AIDS by August 29 2005, and having a penultimate manuscript ready by September 19 2005. Once again his time was squeezed by his work on the Gordimer biography, which was eventually to be published in October 2005

Which is to say Roberts did not

devote himself to the Book full time until the Completion Date and refrain from taking up any other employment or doing anything else which will have a negative effect on the Author's ability to comply with the provisions of the Timetable and in particular to complete the Book by no later than the completion date.

He had no intention of honouring this obligation, because he was still busy with *No Cold Kitchen*, which he proceeded to finish on ABSA's time and money.

Roberts's unscrupulous conduct here was entirely in character, however, considering the Cape High Court's finding in his defamation case that his repeated slimy side-dealing in his own interest while employed as a professional assistant by a firm of Johannesburg attorneys was improper, and could indeed have got him investigated for striking-off had he been an admitted attorney in this country.

The dishonesty of Roberts's statement in his *Die Burger* interview that 'Mbeki acted like a stereotype of Gordimer, and Gordimer like a stereotype of Mbeki' really smacks you when you discover that his first such utterance was on the airwaves in 2005, repeated in his letter to Mbeki in February 2006 – only the person he was then acclaiming for not acting 'like a stereotype of Gordimer' (Roberts's lying portrayal of Gordimer as a 'control freak') and who wound up acting 'like a stereotype of Mbeki' (the newspapers' lying portrayal of Mbeki as a 'control freak') was Essop Pahad. I quote from Roberts's letter:

Somebody asked me on the radio last year about the contrast between writing about Nadine Gordimer versus writing about Thabo Mbeki. I said at that time that, in my experience, there was a strange reversal of stereotypes: Essop Pahad was behaving like a stereotype of Nadine Gordimer, the supposed champion of intellectual liberty. Essop was just leaving me alone to get on with my work in my own way. By contrast Nadine Gordimer had acted, and continued to act, like a media stereotype of Essop Pahad, clamping down like the heavy-handed Commissar whom Essop is mythically supposed to be.

This is to say, in full guilty knowledge of the 'tsar-like ... complete control' that he'd uncomplainingly permitted Pahad to exercise over the writing of *Fit to Govern*, while repeatedly pretending that he'd 'writ[ten] about Thabo Mbeki' independently and without interference, Roberts switched heroes to distract from the 'complete control' that Pahad had asserted over the book's content. It was no longer Pahad who'd commendably let him 'get on with my work in my own way' (which he didn't), not 'clamping down like the heavy-handed Commissar' (which he did); now it was Mbeki who'd let him 'get on with my work in my own way', not 'clamping down like the heavy-handed Commissar'.

On 6 November, in a post on his ThoughtLeader blog, Roberts restated:

This is the final and exquisite irony of the recent free-expression debate: Gordimer, the supposed champion of free expression, attempted to censor my biography of her and thus acted like the stereotype of Thabo Mbeki, the authoritarian control freak. Meanwhile, Gordimer accuses Mbeki – who, unlike her, did not attempt to mess with my work on him – of constituting a threat to free expression!

Do you see what an incorrigible, scheming chicaner this bugger is?

And do you think Roberts ever sent Mbeki a follow-up letter to correct what he'd said about Pahad letting him 'get on with my work in my own way' and not 'clamping down like the heavy-handed Commissar'? Something like: Dear Mr President, I regret to inform you that all my praise for Essop Pahad in my letter to you about the 'intellectual liberty' he provided me to 'get on with my work in my own way' ended up quite misplaced. True to his reputation, Essop turned out to be very much the 'heavy-handed Commissar whom Essop is mythically supposed to be', busily 'clamping down' on numerous unfavourable things I had to say in my book about South Africa's richest white family that made its fortune destroying African lives, families and communities in its mines, working men in the most inhumane conditions, and insisting that I delete them. Also, although I assured you in my letter that 'I am, of course, not prepared to attempt to "spin-doctor" the manuscript in order to attempt to placate any such critics. That would be a fool's errand and an obvious defeat of what is valuable to me in this work', I was quite happy to go much further than to merely "'spin-doctor" the manuscript' and thereby 'obvious[ly] defeat ... what is valuable to me in this work'; I was willing to censor my book according to the dictates of your Minister in the Presidency, acting like an 'authoritarian control freak' and pulling moves behind your back to protect his private business interests. And can you believe that I'm such a whore of Oppenheimer capital myself that I didn't hesitate to do what he told me?

Responding to press enquiries about Pahad's censorship of his book, Roberts claimed he was just toning down his views to accord with Mbeki's, because actually he's more radical than Mbeki is: he had 'strong views on the role of illiberal capital', he said – stronger than Mbeki's 'views', which were 'almost-as-strong'. (Can you believe this person, talking like this without any sense of how utterly ludicrous he sounds?!) Nonetheless, 'Part of proper respect for his radicalism is in not misrepresenting it.' Which is to say, on Roberts's own version, that he'd improperly and disrespectfully misrepresented Mbeki's thinking about 'the role'

of mining capital in our country's history until Pahad came along to fix things with his scissors.

Actually Roberts was not particularly concerned to pay Mbeki 'proper respect'. In his letter Mbeki pertinently enjoined him not to fawn over him, anticipating that the book would be readily dismissed if he did; but unable to help himself, and so eager to please, Roberts proceeded to do just that, turning out a grovelling hagiography whose sycophancy attracted widespread derision.

Mbeki indicated that didn't care much for the book's working title 'Fit to Rule?' either; and again Roberts disregarded this, merely substituting 'Govern' for 'Rule', and finally dropping the question mark too, but otherwise leaving the title substantially unchanged.

Mr Big Communist didn't only direct cuts in the book manuscript to protect his Big Capitalists, it appears that he also ordered Roberts's basic line stated in the very first sentence of his first AIDS chapter: 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident.' Now that we know for a fact that Roberts was writing to order like a cringing servant, the significance of the historical time-frame and the changes he made within it become significant.

Roberts did not claim in the first draft of his AIDS chapter submitted to Pahad – which Mbeki read and commented on sparsely in his letter – that 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident.' Nor did Roberts make this bogus claim or suggest it anywhere in the hugely revised and expanded draft of his AIDS chapter that he showed me on his notebook, written several weeks after he'd met me and read *Just say yes, Mr President*. It seems certain therefore that when Pahad read Roberts's revised AIDS chapter, incorporating great chunks from my book manuscript, duly credited, he told him it that was unacceptable, and laid down the line he wanted. You can imagine how it went: What's this dissident shit doing in here? You must write that Mbeki is not a dissident. Why the fuck do you think I hired you?

More evidence that Pahad directed Roberts's false line on AIDS is to be found in a dull letter he wrote to the London *Independent* on 18 August, after the newspaper had criticised Mbeki's sacking of Deputy Health Minister Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge. Evidently unaware of Mbeki's contact with Gevisser in June to correct Roberts's misrepresentation of him as a fellow believer in the HIV-AIDS hoax, Pahad sold him in his letter as merely misunderstood – basing his argument on the same fallacy that Roberts built his case on in *Fit to Govern* and afterwards, namely that government AIDS policy evidenced Mbeki's own thinking on the subject:

Consider the statement: 'The Government commits itself to intensify the campaign against HIV and Aids and to improve its implementation of all elements of the comprehensive approach such as prevention, home-based care and treatment.'

And add this: 'We shall ensure that the partnerships built over the years are strengthened, and that our improved national comprehensive strategy against Aids and sexually transmitted infections is finalised as soon as possible.'

The words were spoken by the President of South Africa not long ago. Are they the words of a President 'in denial' over the Aids epidemic in his country? The answer must be an emphatic: No!

The second-rate propagandist continued in similar vein, churning out more wooden political cant:

Our commitment to fight the scourge, and to treat the sufferers quickly and effectively, remains as strong as ever.

The remarks by President Mbeki quoted above, made in his State of the Nation address when he opened Parliament this year, serve as corroboration. It was President Mbeki, as Deputy President under President Nelson Mandela, who carried the banner of the fight against Aids in the 1990s, then into his Presidency from 1999, the lapel Aids ribbon being his trademark wherever he went.

Mr Mbeki now leads a government which has received UN and world commendation for its anti-Aids efforts. South Africa is in the forefront of the search for an effective vaccine. The health authorities run a regularly updated and increasingly costly programme of both prevention and treatment which is accepted in informed quarters as one of the most comprehensive and extensive to be found in the world.

And who would deny that the country's splendid economic showing under President Mbeki has underpinned its capacity to pay the high cost necessary? Moreover, the Mbeki government was in the forefront of the campaign to have the cost of Aids drugs reduced.

It is necessary to reassure people that there is no hesitation on the road to beating this scourge. The digging up of old controversies merely confuses the issues. ...

The scourge we face is too great for such indulgences. Even if one concedes that, in epochal matters such as this, there is room for differences over style and presentation of policy, it

should be recognised that there is now no significant argument in South Africa about content.

It is time to call on people everywhere – notably our friends abroad who stood by us so solidly in past conflict – to work with us and help us to intensify this new struggle, so the stunning success achieved when we threw off the yoke of repression in 1994 can be matched, even eclipsed, in facing the challenge. It is not only a national but a world scourge. And we shall win the battle, in the same combined spirit which served to banish apartheid.

Yes, comrade. Pahad obviously hadn't noticed that Mbeki himself had quit talking of 'the scourge' (Pahad repeats the mantra four times) after the lapse of his American faith in AIDS as a sexually transmitted plague among Africans at the end of 1999, just as he missed the clue in Mbeki's subtle distinction in his speech between 'Aids and sexually transmitted infections'. And that if he'd 'carried the banner of the fight against Aids in the 1990s', as indeed he had, he'd carried a very different banner for the right to re-examine conventional wisdom about AIDS from the close of the decade on. Which is why he'd conspicuously thrown away his little 'trademark ... lapel Aids ribbon' in 2000.

Pahad's lie in his letter to the *Star* on 5 July that 'It was President Mbeki who worked tirelessly to bring down the costs of the relevant drugs' was now diluted to 'Moreover, the Mbeki government was in the forefront of the campaign to have the cost of Aids drugs reduced.' Only that wasn't true either. Quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* on 19 April 2001 right after the settlement of the generic drug/compulsory licensing case, Tshabalala-Msimang was explicit: 'We never said we want to use antiretrovirals. People who want antiretrovirals can go to the private sector.' And as the drug companies' attorneys had correctly pointed out in a statement,

the case has virtually nothing to do with access to AIDS treatments, but centres instead on whether South Africa is obliged to follow international law regarding intellectual property rights and the country's own international trade pacts.

Considering Mbeki's rue shared with Gevisser that it was 'very, very regrettable' that he'd been forced leave the AIDS debate under political pressure, Pahad's TAC-like assertions that 'The digging up of old controversies merely confuses the issues. ... The scourge we face is too great for such indulgences' was hardly representative of Mbeki's thinking. As if the 'controversies' Mbeki had brought to the fore were 'old' and now

settled. As if this was Mbeki's view of things: that we can't 'indulge' in thinking in a time of alleged 'epochal' national peril. As if Mbeki's own clear dissension from AIDS orthodoxy amounted to no more than 'differences over style and presentation of policy'. As if 'there is now no significant argument in South Africa about content' of national AIDS policy – which is to say, according to Pahad, the office flunky, there's no 'significant argument' about its founding premises: whether Africans really are riddled with sex-germs as the experts say; and whether they really do need to cool down their sex lives; and whether sex without a condom really can kill you ten years later; and whether HIV-positive really does mean 'HIV' infected; and whether HIV-positive Africans really do need to swallow extraordinarily toxic ARVs every day until they die on them; and whether these drugs really do make them live longer (or the opposite); and whether giving AZT and similar drugs to pregnant African women and their babies really does make the children healthier (or sicker, crippling and killing them).

Put another way, what Pahad was conveying in his letter was that reargitating the 'old controversies' among scientists about the cause and treatment of AIDS, which Mbeki had given air in 1999 and 2000, was not just 'confus[ing]' in his view, it was also damaging. This 'should be recognised' by all of us, he insisted, which is to say it was time the 'old controversies' were shut down and closed. And how? By (a) rehabilitating Mbeki on AIDS by way of a false history in a book alleging that he was still with the orthodoxy, and (b) by dint of a hatchet job on the most active and influential AIDS dissident activist working in South Africa. Indeed, in an emailed response to the *Weekend Witness's* probing about the revelations in this chapter (he didn't deny making the cuts Pahad wanted), Roberts toed Pahad's line in disparaging my work as 'causing ... damage to policy formulation and public debate' – evidencing that on AIDS Pahad intended the book he was supervising to be an exercise in political damage control by whitewashing Mbeki's dissension on AIDS and ARVs:

I am at least pleased that Brink's present silliness is not causing the kind of damage to policy formulation and public debate as did his old fraudulent habit of placing words in the President's mouth [*no instance given*]. ... My book authoritatively repairs that damage, not least because I had the President's comments on that subject as well [*he didn't; Mbeki gave him nothing specific*]. Brink strangely focuses on Oppenheimer rather than my AIDS discussion, his pet area, which was equally closely read by both the President and Essop [*and repudiated by the President*]. Both on

Oppenheimer and on AIDS, my book gives an accurate reflection of the President's thinking precisely because it is informed by these and many other comments from the President, Essop and others [*on AIDS, Mbeki acted to deflate these pretensions in his approach to Gevisser; and on the Oppenheimers he was silent in his February 2006 letter, his only communication with Roberts regarding his thinking*].

But in letting rip with a slew of defamatory lies to discredit me and my work in a bid to silence me, Roberts and Pahad situated themselves among the AIDS promoters to whom Mbeki referred in his letter, leveling the 'demand that all discussion must be terminated'. Why, as Pahad put it, 'The digging up of old controversies merely confuses the issues.' This 'caus[es] ... damage to policy formulation and public debate', Roberts reckons, especially when the bloke continuing to stoke the 'old controversies' was suggesting that the President too was on the unpopular side of them. And had recently acted to confirm it.

There's a further pointer to the likelihood that Pahad directed Roberts to market Mbeki as a believer, particularly apparent to people who know Roberts and his style well, as I do. When telling lies, Roberts communicates in a tell-tale, forceful, brittle manner that betrays he doesn't believe what he's saying. Like his new opening line in his third (or subsequent) draft of his AIDS chapter in the manner of a lying lawyer: 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident', despite all the contrary evidence. Like when he was shouting 'He hit me, he hit me' in Long Street to frame the puny gate guard, in the face of all the probabilities against, and no evidence of it at all. You see it too in his aggressive blog and letter writing, in his hopeless persistence in claiming that Mbeki still subscribes to the HIV-ARV-AIDS model, notwithstanding Mbeki's move to refute this most basic lie at the heart of the book in the month that it came out.

Roberts's apparent instructions from Pahad to allege in his book that Mbeki still goes for the HIV-AIDS theory and the pharmaceutical industry's ARVs may explain why on two occasions Roberts got aggressively agitated when I suggested over a drink that Mbeki shared my rejection of them – contradicting the major claim at the centre of his book that it appears he'd been ordered to make, but which he unhappily knew already would never fly because it was so obviously untrue. Rhodes philosophy lecturer Eusebius McKaiser reported a similar experience in the October 2007 issue of *Molotov Cocktail*.

My first meeting with Roberts ended with an unpleasant dinner on Long Street in Cape Town, with him screaming at me, much

to my embarrassment, what with native onlookers gawking: 'Where is the evidence that Mbeki has said HIV does not cause AIDS? WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE? And you call yourself an academic.'

One feels a twinge of pity reading Roberts vainly trying to avoid the crushing reality that Mbeki himself acted to refute his claims concerning the major topic canvassed in two chapters of his book, namely Mbeki's thinking on AIDS – decisively killing the book's credibility and destroying its author's reputation as any kind of reliable writer. Psychologists helping sad people like this would call it being in denial, a sort of denialism. But it's only understandable. It must be harsh for Roberts to feel so sharply jilted by the object of his unrequited affections.

Like a run-over snake lying in the road with a broken back and hissing in his death throes, Roberts has used his ThoughtLeader blog to attack the messenger of Mbeki's awful tidings for him. Recycling his 'clash of fundamentalisms' device that he tried on me in his book, but abandoned at the end when he couldn't make it work, Roberts assailed Gevisser on 21 November, still contending that he and Mbeki walk the sensible, rational middle way together on AIDS (just like white South African liberals) between what he called in the title of his post, 'Gevisser on Aids: a complicity of opposites'. In a further post two days later, Roberts claimed Gevisser's book contained 'methodological flaws (narrative over analysis) that make Gevisser fall down in his AIDS chapter'. And the 'methodological flaws' in question, the ones that made 'Gevisser fall down in his AIDS chapter'? Gevisser had interviewed Mbeki! 'I knew from my Gordimer book that "interviews" are unfailingly more fun than useful.' It's not useful to interview the subject of one's biographical writing, according to Ronald Suresh Roberts. It's better not to. This is what 'saved me from Gevisser's analytical missteps'. Pathetic!

In his 'complicity of opposites' blog post, Roberts played down his hopeless claim that Mbeki is not an 'AIDS dissident' as Gevisser recorded he is – and as both the *Guardian*<sup>135</sup> and the BBC<sup>136</sup> accordingly reported he is on 6 and 7 November respectively. Roberts's new dodge was to insist that Mbeki is not an 'AIDS denialist', as he'd just done in his *Beeld* article a few days before, entitled 'The President is not now, nor has he ever been an "AIDS denialist"' – in support of which he quoted Presidential spokesman Mukoni Ratshitanga in *Business Day* on 15 November: '... the president is not now, nor has he ever been, an "AIDS denialist"'. Except that this statement was specifically in response to an

article in that newspaper claiming that Mbeki was an ‘AIDS denialist’, not an ‘AIDS dissident’.

Clever, hey? Clever, because there’s no dispute that Mbeki has never doubted, much less denied, that the African poor suffer a high incidence of broken health, nowadays called ‘AIDS’; but as even the most cursory look at ‘Castro Hlongwane’ makes clear, Mbeki has unequivocally rejected the American idea that the African poor are sick from a virus they got from loving each other, which is to say he’s certainly an AIDS dissident, as Gevisser notes in his book.

It’s for this that Mbeki has been branded a ‘denialist’ by people, mostly white, with a professional or personal investment in the HIV theory. To be in denial, however, the state denialists are supposed to be in, is to refuse to face reality, to refuse to accept indisputable historical, medical or other facts. But Mbeki doesn’t deny that poor Africans get sick and die early at higher rate than the rich. In company with hundreds of eminent scientists and doctors, Nobel Laureates included, he disputes the new American idea that impoverished Africans are prone to get sick and die early for the prime reason that they made love with their sweethearts, or just their squeezers sometimes.

It’s true, as Roberts avers, that ‘Mbeki has never denied ... that HIV causes Aids’ – just as he’s never denied that tokoloshes riding in on hyenas cause family misfortune, if you get the drift. The little known reason for this is that Mbeki is with the most rigorous, radical, switched-on AIDS dissident scientists – as he makes plain in ‘Castro Hlongwane’, which he told Gevisser represents his views (and yes, he’s the principal author). I quote from the original March 2002 version:

Strange as it may seem, given what our friends tell us about **the Virus** everyday [*Mbeki’s sarcastic boldface and upper case emphasis*], nobody has seen it, including our friends. Nobody knows what it looks like. Nobody knows how it behaves. Everybody acts on the basis of a series of hypotheses about the Virus, which are presumed to be facts, supposedly authenticated by ‘clinical evidence’.

Those who have imbibed the faith that millions among us are infected by a deadly HI Virus, will disbelieve the assertion that the work of isolating our unique HI Virus has not been done. The omnipotent apparatus will scream loudly that the telling of this truth constitutes the very heart of the criminal non-conformity that must be denounced and repressed by all means and at all costs.

Rather than perpetuate our self-repression, it is time that we demanded that the necessary scientific work be done to isolate and analyse the Virus that is said to be so deadly.

In short, Mbeki scornfully points out – quite correctly – that **‘the Virus’** has never been isolated, never been seen.

What has been seen is that Roberts writes false history on command for money. And that like Pahad, Roberts has ‘imbibed the faith that millions among us [*Africans*] are infected by a deadly HI Virus’. Why, he writes in *Fit to Govern*, it’s ‘obvious and orthodox truth’ that a sexually transmitted ‘viral affliction’ (together with too little food) causes Africans, especially ‘Poorer Africans’, to get AIDS, which is to say eats away at their immune systems and causes their health to break down. But as *Mail&Guardian* editor Ferial Haffajee correctly noted on her ThoughtLeader blog on 15 November, in falsely ascribing this ‘faith’ to Mbeki, Roberts is ‘a peddler of lies’, his chief lie being that ‘Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident’ – a lie contradicted and corrected by Gevisser on Mbeki’s direct authority:

There is no question as to the message Thabo Mbeki was delivering to me along with this [*updated ‘Castro Hlongwane’*] document: he was now, as he had been since 1999, an AIDS dissident.

Four days later, in a post on his own ThoughtLeader blog, Ebrahim Harvey presciently asked in the title: ‘Is Roberts an intellectual prostitute?’ (‘aside [from] the many seemingly credible accusations against him of plagiarism presently’). Yes, Ebrahim, as you can see from this chapter, he certainly is. Who no one wants anymore.

## Endnote: five updates

1. Discussing his Mbeki biography at the Marais Road Synagogue Centre in Cape Town on 20 May, Gevisser reported that after it was published Mbeki wrote to him specifically to confirm that he'd been right in describing him as an AIDS dissident in his book – adding that if he'd just look at the evidence he'd be one too. (A second letter from Mbeki 'disavowed' (Gevisser's word) his resort to psychologistic portraiture in place of fact-based exposition of Mbeki's policy positions, particularly in his AIDS chapter.) So much for Roberts's claim in *Fit to Govern* that 'Thabo Mbeki is not now, nor has he ever been, an AIDS dissident.'

2. On 7 March, three days after receiving our Heads of Argument, the TAC smartly dropped its High Court application against my Treatment Information Group and me, mentioned at page 18 of the Preface. The end of Roberts's abortive defamation action against the *Sunday Times* was less felicitous. On 22 September the taxing master of the Cape High Court set his allocatur to the newspaper's legal bill of one million rands. For him to pay.

3. On 17 June I wrote an open letter to Professor Alan Dershowitz at Harvard Law School, which Roberts had attended in the early nineties,

because I was struck by the many similarities between the manner in which you cooked up *The Case for Israel* and responded to Norman Finkelstein's charge that it's 'among the most spectacular academic frauds ever published on the Israel-Palestine conflict', and Roberts's misuse and abuse of his sources in manufacturing his bogus case in *Fit to Govern* that on AIDS Mbeki is with the believers, and his response to my conclusion following my 443-page critical analysis of his book that he's 'an extensive plagiarist, a fabricator and falsifier of history, and the author of a colossal literary fraud, and accordingly so grossly unprofessional and discreditable a writer that he's unfit to be relied upon for any purpose, not even for directions to the post office'.

I copied the letter to Professor Noam Chomsky, among others, and was thrilled by his response: 'Fine letter, and very appropriate.' Finkelstein also thanked me for it, remarking, 'A thumbs up from Chomsky is the best way to start the day.' Sure is. (Neither are dissidents on AIDS.) The

letter is posted on this book's website and is included in *RUDE LETTERS* (in press).

4. On 16 July the Press Ombudsman's Panel dismissed Roberts's complaint against the *Weekender* for calling him the plagiarist he is in its front-page headline report on 17 November 2007 and on its street posters – a conclusion editor Peter Bruce stood by at the hearing: 'The poster was true – he is a plagiarist.' The panel found Bruce's 'belief that Roberts was a plagiarist reasonable' on the strength of the case made out in 'Brink's persuasive book', and that James Myburgh's subsequent independent audit of my plagiarism charges 'did confirm [Bruce's] belief that Roberts is a plagiarist' – particularly since 'Roberts does not confront the issues of cutting where Brink cut, using identical ellipses and making the same transcription errors'.

The rejection of Roberts's complaint and the finding in as many words that he's indeed a plagiarist was reported by the *Mail&Guardian*, *Times* and *Citizen* online, and in the print editions of the *Sunday Times* and *Mercury* too. Roberts announced he'd appeal, but didn't – obviously not wanting to see the ruling upheld by the Press Appeals Board, chaired by Supreme Court of Appeal judge Ralph Zulman.

Like the High Court did in dismissing Roberts's defamation action against the *Sunday Times*, the panel also found Roberts an 'unconvincing' witness, which is to say not only a plagiarist but a stranger to the truth as well. A liar and a thief in other words. As we were saying.

5. His professional reputation in shreds after the publication of this book – its central critique concerning Mbeki's dissident thinking on AIDS supported by Mbeki himself – Roberts imagined apparently that if he just stuck to his now rather pathetic lies, and continued telling even more about me, he'd be able to brazen his way out of the mess he was in. In columns written in *Empire* in December and *BBC Focus on Africa* in January, he continued misrepresenting Mbeki as a subscriber to AIDS orthodoxy, and persisted in claiming that Gevisser and the *Guardian* reporting his 'Castro Hlongwane' revelations had both got it wrong.

Reacting to my exposé in January of how he'd written his book under close political direction, Roberts used his February column in *Empire* not to plead to the charge but to mount a full-bore attack on me with a barrage of further lies. I refuted Roberts's old and new lies in extended letters to the editors of both magazines, and was invited by both to write for publication. *Empire* published a 500-word letter in June, but my 200-worder to *BBC Focus on Africa* missed the submission deadline by a few

hours due to a miscommunication. The letters can be read on this book's website, along with Roberts's three articles to which they refer.

Roberts was at it again in the July/August issue of *Radical Philosophy* and in the *Mail&Guardian* on 26 September, shamelessly punting his false claim in his book that Mbeki is with the believers on AIDS. Again I wrote letters to the editors to straighten things out. The editorial collective of *Radical Philosophy* placed my letter on the agenda for discussion at its next meeting in November, and the *M&G* published my piece as an opinion piece on 10 October under the neat title 'Aids, lies and dissidents'.

The following week, though, the *M&G* published a correction under the heading 'Matter of fact':

Anthony Brink claimed that the reprint of Roberts's book *Fit to Govern* was cancelled after allegations of plagiarism. The book was in fact reprinted (before any such allegations were made), and is still in print. The *M&G* regrets the error.

I informed the *M&G* that it was flat wrong about this: on 17 November 2007, under the headline '*Roberts se boek oor Mbeki eers nie herdruk*' (Roberts's book about Mbeki will not be reprinted for the time being), *Die Burger* quoted STE Publishers owner Reedwaan Vally's reaction to my plagiarism charges (I translate):

the reprint of the book, of which all 8 500 copies have been sold, has been temporarily halted until finality over the allegations has been reached. ... He said STE Publishers considers allegations of plagiarism in a very serious light, and if they are true he will feel terribly betrayed by Roberts. ... Brink's allegations ... will be thoroughly investigated.

So, after 'finality over the allegations had been reached' with both Myburgh and Sanders having publicly confirmed them, I was astonished to learn from the Press Ombudsman's decision on the matter that in February 2008 Vally had nevertheless gone on to reprint *Fit to Govern*, notwithstanding his solemn declamation that he 'considers allegations of plagiarism in a very serious light, and if they are true he will feel terribly betrayed by Roberts'.

Evidently the 'terribly betrayed' feeling Vally experienced when Roberts's plagiarism was confirmed was displaced by the joyful prospect of silver jingling in his pocket from a few more sales.

In reprinting *Fit to Govern* despite the corroboration of my plagiarism charges, Mbeki's validation of the thrust of my case on fabrication and falsification, and my further revelations in January that Pahad had cen-

sored and directed *Fit to Govern*, Vally made himself complicit in Roberts's fraud on the reading public, his perversion of public discourse about Mbeki's engagement with AIDS, and his attempt to distort the history of it. A peddler of any kind of junk for money, you could say. A fellow intellectual criminal.