

# *Africa, Africans and masculinity in the work of Robert Keable, 1912–1927:*

## *the limits of liberalism*

*by Marc Epprecht*

Robert Keable was an English Anglican priest who first came to Africa as a mission school teacher in Zanzibar in 1912. From 1915 to 1920 he ministered in colonial Lesotho, then a British protectorate known as Basutoland, during which time he served in France for a year as a chaplain to the South Africa Native Labour Corps (SANLC). He subsequently became a prolific, internationally renowned essayist, poet and fiction writer with novels made into a Broadway play and a successful Hollywood film. Many of his publications contain significant or predominant Africa content. Vivid descriptions of the Drakensberg (the Berg or uKhahlamba, the Malutis) feature prominently throughout his writing, including as seen and climbed from the Natal and Free State sides, and as tramped up and down the valleys and peaks of Lesotho. Among other things, he identified as a socialist, an advocate of women's liberation, a critic of empire and a Christian intellectual even after he quit the ministry to become a novelist. He died prematurely in Tahiti in 1927.

Keable is not well-remembered in Lesotho or South Africa. His books were never published, marketed or, as far as I can see, reviewed in the region. Neither Gray's (1979) nor Chapman's (1996) overviews of Southern African literature spare a thought for him.<sup>1</sup> Literary commentary that did (notably Hugh Cecil's) focused on his most famous war novel, *Simon Called Peter* with almost nothing to say about Lesotho or his other African writing.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary friends and critics (such as Sadleir or Field) and obituarists (Garrett and

Le Huray, for example) similarly had virtually zero interest in his depictions of Africa and Africans or the influence these may have played in the development of his thinking and art.<sup>3</sup> Albert Grundlingh's history of the SANLC does reference Keable's war writing in passing for bearing witness to the racial prejudice and other injustices that Africans faced in the corps, and to support his point that African priests were useful to the British in controlling the African troops.<sup>4</sup> To fellow missionary and historian of the An-

glican church, Canon Dove, Keable appears as a complicated person who achieved much, but ultimately failed to match ideals with either artistic or political practice. A 'brilliant but sad' career, as Dove put it, in a decidedly obscure publication.<sup>5</sup>

My own passing engagement with Keable was strictly instrumental. I cited his novel *Recompense* solely for its depiction of a repellent white trader in the highlands

of colonial Lesotho.<sup>6</sup> This supported a point I was arguing about the oppressive stranglehold that whites held upon the Basutoland economy in the early twentieth century, a significant aspect in the history of women's steady impoverishment in those years.<sup>7</sup>

A new biography has prompted me to dig into Keable's *oeuvre* more attentively. The author, Simon Keable-Elliot, never met his grandfather but he draws heavily upon Keable's private letters to friends and family. He also uses research gathered by two prospective biographers who died before they could publish: Hugh Cecil, who had previously published a chapter on Keable's war fiction; and Tim Couzens, well known



*Robert Keable (1887–1927)*

for his work on mission life and death in Lesotho in the same period.<sup>8</sup> Keable-Elliot (2022) rounds out the research with reference to contemporary reviews and interviews of Keable, family photographs and cover art, all woven together within a wide-ranging historiography.<sup>9</sup> It makes for a fair-minded assessment of Keable's career that still, however, shows relatively little critical interest in the African context. He was married in Durban, for example, and judging from the rich descriptions in his second novel, he was very familiar with (indeed, seemingly enamoured of) southern Natal, yet we learn nothing of this connection. Rather, Keable-Elliot focuses disproportionately on *Simon Called Peter* and its reception in England, the United States and Australia. This novel is set in France and contains only passing references to Africa.

Keable-Elliot likewise pays little attention to the politics of Keable's representations of Africa and Africans beyond commenting that 'Keable was as guilty of racism as any white person born at the end of the nineteenth century. Some of his books contain racist language and some characters are racial stereotypes'. He balances this by noting how Keable was vocally critical of white racism, and took the trouble to learn first Swahili then Sesotho. For this and his accessible style of preaching, Keable's 'reputation remained high among his Basotho parishioners well after he left them'. Keable-Elliot also makes the plausible claim that influential trade unionist Keable 'Mote was baptised by and named after him in apparent acknowledgement of Keable's empathy for African struggles for justice'.<sup>10</sup>

In this article I would like to assess the depth of that empathy by shining a sustained light on Keable's depictions of Africa and Africans. I am particularly interested in the role these may have played in the development of his thinking around masculinity and sexuality. Keable was undoubtedly on the colonialist spectrum, but he could indeed be scathing in his disapproval of white men's injustice toward and exploitation of Africans. In that way he expressed a more liberal ethic than many of his white male literary forebears and contemporaries like H. Rider Haggard, James Percy FitzPatrick, and Crosbie Garstin. He may thus bear closer comparison with David Blackburn, whose biting satire of a rogue Zulu mineworker and a flailing 'Maritzburg missionary (1908) is set among politely racist Natalians.<sup>11</sup> His romantic sense of longing and spirituality, and his unusually frank explorations of sexual desire, also potentially complicate some current simplistic notions of coloniality and whites' epistemic

violence. Beinart and Draper offer a model for me in this regard, with close studies of progressive white men's writing about the South African environment before and after Keable's era.<sup>12</sup>

In following this trail, I am not seeking to elevate Keable into the canon of southern African literature or political thought. Rather my aim is simply to assess a neglected, and very unevenly dissident, voice within the hegemonic masculinity of an era of portentous change.

For the purposes of this article, I roughly divide Keable's copious writing into three periods by date of authorship (often different from the order of publication) and three genres.<sup>13</sup> The earliest writing (1912–1915) consisted of missionary tracts from East Africa which are of interest mainly to mark where Keable began his intellectual, spiritual and artistic journeys on the continent. Next came a plethora of short pieces that reflected his experiences in Lesotho, South Africa and France: wartime journalism, political tracts and short stories/parables (1917–1920). Overlapping these, but with a decidedly different tone, are his popular novels with African settings and characters (1919–1927). The shift in tone in the novels is likely related to different imagined audiences. In the first two periods his main readership would have been the Anglican clergy and missionaries around the British empire, plus a lay population of Anglican faithful, presumably mostly in England and the settler colonies. By contrast, the novels were targeting a mass audience primarily in Britain and the United States in competition with a new generation of post-war, secular-minded authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald and D.H. Lawrence – with whom he was often compared.

In the following sections, I examine Keable's key works with African content. In this I am alert to the hurtfulness today of everyday racist discourse in the 1910s and 1920s, and I admit to being shocked at how pervasive it is in Keable's work. I apologise in advance for a necessary amount of sampling. In the conclusion I assay an appreciation of aspects of Keable's *oeuvre* with a critique of the limits of white liberal masculinity in a settler colonial context, which is to say, a comment upon the tenacity of colonialist and racist tropes in even otherwise progressive men.

### **Missionary propaganda, 1912–1915**

Keable's missionary propaganda came primarily out of his Zanzibar period. His very first Africa-focused book, *Darkness or Light*, appeared in print only months after he arrived there.<sup>14</sup> This, and the writing style, suggests

much of it was researched as a student at Cambridge in preparation for departure. It refers heavily and approvingly to the classics of the Age of Exploration fifty or more years earlier (Burton, Speke, Livingstone, Lugard, Stanley and the like). This is to support a mix of partisan history of his employer at the time (the Universities Mission to Central Africa; also Livingstone's), abolitionist and Islamophobic rants, amateur anthropology, geography, political economy, prayer book, and study guide. As an example of the latter, consider: 'Give an explanatory list of the bad features of native life'.<sup>15</sup>

Knowing what came later, this book makes for painful reading, and it is easy to see why his boss and mentor, the famously socialist Bishop Frank Weston, may have worried about his young charge. According to Cecil, Weston saw 'colour prejudice as the greatest danger to the spread of Christianity in Africa, and thought he detected it in Robert'.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Weston later publicly denounced Keable for an unforgiving disdain, and double standard toward, African priests' class airs.<sup>17</sup> And yet Weston, by virtue of a glowing preface, seemed to have approved of sentiments such as this: 'The average negro is entirely content with his unsanitary hut, his high death rate and his precarious existence ... He is an inveterate beggar, entirely improvident, and incorrigibly lazy at his best'.<sup>18</sup>

This book was followed by *A City of the Dawn*, a compilation of monthly newsletters that Keable had written from east Africa to friends in England.<sup>19</sup> Where *Darkness or Light* was serious, *A City* makes missionary work sound like a rollicking good time – picnics, hiking, people-watching. His other works in this genre or set in east Africa also appear to hew closely to his personal experiences (like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and sailing through the Red Sea), and interactions with his pupils, the Boy Scout troop that he founded, and the missionaries or other travellers who told him spine-tingling tales about their time in Africa.<sup>20</sup> The tone in these pieces is unselfconsciously Orientalist in a Boy's Own adventure style, full of both wonder and revulsion for a place where East meets West meets the 'real' Africa, and where 'We have to save Africa from Asia'.<sup>21</sup> The cosmopolitan nature of Zanzibar – Goans, Gujaratis, Arabs, Swahili, 'real' Africans – and the beauty of nature (a whole chapter is devoted to the creatures he observes at low tide and in the mangrove swamp) are described in truly loving detail, mixed in with thoughts on the nature and necessity of missionary work.

One passage from an autobiographical-sounding

short story that Keable wrote while serving in France hints at an important source of that imaginary.<sup>22</sup> The character was a priest newly arrived at a desolate mission station in Lesotho and feeling that first dismay of culture shock:

And then when I got among the people, after the first pleasure of the scenery had worn off, and so on, I was miserable. All the old tribal colour had gone. This was no conquest worth making. These hideously dressed women, and civilised drunken men, were about as far removed from my interior and secret picture (drawn chiefly from Rider Haggard's novels) as they could be.<sup>23</sup>

In the following section, I shall show that Keable matured out of some of the Haggardesque fantasy of his early years. One aspect of his Orientalism, however, was to linger. Like many European men from the sexually repressed society that was Edwardian England, Keable was clearly fascinated by the ease with which Africans appeared to inhabit their bodies, often nearly naked. Glimpses of, and musing about, topless, young African women and girls feature in many of his stories and novels. These are not erotically charged in a way recognisable to most readers today, but are symbolic of either some white men's perversion (as in *Recompense*) or, much more commonly, the sexual repression of his own culture. 'I wish I were brown and lithe and that I might live as free', he writes of the naked girls he photographs playing in the waves off a Zanzibari beach.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps to protect himself against untoward suspicion, or to promote his belief in white women's sexual emancipation, this imagery is subsequently mostly invoked by admiring white female characters. Julie in *Simon*, for example, describing her home in Natal, sighs how 'I just love the all but naked girls carrying water up to the village'.<sup>25</sup> The protagonist in *Peradventure* allows himself to fall in love with Ursula after she chastises him for being such a moralistic prude at a belly dance. The lead dancer, she explains, 'had one of the most lovely bodies I've ever seen'; implying, what is your problem, man, admire it, let your body respond naturally.<sup>26</sup>

### **Wartime journalism, political tracts and short stories, 1917–1920**

A shift in tone in Keable's writing is clearly noticeable between his Zanzibar-inspired writing and that which came out of his Lesotho/wartime periods, from 'missionary's own (bit naughty) adventure' to introspective and searching. Four life changes may explain the shift: living in Lesotho itself, an unhappy marriage coming

to an end, being near-fatally shot in the course of his duties in Lesotho, and the world war. His essays and stories from this period reflect a sharpening political consciousness underlaid by deepening anxiety over modernity, including sexuality. *Simon Called Peter*, notably, is at root about a man's existential crisis set off not by the war itself, but by the sexual inhibitions that the war lifted. Yet well before that novel, various pieces illustrate progressive loss of faith in the Christian mission, colonialism, capitalism and the sexual repression these seemed to demand. They foreshadow his doubts about ostensibly respectable sexual mores, which he would later articulate to scandalise some readers.

Keable-Elliot tends to stress the war and unhappy marriage as underpinning Keable's transition as an author. Lesotho the place, and the Basotho as a people, may have had a bigger impact than acknowledged. That context requires a brief explication. Rather than a densely populated tropical island with a cosmopolitan culture and diverse demography, the area of Lesotho that Keable ministered in was a sparsely populated, austere and often frigid mountain environment. The people survived just a step away from hunger, but with a powerful sense of community and independence. The culture was still haunted by the ghosts of not-too-distant traumas – slave raids, massacres, famine, cannibalism – but also triumphs like defeating a colonial army in the Gun War of 1880–1881. In part as a result of that war, Basutoland became politically a protectorate rather than a colony. White settlement was restricted to tiny reserves or camps around trading, mission and administrative enclaves. Nonetheless, the maw of industrial racial capitalism was nearby and voraciously consuming African male migrant labour. The impacts of this, and of relatively deep Christian evangelism and schooling, already pervaded the remotest mountain villages. Keable's almost manic writing in his Lesotho and war years (six book-length manuscripts between 1917 and 1920) was evidently a way for him to grapple with these contradictions and his wavering faith that modernity could resolve them.

Keable's first essays to articulate these doubts were written in Lesotho prior to the war, although the book is dedicated from France in 1917. Much of *Drift of Pinions* is theological or even mystical in tone. But Keable here and there conjures some memorable African personalities who are dealing with profound questions of cultural conflict and the complicated transformations happening in the early twentieth century. How to cope with whites' casual, callous injustices, for example.

How to negotiate marriage between Christian and traditionalist families? How to explain the persistence of 'black magic' in Christian villages? How to survive bewildering competing colonialisms? Stephano, for example, in a story of the same name, was a young 'Socrates ... perpetually grappling with the problems of his universe,' not least of all contradictions in the teachings of the (Keable's irony) 'perpetually infallible Mission'.<sup>27</sup> Another big problem was how to survive the brutality of the German officers of askari forces during the war in East Africa. Stephano failed in this. In his final charge toward British lines, he died with a bullet in the *back* of his head.

Sekeke in 'Cattle for money' is another compelling African character in the same book who stoically confronts a cheating white farmer and the migrant labour system on his way to acquiring enough cattle to get married. The farmer is depicted in chillingly brutish terms, a stand-in for the violently racist norms on the farms on the South African side of the Lesotho border. Then there is Teresa in the subsequent *Pilgrim Papers*, a rough diamond 'who spat vigorously from time to time on the floor'.<sup>28</sup> She frankly rebukes the white priest for his lack of success in converting her fellow villagers and takes the task upon herself through fervent prayer and fasting. In 'Black magic' the witchdoctor's curse against a white man for kidnapping/raping his daughter is given credence. The white man dies just weeks later without showing any symptoms.

During the course of his military training and transit to France, Keable developed one of the themes of *Drift of Pinions* in two strongly worded essays. The first, 'The worth of an African', argued that the 'African mind' has 'a humility, a simplicity' that makes it admirably more open to metaphysical life than the modern Westerner. Rather than trying to suppress that openness by acculturating Africans to Western thought, Christian educators should foster African culture in a way that now sounds almost Freirian: 'awakening the liberator of the mind, the imagination'. Were that to be done (and he rued that it was not), the worth of an African would be to enrich and revitalise Christianity in the West. As 'natural socialists', Africans could also be 'our unconscious teacher in the rise of the socialist state'.<sup>29</sup>

This essay was followed by a diatribe against his fellow African priests assigned to the SANLC: 'terrible failure', 'failed hopelessly', 'utterly lacking' and the like.<sup>30</sup> True, he acknowledged, they faced infuriating prejudice and discrimination from white officers. But their mimicry of middle-class European values fatally



set them apart from their fellow Africans; not wanting to eat the same food, sleep or share toilets. They even protested being subject to their medical exam with the regular troops (presumably standing naked in public and having a white doctor examine their genitals, *inter alia*). In this way they betrayed their worth to the Christian mission that Keable had admired earlier.

This piece attracted considerable criticism and Keable was moved to defend himself. His choice of words would probably not have satisfied African readers, if any. The fault was not with the African priests, he explained, but with the mission's methods of training them: 'Many of them I know and love, their work is often extraordinarily beautiful and zealous'. But, after their bad training and their ordination, '(a) we invariably pay too much, and (b) commonly supervise too little.'<sup>31</sup>

We must take Keable at his word that his next foray, *The First Black Ten Thousand*, defended the honour of the regular African soldiers of the SANLC and for that reason was suppressed by the British censors. No copy has survived because, he subsequently claimed, it had 'slight hints of the truth about the racial situation in South Africa'.<sup>32</sup>

That concern does not present very strongly in his first published reflections on the war, which appeared in print well after the SANLC had gone home. *Standing By* is thoughtful, long-form journalism.<sup>33</sup> It offers vignettes of his wartime feelings and observations rather than a disciplined memoir or a critique of either the war or settler racism. One chapter, on the *SS Mendi* disaster that saw hundreds of African troops drown on their way to France, does offer that critique in a subdued way by highlighting the courage and discipline of the Basotho men who so senselessly perished. Mostly, however, Keable is struggling to draw theological or philosophical lessons from the simple things he describes in thick detail – the French prostitutes, notably. What do they teach us? The chateaux and cathedrals? The soundscape of northern France – church bells, cattle lowing? Concerts given by the African men – hauntingly beautiful? *Standing By* is infused with a strong nostalgia for pre-industrial society in France and Lesotho. Notably, Keable waxes poetic about peaceful villages in the Maluti mountains where people enjoyed 'Liberty, Justice, Honour'. Yes, there was a distant alien government, incompetent police and grinding poverty. 'But we lived. We laboured and we loved; we were glad of the warmth of the gay sun or the clean fire'.<sup>34</sup>

The contrast between the bucolic life in the Berg with the hideousness of modern civilisation leads Keable

to lament the seductive nature of modernity, thence to imagine a sad future for Basutoland. He foresaw it joining South Africa, black people getting the franchise, industrial development, mass tourism, and a level of civilisation where 'white has to reckon with black as rival'. Why so sad about that, Keable writes metaphorically, but the answer becomes clear as he looks upon the peaceful French countryside, the dull roar of cannon fire just off scene. The march of civilisation will inevitably bring pain, alienation, and destruction.<sup>35</sup>

The focus on daily, mundane life makes *Standing By* unusual for war journalism, while the storytelling style makes it difficult to distinguish whether the opinions expressed are from a real person or Keable's own projections. This leaves a decided ambiguity about industrial-scale carnage and imperialism. The story 'Michael and Agnesi', for example, is a paean to Basotho nobility in the service of empire. The father, a veteran of the Gun War, encourages his son to sign up to fight since the British are honourable. The soldier then goes stoically down with the *Mendi* (due to British negligence) while his wife calmly expresses pride when informed of the devastating loss.

Strong doubts about the political leadership of the victorious empires do find a way into the final chapter, but again ambiguously. In 'Peace terms', a fellow chaplain presciently intuits that the proposed terms for Germany's surrender ensured another global conflict and, from that, the end of empires. That character is then killed in one of the final stupid battles of the war, leading Keable (Bobbie) to admit to a flash of hatred for Germans. But the prospective end of empire is equally to be regretted. Bobbie did not contest his interlocutor's mockery of tribal Africans being given the franchise as 'unutterably stupid and deceitful'.<sup>36</sup>

Nostalgia and ambivalence about empire are also evident in 'Slave, serf, citizen', Keable's only publication that is explicitly critical of British colonialism.<sup>37</sup> His principal target here was Britain's imposition of forced labour in its post-war mandate over Tanganyika, an 'incredible' act of cynicism and betrayal of the supposed principles that the war had just been fought for. He feared it augured Britain's sell-out of the Basotho by handing them over to South Africa, no strings attached. Keable also expresses outrage at the earlier wars and massive theft of land that created Southern Rhodesia; and of swindle, deceit and trickery against Africans in Mozambique. He sneers at whites in Basutoland who, after decades of living in the country, did not even know that Basotho men milk the cows. He defends Africans

against various commonplace calumnies (lazy, cheeky, and such). And he denounces pass laws, taxation without representation, and grossly exploitative wages and labour practices in South Africa. It is a rousing, wide-ranging rant of which his namesake ('Mote, the African nationalist trade unionist') would have approved.

At root, unfortunately, it seems the problem for Keable was not colonialism intrinsically. Rather, the problem was that Britain was not doing colonialism properly, which meant paternalist and protective of Africans. Why?

Because both the men and the women of tropical Africa, in their present state of civilisation, are still animal in their instincts and passions. Wives will easily become unfaithful if the husband is long away. The men themselves resort to concubinage and Venereal disease is spread broadcast. The birth-rate is lowered. And more, a new type of African is created, that very type of a primitive man not yet civilised, but, thanks to 'Civilisation', no longer controlled by his own social laws.

This then explains the full title of the article, 'the way back' suggesting a return to a delusionary principled earlier form of guardianship over a 'child race'.<sup>38</sup>

In that same year, Keable published a very different scholarly piece, his first and only in the spirit of an ethnography. 'A people of dreams' relates a series of colourful anecdotes mostly derived from observation of his parishioners. These convey the importance of dreams to Basotho decision-making. Dream visitations by dead relatives are especially motivating. He then suggests there may be more to this than a Western scientific mindset acknowledges.<sup>39</sup>

*Pilgrim Papers* is another collection of short stories primarily set in Lesotho. It was written in the interlude between Keable's return from the war and his decision to quit the ministry, the continent, and his marriage. Keable introduces the book in his own voice as the editor of papers supposedly written by and entrusted to him by a friend, the dying old priest, Father Wilfrid. Wilfrid supposedly wanted to share his reflections upon a life of service and piety, tentatively entitled, 'The face of the Berg' (the latter a stand-in for God). In fact, no real Wilfrid existed. The fraud is thus pretty obviously a means for Keable to give himself permission to express the roiling emotions he was experiencing at that time. And, indeed, it is not hard to imagine the need: 1919–1920 was perhaps a nadir in Keable's life to this point. His marriage was falling apart, his faith was in tatters, his first novel manuscript was getting constantly rejected, and he scorned even the practical

value of his work as an educator among a people who, to put it mildly, took his teachings very differently than he gave them. Putting on the Wilfrid mask was a way for Keable to let all the hurt, pain and frustration out.

Keable-Elliot focuses his brief discussion of the book on its ruminations upon divorce, adultery and theology.<sup>40</sup> My eyes were drawn to Wilfrid/Keable's emotions around the Basotho. Although Wilfrid/Keable rues how 'I am utterly ashamed that I let the natives get on my nerves so often and irritate me', he nonetheless perseveres with some quite damning judgements against them. Wilfrid/Keable frankly and repeatedly asserts his belief not just in the irredeemable concupiscence of the Basotho, but also their 'stupidity', baked in, he laments at one point, from the embryo.<sup>41</sup>

Wilfrid/Keable also introduces his opinion on eugenics, presaging Keable's fuller development of the idea in *Recompense*. In his defence, eugenics only became generally discredited after the Nazi regime put it into mass practice. In Keable's time, important intellectuals and feminists on the political left saw eugenics as a viable solution to many social and economic problems.<sup>42</sup> Keable does not appear to have ever tied eugenics to race, but his views on African intelligence imply Africans were not among those who should be supported by the state to reproduce. Africans, and other supposedly unfit people, would need to be managed by 'advanced socialism'. I interpret this to mean that greater welfare and prosperity more evenly distributed would offset, then undermine, the unfits' propensity to breed.

If the Basotho as people were driving the old priest (that is, Keable himself) to exasperation, Basutoland the place was by contrast bringing him closer to his honest spirituality. The Berg's role in these stories is as a source of mystical energy. In one exceptionally vivid scene Wilfrid descends into, through to the underside, and then rises back out of the sea of mist that sometimes laps up against the Natal side of the mighty escarpment.<sup>43</sup> Basotho, in their pre-modern iterations, supplement the sensibility. In 'Of a village under the moon', the tired missionary watches and listens while Basotho children play, the women sing and make cooking sounds, the cattle snort, the men tell stories and drink low alcohol beer. Their dignity, and the ghostly light on the mountains, move Wilfrid to reflect on his profound loneliness, and implicitly, his doubts about the so-called civilising mission. Stories like these reveal a heartfelt confusion and vulnerability that seems almost confessional.

A final word with regard to Keable's soft masculinity

takes us back to ‘Peace terms’. Keable-Elliot wondered whether Keable, like many in the English boarding school system in those days, had had homosexual relationships prior to going to Zanzibar.<sup>44</sup> Others also apparently worried about him in that way as his marriage floundered and he mulled celibacy.<sup>45</sup> Is it then possible that Keable is hinting at physical as well as emotional love for another man when Bobbie comes to the frontlines to say goodbye to a dear old chum? They meet in a bunker, so cramped that Keable has to sit on the narrow bed. They banter a bit. ‘Then followed what they call in books a dramatic interlude, which ended in our getting up panting but merry. This war tends to make me feel damnably old; it is very good to find one is not’.<sup>46</sup>

Three months later, Bobbie finds himself comforting his mortally wounded friend, gazing at his hair, ‘that I could have touched even as if I had been a woman’.<sup>47</sup> Could two young priests have engaged in physical intimacy without considering themselves homosexual or even worrying about morals? Southey suggested as much in the Anglican church in the nineteenth century; but other than this, not the remotest hint of such a thing can be found in Keable’s published work.<sup>48</sup>

### Popular novels, 1919–1927

The shift to writing for mass, largely secular audiences in England and subsequently the United States, which began before Keable’s translocation to England and eventually Tahiti, brought him a well-remunerated, ‘champagne socialist’ lifestyle. A new paradigm is evident in both the melodramatic tone and the politics. The latter can be summarised as one that advanced a relatively radical view of white women’s (and hence men’s) sexual liberation at the expense of sacrificing concern for the development of African characters. Compared to Stephano, Sekeke or even Theresa, Africa and African characters in the novels are little more than foils for revealing, and in some cases passively instigating the healing of, white people’s anxieties.

*Simon Called Peter* was the first novel Keable wrote, in late 1919, although its publication was delayed for some time on account of its (at the time) salacious content. The protagonist, Peter, is a chaplain gradually losing his faith from the things he witnesses or experiences during the war. Not the horrors of battle, so much, but the boredom, the hellish transformations of the countryside, the doomed infantrymen’s total disinterest in Christ. Peter starts to let himself out from a cage of sexual repression in the process; first, lusting

for a French prostitute and then falling in love with a vivacious nurse from Durban/Pietermaritzburg (Julie). That relationship is consummated but quickly ends at her initiative. She does not want to stand in the way of his search for spiritual meaning.

Peter in *Simon* was English and had never been to Africa. However, two of the main characters in the story entice him with their descriptions of tropical paradises and lusty savages. Basutoland makes but a single, decidedly colonial appearance. An Aryanesque Captain Donovan describes his home there to Peter as ‘Not a bad place in a way – decent climate, topping scenery, but rather a stodgy crowd in the camps ... I don’t advise you to settle in a South African dorp if you can help it, padre’.<sup>49</sup> Donovan is the officer in charge of the SANLC, but has nothing to say on the topic other than to use the n-word to describe his outfit. Julie, on the other hand, shares some strong views about her home country. In addition to rhapsodic descriptions of romantic tourism adventures, she opines that African women are ‘human animals’ with the human part stuck in the middle ages, less happy than ‘their cows’.<sup>50</sup>

*Simon Called Peter* leaves the door open to the possibility that Keable was quietly mocking his presumed readers and/or colonialists who are ignorant and racist toward Africans. Anyone in the know would know that Basotho and Zulu women do not own or even milk cows. Everyone would know a dorp (Afrikaans for village or small town) was not a camp and that Basutoland was not South Africa. Why would Keable have phrased it this way?

Keable wrote *Mother of All Living* (1922) next, soon after he had effectively quit the church, separated from his wife and determined to make a living as a writer. No evidence of satire here. The novel begins on the lush south coast of Natal then moves up along the rugged Umtamvana River gorge into Griqualand – ‘South Africa at her best’, ‘paradise’, ‘delightful’.<sup>51</sup> A father is driving his teenage daughter Cecil home on the border with the eastern Cape after she has returned from years of boarding school in England. At the farm, Cecil’s precocious younger sister is excited to greet her. They frolic naked in the sea. Later they flirt with various handsome suitors and picnic in beautifully forested glades. Discussions unfold about the nature of the natives (for example, they breed like rabbits).<sup>52</sup> The latter opinion is intoned by yet another flirtatious young white woman, Pam, who apparently loves natives in a way that includes striking them if they do not serve her properly and ‘experimenting’ upon them

with hypnosis to learn their secrets. Pam at one point defends the slaughter and poisoning of the Berg's Bushmen population (Natal's foundational genocide in other words) because of the cruel and wasteful way they used to steal and kill the settlers' sheep.<sup>53</sup> A scene in Durban establishes the early tourism imaginary of the region – nightclubs, ice cream at the beach, the waterfalls, the mines, and of course, shooting wild animals in Zululand.

This extended introduction (more than half the book) reads like a love affair for the sporty, sexy, power-blinded settler life on Natal's southern frontier, a kind of *White Mischief* albeit related in quite chaste language by today's standards. Almost all the white characters make casual use of the k- and n-words, about which Keable as author does not intimate any opinion. Their dialogue is peppered with 'ripping', 'beastly', 'right-o' and other colonial ejaculations. 'Everything we do is so jolly,' affirms Cecil;<sup>54</sup> which Keable does not contest until she marries the boring Hugh. Africans meanwhile are loyal servants, wizened crones, witchdoctors, statuesque roadside beauties, lusty savages. Most have nothing to say and if they do, speak in a kind of pidgin or bizarrely archaic 'thys' and 'thees' (Haggard, reprised). Two (sort of) exceptions are, first, the 'splendidly' bare-breasted Nanea who, under hypnosis, brings forth scary ancestral voices and premonitions. And, second, the devoted house servant Auntie Tot (short for Hottentot), who is induced to share her fear of the mountains because that's where she was kidnapped and enslaved as a child by the fierce, mixed-race Griquas, thankfully to be saved by good white folks (Pam's father).

These tales set up the drama of the central part of the book. A party sets out for a pony trek up into the Berg from Kokstad in the west to the highest peak in the east, then finally down to the Afrikaner dorp of Fouriesburg, just over Lesotho's northern border. Much spectacular scenery unfolds along the way, while sexual tension grows between Pam and a rakish world traveller (Chris). After much melodrama and pondering upon how white people could learn from African mysticism, folk wisdom and lack of sexual guilt/shame, Chris and Pam run away together for adventures in the Far East.

*Peradventure* (1922) came next, with a single chapter set in Africa, this time en route by steamer through the Red Sea then culminating on a beach in Zanzibar reminiscent of the naked girls' scene from *City of the Dawn*. The thrust of this chapter, indeed the book, is that African sexuality provides an inspiration to the priggish (his word) protagonist to let his respectable

Christian hair down. The point is made here, as in *Mother of All Living*, that the epiphany comes through gazing upon, not actually having sex with, Africans. The belly dancer who arouses and shames the protagonist is described as Abyssinian but mixed in a way that is 'better not named', implying some sordid tryst between her mother and a white man.

Meanwhile, *Simon Called Peter* turned out to be such a hit that Keable's publishers pressured him to write a sequel. *Recompense* (1924) is that novel, which picks up in Cape Town as Peter (the Keable-like protagonist) makes his way into the wilds of the Malutis to heal emotionally from his war experience. Peter takes up employment with a nasty white trader (the subject of my footnote, at last!). Julie, meanwhile, has demobilised from France back to 'Maritzburg, where she seems a bit let down by her civilian nursing and love life. But then, such is the small world of white settlerdom, she hears word that Peter has had a life-threatening injury and she rushes up the Berg with a doctor to rescue him. Despite their obvious love for each other, they once again decide to part on account of his still unrequited need to find connection with God (he decides to become a monk). The second half of the book then shifts focus to Julie who has left South Africa to embark upon an exciting career as a eugenicist (!?) in London.

Keable's final novel with African content, *Ann Decides* (1927), was written in Tahiti soon after his lover's death during childbirth.<sup>55</sup> The sadness in the writing is heavy, as is nostalgia for his days tramping around the Malutis and Natal in a state of constant emotional rollercoaster. Chapter one introduces the Keable-like protagonist Dick at a monastery on the South African side of the border as he explains to his bishop that he has decided to resign from the church. Africans move silently in the background of this tumult, almost uniformly described in negative terms: ugly, sweaty, heathen, savage. Chapter two shifts back to Basutoland where Dick performs his last duties as a priest and says goodbye to his devoted, but suspecting, parishioners. The Africans here have names and are given some positive qualities including honesty, warmth and, in his servant Stephen's case, intelligence. Yet they exist in the novel primarily to illustrate the priest's moral character and achievements. They do so both through their bad example that has been Dick's lot to combat (habitual drunkenness, adultery, incest) and with their entreaties, flattery and tears at his imminent departure. Stephen even offers to leave Lesotho with Dick to continue to serve without any wages, which is to say to



self-enslave in defiance of his culture, family and betrothed ('Theodora is nothing'). Dick is decent enough to refuse. Thereafter, the novel moves to England and Africa fades to passing invocations of fond, romantic memory. Indeed, the novel is a romance primarily concerned with a passionate, adulterous, doomed love affair between Dick and Ann, his Jolie/Julie-like muse.

All of these novels are primarily about white angst over relations between white men and women, religion, and modernisation. Africans and African landscapes often inspire the white characters to think outside the box of conformity to white bourgeois norms, to feel 'full' as Peter puts it in *Simon*.<sup>56</sup> With the exception of *Recompense*'s unscrupulous trader and a short speech by Pam in *Mother*, there are only passing hints that overt racism is a bad thing. In Pam's case this comes late in the story when she chastises her lover-to-be Chris for letting his opinions flow with the conventional settler tide. Bearing in mind what Pam has earlier had to say about Bushmen and Africans in general, the unconscious irony of her speech reveals something of Natalian self-delusions, as if somehow their paternalism placed them above the fray of direct criticism:

When the impartial story of the white man in Africa comes to be written, a thousand years hence, it won't read over nicely. Slavery, to begin with, Jameson's got-up little war in Rhodesia and the cool 'expropriation' of nine million acres. The suppression of the Herero 'rebellion' in German West Africa. And so on. No, it won't make nice reading when the human race is welded into one and the colours are as mixed as the Goths, Celts, and Latins.<sup>57</sup>

No African is remotely given the chance to express such views. On the contrary, the single most developed Mosotho character in any of the novels is Moshoeshoe, Peter's faithful servant in *Recompense*.<sup>58</sup> Peter's alienation from white society in his mountain camp is so complete that Moshoeshoe becomes his only friend. He is accorded several pages of dialogue, imparting various bits of Sesotho wisdom which, inscrutable as they may be, help Peter cope. Moshoeshoe ultimately saves Peter's life (after receiving instruction from the near-mortally wounded Peter), then vanishes from the narrative without so much as a *tsamaeng hantle* (go well). As one reviewer at the time put it, the author of *Recompense* 'is obviously very much in sympathy with [the natives]' but 'Moshoeshoe never quite lives for the reader'.<sup>59</sup>

A final observation is how the landscape is eroticised. In addition to nudity on the beaches, the mountains also

get the pulse of white characters up. Julie, notably, is the most explicit when she describes to Peter the wonders of climbing the Berg and looking out over 'all Natal' (their relationship is still chaste at this point). 'But what do you do there?' he asks. 'She laughed and broke the spell. "What would one do?" she demanded. "Eat, and drink, and sleep, and make love, Peter, if there is anybody to make love to."'"<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions

Having read close to a quarter of a million words of Keable's writing, I can now safely conclude that I was not incorrect to cite a small section of one of his novels to support a point I was making about the history of women and gender in Lesotho. Keable could indeed be a sharp critic of overt white racism and exploitation of Africans. From the monstrous trader in *Recompense* to the full-throated polemic of 'Slave, serf, citizen' to subtle conversational exchanges between white characters and occasional hints of irony in many of his short stories, Keable between 1918 and 1924 was without question capable of being a sympathetic witness to injustice done to Africans. He was, moreover, deeply moved by aspects of Sesotho culture and an admirer of Basotho stoicism, generosity, heartfelt humanity, unpretentiousness, and attentiveness to the metaphysical. What he saw as Africans' lack of guilt or shame about their bodies and their sexuality was something he himself, and Europeans in general, could learn from to become better people and better Christians. Keable deserves to be remembered for taking those observations to a very wide international audience.

But Keable also wore his heart on his sleeve, so to speak. He did not censor his feelings of exasperation, disgust or disappointment with Africans. Harsh judgements focused most intensely on Basotho who in his view tried to ape Western mores. He was not interested in writing about or debating Africans who sought to oppose whites' injustices against Africans on modern terms. Indeed, he was clearly writing with whites only in mind, as his apology for the trader character in *Recompense* beforehand (in the preface) suggests. He was not self-aware of the persistence or offensive nature of noble savage and other stereotypes in his writing, and often inattentive (tone-deaf) to the politics of language. In this his novels in particular compare unfavourably to *Leaven* (Blackburn, 1908) and even *Zidji* (Junod, 1911).

Is there value, then, to revisiting Keable in this decolonial moment? Perhaps not, given how rich is the production of African literature and how there

are only so many hours in the day. I appreciated my time with Keable, however, for all his weaknesses as an author and would-be radical thinker. It cannot hurt to have the contradiction between progressive values on some issues and persistent blindness to racism on others demonstrated in such unwitting and startling ways. His loving descriptions of the mountains and how people lived in them provide an important record of an environment and a culture then on the cusp of irreparable damage. His perception and implicit respect for something deeply true within African spirituality was astute, and provides insight into, for example, African attractions to millennial or Pentecostal expressions of Christian faith.

Perhaps more significantly from a gender perspective is his heart-on-sleeve masculinity. It is true that the secondary white characters are commonly portrayed in stiff colonial performativity. The narrator himself, however, sometimes speaking vicariously through strong-willed white female characters, is often very vulnerable, self-doubting, and hungry for meaning beyond what coloniality or conventional understandings of Christian faith allowed. It is sobering to reflect upon how Keable's wrestling with this (somewhat) dissident masculinity so thoroughly disappeared from cultural memory compared to the posturings and certainties of Haggard and others' masculine leads. In that sense, some of Keable's characters represent an important moment in the history of masculinities in literature from or about southern Africa in the early twentieth century.

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**Note:** References are generally to the American editions of Keable's novels.

## NOTES

- 1 Stephen Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979); Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures* (London: Longman, 1996).
- 2 Hugh Cecil, 'A parson's life laid bare: Robert Keable, 1887–1927' in *The Flower of Battle: British First World War* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1995): 154–184; Robert Keable, *Simon Called Peter* (New York: Dutton, 1921).

- 3 Michael Sadleir, 'Robert Keable and his spiritual adventures' *Literary Digest International Book Review* 1 (February 1923): 28–29; Louise Maunsell Field, 'Mr. Keable handles two dangerous subjects' *Literary Digest International Book Review* 2 (1923): 382–384; Bede Garrett and C.P. le Huray, 'Robert Keable' *New Blackfriars* 9/95 (1928): 77–86.
- 4 Albert Grundlingh, *Fighting their own War: South African Blacks and the First World War* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987): 97, 104.
- 5 Canon Dove, *Anglican Pioneers in Lesotho: Some Account of the Diocese of Lesotho, 1876–1930* (Maseru: Anglican Diocese of Lesotho, 1975): 153.
- 6 Robert Keable, *Recompense: A Sequel to 'Simon Called Peter'* (London: Constable, 1924).
- 7 Marc Epprecht, 'This Matter of Women is Getting Very Bad': *Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho, 1870–1965* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000): 229.
- 8 Cecil, 'A parson's life laid bare'; Tim Couzens, *Murder at Morija: Faith, Mystery, and Tragedy on an African Mission* (Johannesburg: Random House, 2003) is very rich in detail on white society in the protectorate around the time that Keable was there.
- 9 Simon Keable-Elliot, *Utterly Immoral: Robert Keable and his Scandalous Novel* (Market Harborough: Matador, 2022).
- 10 *ibid*: 68, 109, 114. Keable 'Mote (b. 1898) was a prominent and radical, famously bombastic leader in the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) in the 1920s and 1930s. (David Johnson, Noor Niefertgodien and Lucien van der Walt (eds), *Labour Struggles in Southern Africa, 1919–1949* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023)).
- 11 David Blackburn, *Leaven: A Black and White Story* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1908 [1991]).
- 12 William Beinart, 'Men, science, travel and nature in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Cape' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24(4) 1998: 775–800; Malcolm Draper, 'Zen and the art of garden province maintenance: the soft industry of hard men in the wilderness of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 1952–1997' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24(4) 1998: 801–828. Beinart and Draper's articles both appear in the special issue on masculinity that introduced critical masculinity studies to southern Africa through the interpretation of the work of Raewyn Connell, among others (Robert Morrell, 'Of boys and men: masculinity and gender in southern African studies' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24(4) 1998: 605–630). Morrell also casts light on white Natalian masculinity in Keable's era (Robert Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in Colonial Natal: 1880–1920* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2001)); while I develop the arguments in relation to the historiography of masculine sexualities more broadly (Marc Epprecht, *Accidental Queer, and Other Essays around Critical Masculinity Studies in Southern Africa and Canada* (Bamenda: Langaa, 2024)).
- 13 A fourth genre (theology) and fifth (poetry) are outside the scope of my interest or ability to interpret. It is obvious, though, that Keable's African experiences strongly influenced his interpretation of Christianity, which comprises a recurrent theme in much of his secular writing. This could be pertinent to current debates about decolonising liturgy and biblical exegesis, were someone else interested to pursue it.
- 14 Robert Keable, *Darkness or Light* (London: Universities Mission to Central Africa, 1912).
- 15 *ibid*: 49.
- 16 Cecil, 'A parson's life laid bare': 161.
- 17 Keable-Elliot, *Utterly Immoral*: 78.
- 18 Keable, *Darkness or Light*: 33.

- 19 Robert Keable, *A City of the Dawn* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1915).
- 20 Robert Keable, *The Drift of Pinions* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1918); *Missionary Stories: African Scout Stories* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1919); *Peradventure or The Silence of God* (London: Constable, 1922); 'The priest's tale: Pere Etienne', 1922 (*New Decameron, Volume III*, Project Gutenberg, 2007).
- 21 Keable, *A City of the Dawn*: 26.
- 22 I should note here that Keable mined his personal life very closely for story lines and characters; so much so that to read the biography at the same time as his stories is to court confusion over which event or character was fictional and which was not. His most famous female character – Julie – for example, was evidently modelled on his real-life lover from the war, Jolie Buck (Keable-Elliot, *Utterly Immoral*).
- 23 Keable, *The Drift of Pinions*: 46.
- 24 Keable, *A City of the Dawn*: 90.
- 25 Keable, *Simon Called Peter*: 280.
- 26 Keable, *Peradventure or the Silence of God*. Simon Keable-Elliot, who had access to Cecil's and Couzen's unpublished research notes, found no evidence that this recurrent imagery was more than semiotics. It may nonetheless have provided ammunition to his critics to sustain some remarkably enduring accusations against him. Colman devotes much of a chapter to Keable as a sexual predator in Lesotho, albeit with no grounds to say so except 'fable has it' (James Colman, *Sani Pass: Revealing its Secrets* (Pietermaritzburg: Otterly Press, 2016): 128). It may of course still be true. Other than this prurient trope, however, no hint of 'bounder' desire comes through in Keable's various narrators' voices. On the contrary, they often voice revulsion at the idea of inter-racial sex. To respectable Natalians Cecil and Hugh in *The Mother of All Living*, for example, the very idea is 'too awful for words', whose merest intimation leaves them 'genuinely horror-struck' (Robert Keable, *The Mother of All Living: A Novel of Africa* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1922): 97, 119–120).
- 27 Keable, *The Drift of Pinions*: 136.
- 28 Robert Keable, *Pilgrim Papers from the Writings of Francis Thomas Wilfrid, Priest* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921): 155.
- 29 Robert Keable, 'The worth of an African' *International Review of Missions* 1918: 525, 541. This was, in fact, a fairly commonplace observation by Europeans about the communal, levelling nature of tribal life: see Dudley Kidd, *Kafir Socialism and the Dawn of Individualism: An Introduction to the Study of the Native Problem* (London: A. and C. Black, 1908); or the work of two other liberal novelists of the era Blackburn, *Leaven* (1908) and Henri-Alexandre Junod, *Zidji: Étude de Mœurs Sud-Africaines* (St. Blaise: Foyer Solidariste, 1911). Matthew Shum in 'The content of the form: romance and realism in Douglas Blackburn's 'Leaven' (*English in Africa* 21(1/2) 1994: 93–102) makes an astute comment on this romantic streak in Blackburn's work which may equally apply to Keable, were one to substitute 'emotional wholeness' for 'stolen diamonds' as white men's reward for black men's deference. I would note as well that Junod, a fellow missionary of Keable's, was also deeply paternalistic, but nuanced and empathetic portrayals of complex African characters are nonetheless central to his narrative. *Zidji* was particularly poignant for me to re-read as it begins in a village at the base of the Berg. Africans look up the mountain in scenes immediately reminiscent of those where Keable's white characters look down from the top of the precipice (Keable, *Pilgrim Papers*: 230–233, notably).
- 30 Robert Keable, 'African priests in France' *The East and the West: A Quarterly Review for the Study of Missionary Problems* 1918: 53–59.
- 31 Robert Keable, 'The training of an African priesthood' [letter to the editor] *Church Times*, 8 March 1918. One wonders if there was a response by Africans in any of the African-language presses. One of the seeming targets of Keable's criticism, Leonard Polisa, went on to enjoy a very long and distinguished career as an Anglican pioneer (Dove, *Anglican Pioneers in Lesotho*: 189) and may have left some private thoughts on the matter.
- 32 Curiously, the suppression of an entire book manuscript is not the focus of Keable's rage against censorship. That, rather, is directed at the 'neo-Puritanism' that caused a short delay in the publication of *Simon Called Peter*. Someone, it seemed, had objected to the author's use of a plural synonym for a woman's bosom (Robert Keable, 'The censorship of thought' in *Nonsenseorship: Sundry Observations Concerning Prohibitions Inhibitions and Illegalities* edited by G.P. Putnam, 1922; Project Gutenberg, 2004).
- 33 Robert Keable, *Standing By: War-time Reflections in France and Flanders* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1919).
- 34 *ibid*: 24.
- 35 *ibid*. Lesotho never did join South Africa, but otherwise much of what Keable feared has in fact taken place. Not to condone Keable's romantic vision, and aware that many factors have contributed, but Lesotho's present malaise may actually be worse than he could have imagined. See Nora Kenworthy, *Mistreated: The Political Consequences of the Fight Against AIDS in Lesotho* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2017) or Ndebele Lenin, 'Research finds that Lesotho has the highest suicide rate in the world' *News24*, <https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/research-finds-that-lesotho-has-the-highest-suicide-rate-in-the-world-20230605>, 2023 (accessed 7 June 2023) for that context and, let's say, Emily Margaretten, *Street Life under a Roof: Youth Homelessness in South Africa* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015) for a Durban dystopia.
- 36 Keable, *Standing By*: 266–267.
- 37 Robert Keable, 'Slave, serf, citizen and the way back' *Blackfriars* December 1920: 503–564. I stress that I did not have access to Keable's private journals and correspondence, which may well have expressed this critique fulsomely and acknowledged African nationalist secular leaders, intellectuals and cultural figures such as his contemporaries Thomas Mofolo and Sol Plaatje. This is not a topic his biographers have explored. The complete invisibility of African nationalist intellectuals in Keable's published work suggests it was not of compelling interest to him either, making a seeming two-way non-street. Peter Limb (personal correspondence) finds no references to Keable in any of Keable 'Mote's published work from the 1910s and 1920s.
- 38 Keable, 'Slave, serf, citizen and the way back': 534.
- 39 Robert Keable, 'A people of dreams' *Hibbert Journal* 1920: 522–531.
- 40 Keable-Elliot, *Utterly Immoral*: 111–112.
- 41 Keable, *Pilgrim Papers*: 60, 125, 145.
- 42 Adam Rutherford, *Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics* (London: Orion Press, 2022).
- 43 Keable, *Pilgrim Papers*: 230–233.
- 44 Keable-Elliot, *Utterly Immoral*: 20.
- 45 Cecil, 'A parson's life laid bare': 156, 162.
- 46 Keable, *Standing By*: 261.
- 47 *ibid*: 271.
- 48 Nicholas Southey, 'Uncovering homosexuality in colonial South Africa: the case of Bishop Twells' *South African Historical Journal* 36 (1997): 48–67.
- 49 Keable, *Simon Called Peter*: 31.
- 50 *ibid*: 137.
- 51 Keable, *The Mother of All Living*: 3, 29, 165.

52 *ibid*: 53.

53 *ibid*: 91–92.

54 *ibid*: 76.

55 Robert Keable, *Ann Decides* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927).

56 Keable, *Simon Called Peter*: 281.

57 Keable, *The Mother of All Living*: 305.

58 Again, I strove to see satire here but only come up with insulting appropriation. Moshoeshoe I was the founder of the Basotho nation, widely respected if not revered in the region for having preserved much of his people's independence from rival colonialisms. Why would Keable choose that name for a faithful 'boy'?

59 Field, 'Mr. Keable handles two dangerous subjects': 384.

60 Keable, *Recompense*: 281.