

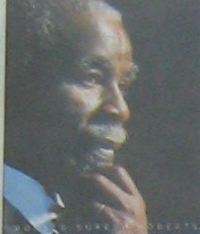
Whatever the outcome of the debacle, the Brink-Roberts battle promises to be riveting

Authors in plagiarism war

Once a friend of Ronald Suresh Roberts, Anthony Brink is now accusing the author of Mbeki's controversial biography of copying his work, writes PETER BRUCE

JE T'ACCUSE

Fit to Govern



The judge agreed Roberts had been "unbalanced, paranoid and obsessed" in pursuing a complaint against the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and that he had "an unreasonable expectation of especially favourable treatment". He was ordered to pay costs to the Sunday Times.

Roberts appeared to recover rapidly from the case. Under his political patron, Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad, he had secured a contract to write a book about Mbeki. The book, to be called *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki*, was sponsored by Absa.

Roberts, who recently published a biography of Nadine Gordimer, plunged into final preparations for the Mbeki book soon after the case was over.

Fit to Govern was meant to be one of the high points of Mbeki's year and cement his intellectual prowess as a powerful tool in the

LYING AND THIEVING



African National Congress (ANC) succession battle with Jacob Zuma. To an extent, it succeeded. The book was widely discussed and Roberts was given many opportunities to speak in public and through the SABC's radio and television outlets.

In these talks, he has repeated, and expanded on, many of the fairly savage criticisms he made of Mbeki's critics (or perceived critics) in the book.

It has sold more than 8,000 copies and STE has been keen to print more. But it was also widely derided as too obsequious to and about Mbeki.

But while many journalists and reviewers were reading the book with half an eye out for mention of their own names, one of the subplots of the book was the surprising low regard in which Roberts appeared to hold Brink.

During Roberts's case against the Sunday Times, Brink had sat in the gallery in a gesture of support for his friend. Yet in *Fit to Govern*, Brink, according to Roberts, had become a "dead, transported" into a twilight zone where a tiny coven of furious anti-treatment propagandists and amateur statisticians make him their unlikely prophet.

The two men met in April 2005 in the Exclusive Books in Cape Town's Kloof Street. Right away they hit it off, says Brink in a new book, *Lying and Thieving: The Fraudulent Scholarship of Ronald Roberts in Fit to Govern*, www.lying-and-thieving.com.

From the bookshop they went to Roberts's nearby flat and he made Roberts digital copies of his published books and one of his major works in progress, *Just Say Yes, Mr President: Thabo Mbeki and AIDS*.

It is a history and analysis of the AIDS controversy in SA.

Brink started writing *Just Say Yes* in 2000 and he plans to publish it, he says, in 2009.

Quite how or why the two men fell out is unclear, though they now argue bitterly over who correctly interprets Mbeki's views on AIDS.

Roberts, in *Fit to Govern*, portrays Mbeki's approach to AIDS as thoughtful and cautious but insists he has never denied the link between HIV and AIDS.

Brink insists that Mbeki does deny the link, a point reinforced by Mark Gevisser, the author of the latest Mbeki biography, *The Dream Mbeki*.

Gevisser says Mbeki went out of his way to furnish him with documents he had written and which argue against the link.

The falling out, however, promises to be riveting. Roberts is argumentative and litigious. Brink, it appears, may be doubly so.

In fact, in one passage in *Lying and Thieving*, Brink says: "What Roberts really objects to is that I'm much more militant and uncompromising than he is. I know

L'aver and AIDS researcher Anthony Brink claims lawyer and writer Ronald Suresh Roberts committed an act of plagiarism of Brink's ideas and words in the writing of his recent book on President Thabo Mbeki: *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki* (FTG).

Brink says that on the day he met Roberts in a coffee shop in Cape Town in 2005 he burnt Roberts a CD of his (Brink's) work in progress on the debate around HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Just Say Yes, Mr President (JSY).

Here are five samples of Brink's complaint.

Roberts stole without credit my idea of writing about the racism of Kant and Hume

Brink quotes Immanuel Kant in JSY: "The heptens of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifle. All inhabitants of the hottest zones are, without exception, idle. With some, this laziness is offset by government and force."

Roberts picks up the theme in FTG: "When the European rationalists... Immanuel Kant, commented - in giving advice on slave husbandry centuries earlier - that blacks are so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thralldoms; it was figures such as... Gove Mbeki who might have been feared or dimly envisaged."

Roberts stole without crediting where he found them (he never went to the original!) my quotations from New Scientist, Newsway and NAIAD director Anthony Faut in his discussion of Ho's hit early, hit hard ARV

Brink in JSY: As leading US AIDS journalist Laurie Garrett put it in *Newsway* on 17 January 2001, "Instead of telling American physicians to 'hit early, hit hard', a policy in effect since 1996 that calls for giving HIV-positive patients powerful drug cocktails before the patients actually experience any symptoms of illness, the new National Institutes of Health guidelines will call for caution and delay in treatment." He mentioned an epiphany arrived at by prominent AIDS physician, Eugene Carpenter of Brown University, a member of SA's advisory committee to the WHO, which he shared with the Royal Society of Medicine in London in a speech he had given in December. In retrospect, we now realize the risk of drug toxicity is greatly enhanced by taking these drugs early. Which your regular guy might suppose means that the sooner you start taking your poison, the sooner you fake it. NAIAD's Anthony Faut, one of the co-chairs of the panel convened to review the official treatment regime, agreed, more or less, that not only is the medicine dangerous, it doesn't even work. "It's clear we're not going to eradicate the virus with the drugs we have now. And we're starting to see a greater and greater realization of the accumulation of toxic side effects." It's sinking in at last.

Roberts in FTG: To understand the role of the William Makgoba one needs fully to digest Fanon's insights concerning the native technician. Under the heading "The colonised and the native doctor" Fanon showed himself acutely aware of the cultural politics surrounding that professional status. He quotes Fanon thus: The native doctor is a Europeanised, Westernised doctor, and in certain circumstances he is considered as no longer being part of the dominated society."

Roberts has stolen Brink's quotation of Professor Jerry Coovadia's racist speech at Wits - copying Brink's ellipses and his arrangement of Coovadia's phrases

Brink in JSY: In his acceptance speech at the University of the Witwatersrand on 24

in the US are about to constitute a humiliating 150-year when the Department of Health and Human Services launches its revised HIV treatment guidelines in January (2005). Laurie Garrett wrote in *Newsway* on 17 January 2001 "instead of telling American physicians to 'hit early, hit hard', a policy in effect since 1996 that calls for giving HIV-positive patients powerful drug cocktails before the patients actually experience any symptoms of illness, the new National Institutes of Health guidelines will call for caution and delay in treatment". Garrett quoted Brown University's Eugene Carpenter, a member of the US regulatory panel who now realise the risk of drug toxicity is greatly enhanced by taking these drugs early. Anthony Faut, who served as a co-chair of the same regulatory panel explained why AIDS orthodoxy had shifted away from the No approach: "We're starting to see a greater and greater realisation of the accumulation of toxic side effects."

Roberts has stolen Brink's analysis in Fanonian terms of Makgoba's role as a colonial servant

Brink in JSY: Makgoba's defence of scientific medicine's mental paradigms - at its essence or nodes in the HIV/AIDS model, depending on your point of view - is Mbeki's challenge is interesting for another reason. In their classic analysis, The Political Economy of Health (PHEU, Press 1979), Doyal and Parnell highlight the 'process of medical socialisation' that occurs in colonised countries in which even the most outrageous, racist medical models get taken on board by indigenous elites. They quote Martinique-born Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon telling in his essay, Medicine and Colonialism, how the notion that the native Algerian is a born criminal had entered the syllabus of the medical school in Algiers. Fanon quoted a student there: "It's a hard pill to swallow, but it's been scientifically established... Such co-opted elites in colonized countries like Makgoba, become 'beams of Western science and rationality... the bourgeoisie doctors of the neo-colonial state... This rigid adherence of third world students to the Western medical model is usually accompanied by a largely negative view of indigenous health systems - an attitude which is strongly reinforced by medical education which either gives no account at all of traditional medicine or actively seeks to discredit it."

Roberts in FTG: To understand the role of the William Makgoba one needs fully to digest Fanon's insights concerning the native technician. Under the heading "The colonised and the native doctor" Fanon showed himself acutely aware of the cultural politics surrounding that professional status. He quotes Fanon thus: The native doctor is a Europeanised, Westernised doctor, and in certain circumstances he is considered as no longer being part of the dominated society."

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one 2005, on being elected as honorary academic, these students seem to spend their time looking at their own feet, Professor Jerry Coovadia's response tended to be as oily a tactic as all of them. To us, who sit outside the hazy world of AIDS, it is the unreflected, unthought of newly independent beaute, especially the proximity of each that has led to AIDS - meaning through millions of fat people. In the parlance of South African AIDS experts, our people, a symptomatic, reflexive, oilily happy, young like a house on fire.

Roberts in FTG: Only implicitly does someone like Brink, at all or at all, go on and present themselves, as did Professor Jerry Coovadia, in a speech at the University of the Witwatersrand on 24 June 2001. Coovadia, succumbing to Fanon's veteranism on the welfare of Rhodesia's house, instead AIDS upon the intended narrative, all away independent men - especially the primacy of men.

Roberts stole his abstract line translated from Afrikaans by Brink for JSY, and then in his footnotes he fraudulently credited the original source, Rapport. I have the original hardcopy of the article in my research files. Even if Roberts did not take his credit 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. In fact, he 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, translated on the CD I gave him, and the next thing he's onto his copy and paste buttons. He says it there, he did it, ran out with it, and then lied about it.

Achmat quoted in JSY: The role of Mbeki's close associates in the dissemination have been quiet... it is difficult to believe from a doctor that the government has failed to think... What disconcerted, what a nice society pays. And this is a government born from a party that always fought for human rights. Now black people must have been lives are not worth anything. Just think, a whole generation of ten million orphans, without income or job security, knowing that their parents could perhaps also have lived had they been able to afford the AIDS drugs.

Roberts in FTG: Then, locally there was Zacks Achmat in 2002. "Just think, A whole generation of ten million orphans, without income or job security, knowing that their parents could perhaps also have lived had they been able to afford the AIDS drugs."

RONALD Suresh Roberts, the Trinidadian lawyer and writer who recently authored a controversial book on President Thabo Mbeki, has been accused of serious counts of plagiarism in the book *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki*, in a turn of events that could see him face criminal charges.

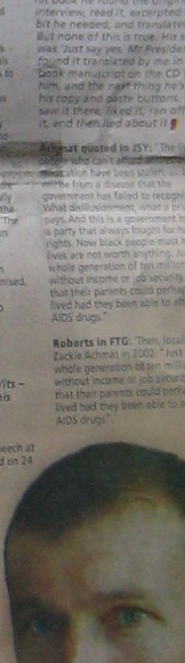
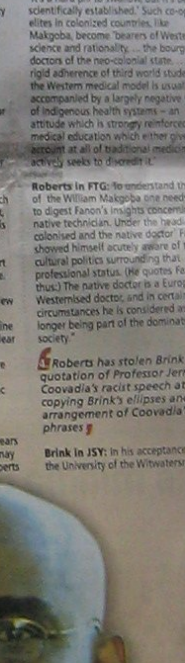
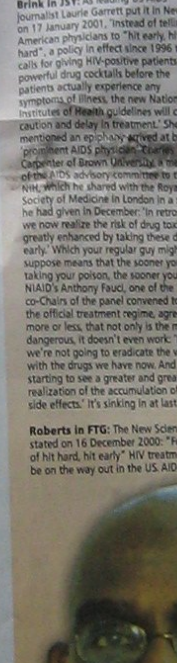
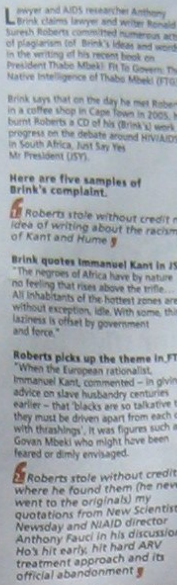
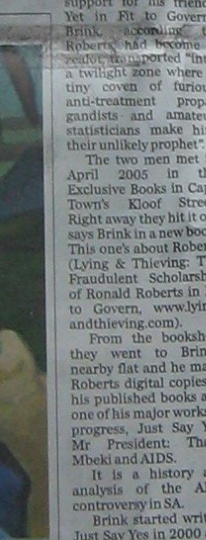
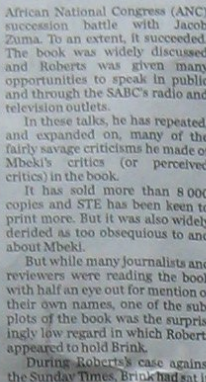
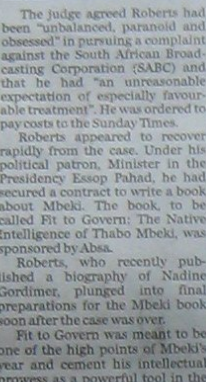
His accuser is advocate and AIDS researcher Anthony Brink, a former friend, who says that he is preparing a sworn complaint for the police with a view to having Roberts criminally prosecuted for theft of intellectual property under the provision of the Copyright Act.

So severe are Brink's accusations of plagiarism that Roberts's publisher, Reedwain Vally, the boss of STE publishers, has put a second print of *Fit to Govern* on hold until he gets considered legal advice or direction from a court.

Both Roberts and Brink are well-known figures. Brink is an AIDS dissident and has outraged the medical and political establishments with many of his views on AIDS. He has written widely on the subject and played a major role in persuading Mbeki to question conventional wisdom on the causes and effects of HIV. He was one of the first writers to attack the toxicity of early antiretroviral drugs.

Roberts is perhaps better known, having been involved in a number of high-profile scraps with politicians and journalists, and a spectacular libel case he brought against the Sunday Times last year.

He lost, with acting judge Leslie Weinkove describing him as naughty and arrogant, not only in his manner of correspondence, but also in his manner in court.



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RONALD SURESH ROBERTS

It and I know that my stings burn, whereas in his writing 'aliphahod beatnik' [which Roberts calls Noseweke editor Martin Welz], 'publicity whore' (Rlan Malan, etc) Roberts does the equivalent of farting in the room like a school-boy, thinking he's clever and expecting everyone to giggle along with him.
"Brink responded to the instances (some are highlighted in the graphic accompanying this story) by charging that Brink suffered from a 'gargantuan self-regard' and was wont to 'claim whole areas of insight (the idea of whole areas of insight (the idea of Kant and Hume's racism and Fanonian medical analysis) as his own personal property'.
"Brink claims intellectual property not his own when he speaks of 'stolen quotations' from third parties," says Roberts.
"This is not language written by him nor over which he holds

ANTHONY BRINK

copyright. At times he appears to seek credit for transcription or translation."
Yet Brink reports in *Lying and Thieving* that Roberts had said he found the manuscript of *Just Say Yes, Mr President*: "Brilliant, fucking brilliant." He recalls that when Roberts showed him the draft AIDS chapters for *Fit to Govern*, he was dismayed to see many of the quotes he had spent years collecting for *Just Say Yes*, in Roberts's work. "I can't help it," Brink quotes Roberts replying. "Your writing is infectious."
Though Roberts can mount a defence against Brink's charges, he may find himself having to do so in court, even if Brink is unable to make good his threat to force a criminal prosecution.
Brink could bring his own criminal libel suit against Roberts, an arduous and uncomfortable procedure for the "accused".

ANTHONY BRINK

The saga also has significant political meaning because it threatens to split one of the support communities around Mbeki. At its core is the controversial lawyer Christine Quenta, a favourite Mbeki acolyte who has become a champion of Roberts.
She also acts for Brink, who first introduced Quenta and Roberts. Should Roberts sue Brink, or Brink prosecute Roberts, Quenta would be torn.
That conflict would reach right into the Presidency, to Pahad and Mbeki's legal adviser, Mojanuku Gumbi, whom Quenta admires. Depending on how vicious the battle becomes, some political secrets may be spilled.
It is not clear how much access Roberts still enjoys in the Union Buildings. His relationship with Pahad is said to have cooled. Likewise his friendship with James Sanders, who edited *Fit to Govern*.