

Trevor is ‘news’”: Celebrity as Protest in the Early Anti-Apartheid Struggle, 1948-1960

Abstract

Celebrity culture was a crucial, though unrecognized, component of the early anti-apartheid struggle. Between 1948 and the foundation of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in Britain in 1960, activists discovered celebrity to be a valuable political tool. The strategic use of celebrity secured media coverage, mobilized support for the struggle, and built a transnational network of activists and collaborative institutions. By analysing celebrity as a tool of protest in the pre-Sharpeville era, this article will illuminate its centrality in the future ‘war of representation’ between South African authorities and global anti-apartheid protest. I focus on British Anglican priest and anti-apartheid activist Trevor Huddleston who reached international fame in the early 1950s as a leader of the moral crusade against apartheid. The South African state increased its offensive on Huddleston as his reputation grew, leading to his recall to England in late 1955. The Huddleston affair instructed both sides about the promises and perils of the use of celebrity in the global war over public opinion. I argue that this standoff was a precursor of the 1970s campaign of propaganda and disinformation that the South African government launched to counter anti-apartheid movements in the West.

Keywords: Celebrity, Protest, Anti-Apartheid, Trevor Huddleston, Media, Persona, Activism, War of Representation

“Trevor is ‘news’”: Celebrity as Protest in the Early Anti-Apartheid Struggle, 1948-1960

During the period between the formal establishment of the apartheid regime in 1948 and the foundation of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in Britain in 1960, activists discovered celebrity to be a successful political tool. The strategic use of celebrity secured media coverage, mobilized international support for the struggle, and facilitated the building of a transnational network of activists and collaborative institutions. To demonstrate this dynamic, I focus on the figure who most embodies the ties between celebrity and anti-apartheid protest in this era: Trevor Huddleston, a man to whom all roads seemed to lead in Johannesburg as the journalist Anthony Sampson declared in 1956 (132). A British Anglican monk and activist, Huddleston was also one of the founders and later the president, of the AAM. His tenure as a priest in the black suburbs of Johannesburg between 1943 and 1956 convinced him that media coverage was inseparable from protest. During this period, Huddleston discovered his talent for public appearances, which he exploited from then on to sustain media interest in the struggle against apartheid. Father Jonathan Graham who headed Huddleston’s religious order between 1957 and 1965, shared this insight in a report he composed about Huddleston for the Community of the Resurrection in June 1955: “Trevor is ‘news,’ and his opinion now is constantly sought by the press, on every conceivable subject, from vivisection to republicanism” (Denniston 1999, 221).¹

In recent years, scholars have established the role of culture in the later decades of the anti-apartheid struggle.² The centrality of culture to its early days and the intersection of church, media and celebrity, however, have remained underexplored. I use Huddleston as a case study to

¹ In their landmark 1965 research, Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge established 12 categories that influenced what journalists’ news selection, “reference to Elite people,” being one of them. In their 2001 update to this research, Tony Harcup and Deirdre O’Neill confirmed the earlier findings about the prominence of references to elite people to the news selection process (Harcup, O’Neill 2001). Huddleston’s elite status contributed to his media presence.

² Some examples include, Stefan Helgesson, Louise Bethlehem, and Gül Bilge Han, “Cultural Solidarities: Apartheid and the Anticolonial Commons of World Literature,” *Safundi* 19, no. 3 (2018): 260–68; Louise Bethlehem, “‘Miriam’s Place’: South African Jazz, Conviviality and Exile,” *Social Dynamics* 43, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 243–58; Detlef Siegfried, “Aporias of the Cultural Boycott: Anti-Apartheid Movement, ANC and the Conflict Surrounding Paul Simon’s Album Graceland (1985–1988),” *Studies in Contemporary History*, no. 13 (2016): 2–26; Shirli Gilbert, “Singing Against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 421–41.

shine a light both on the first decade of the struggle, and on the process in which activists found celebrity politics to be an effective tool of mobilization within South Africa and outside the country. Furthermore, the process that was initiated in 1950s Johannesburg translated into a consistent and strategic use of culture and celebrity advocacy in the global anti-apartheid struggle. The apex of this was the 1988 “Free Nelson Mandela” concert in London, organized by Huddleston in his capacity as the president of the AAM. The focus on the first decade of the apartheid regime brings to the foreground the contribution of Christian activists and illuminates the role of the Church more broadly. Historian TD Mufamadi recently pointed to the limited body of work that considers religion and the religious experience in the struggle (Mufamadi 2011, 4). In the last decade, some efforts have been made to expand this corpus (Skinner 2009, Bonner 2010, Macqueen 2017, Zalmanovich 2019). Yet the link between religion, culture, and particularly celebrity culture in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle remains mostly hidden.

This is perhaps due to the uncomfortable history of the Church in South Africa where Church and state were not separated. From the seventeenth century, when Dutch settlers established the Dutch Reform Church (DRC) of Calvinist origins in the Cape colony, the church was connected to the settlement project. From the nineteenth century onwards, a host of missions descended on South Africa. In 1857, a synod resolution allowed the racial segregation of congregations, and the division of the church into four racially defined denominations (white, ‘coloured,’ black and Indian). This division carried over into the post-1948 apartheid state (De Gruchy 2008, 393). The complicity of the church extended to the English-speaking churches. Moreover, these churches avoided outright critique of the regime until the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960. One early exception was Geoffrey Clayton, the then Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, who advised the Church in 1940 to rethink the “shape of race relations” in a postwar society (Skinner 2005, 247). Clayton, however, did not suggest forsaking the ideal of trusteeship or challenging the South African regime directly (Ibid.). Church officials largely limited their protest to laws in direct contradiction with the Christian gospel such as the 1953 Bantu Education Act and its racialization of the education system. Other early dissenting voices were a number of radical Anglicans such as Michael Scott, Canon John Collins and Trevor Huddleston (Skinner 2009).

During the 1950s, as Rob Skinner has shown, Christian activists despaired of the church and turned to secular politics to promote their agenda (2005, 70). Many chose or were made to leave South Africa—the Britons returned to the UK, as did those South Africans who managed to exit the country. In the 1950s and early 1960s there was no exile community in London to which to turn for support or protest (Israel 1999: 141). Nor was there an organized anti-apartheid movement that they could join. The first anti-apartheid gathering in London was a multi-racial demonstration to boycott South African goods on 26 June 1959 (Gurney 2000: 123), and it led to the establishment of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in March 1960 (Lissoni 2008: 79). Support for the cause in the 1950s came from anti-colonial movements, Church groups, the Communist Party of Great Britain and individuals in the Labour and Liberal parties (Lissoni 2008: 86). The Defence and Aid Fund, an early and central organ of support was established in 1956. Oliver Tambo who would head the ANC in exile arrived in London in March 1960.

In these circumstances, Huddleston, with his clear message and access to media, was an asset. From 1943 up to his recall to England in 1955, Huddleston forged a network of activists-friends such as Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Alan Paton, and Canon John Collins. Huddleston positioned himself at the axes of several cultural and political circles. He was at the centre of a web of journalists, writers and musicians such as Hugh Masekela, Hilda Bernstein, Can Temba, Anthony Sampson, and Todd Matshikiza. He also became close friends with politicians across the racial divide; he dined with mining mogul Ernest Oppenheimer, the British High Commissioner for Southern Africa Evelyn Baring, as well as with Oliver Tambo the Secretary of the ANC, and Yusuf Cachalia Secretary of the Indian Congress (Sampson 1956, 133). In the discussion below, I trace Huddleston's various friendship and collaborations to shed new light on the types of networks characteristic of anti-apartheid protest in the pre-Sharpeville era.

Anthropologist Dan Brockington argues that the power of celebrities is such that their proximity to an issue is enough to put it on the table (Totman and Marshall 2015, 1). Huddleston's involvement in the struggle against apartheid is a case in point. In his eulogy for Huddleston in 1998, his close friend Archbishop Desmond Tutu concluded that, "[I]f you could say that anybody single-handedly made apartheid a world issue, then that person was Trevor Huddleston" (Denniston 1999, 207). In what follows, I will explore the components of Huddleston's public

persona, I will ask how his actions were perceived in South Africa and later in Britain, and demonstrate how his celebrity status shaped the global anti-apartheid struggle.

To tell this story, I have collated a diverse body of sources such as reports, correspondence and memorabilia from Trevor Huddleston's papers at Oxford University, as well as documents from the institutional archive of the British AAM. I layer these with correspondence and reports from fellow-travellers at organizations such as the anti-colonial think tank, the Africa Bureau, or the American Committee on Africa. Because media was central to Huddleston's ascent and to his decades-long public life, I follow his media coverage in the USA and Britain. This archive includes printed texts but also audio and televisual performances. Correspondence and production notes from the BBC Written Archives illuminate the social, cultural, and moral roles that broadcasters attributed to Huddleston. As a preacher and activist, words were extremely important to Huddleston but he was also alert to the importance of image. Thus, I include in my exploration the analysis of Huddleston's own literary and journalistic output, and that of cultural products that attest to his impact on others such as essays, memoirs, journalistic treatises, fiction and photographs.

From Social Reformer to Radical Activist

Trevor Huddleston was born into privilege in 1913 in Bedford, England. One ancestor was Father John Huddleston, a Restoration priest who received Charles II into the Roman Catholic Church (Sampson 1956, 131). For centuries his family maintained its status and proximity to power. Huddleston's father was born in the Punjab to an officer in the Indian army and was later appointed commander of the Royal Indian Navy, and married a childhood friend from a prominent Anglo-Argentinian family of bankers. Trevor and his older sister were raised by their aunt in London, while their father was deployed in India (McGrandle 2004, 3).

Huddleston attended the High Anglican public school Lancing College, a school that produced more clergymen than any other private school in the country (*Observer*, 1956b). At Lancing Huddleston started worshiping daily, and contributed to his college magazine. As a student of history at Oxford, Huddleston was influenced by Anglo-Catholic priests who aspired to integrate spiritual practice and social justice. These were years of recession, and Huddleston witnessed the

devastation through his volunteer work among hop-pickers in Kent, and visits to hunger marchers (*Observer*, 1956b). Decades later, Huddleston claimed that these experiences shaped his political beliefs, “They were starving whilst I lived in great luxury and privilege” (*New Statesman & Society*, 1995). In 1939 Huddleston became a novice in the Community of the Resurrection (CR), a monastic community that sought to reproduce the lives of the early Christians. By 1941, Huddleston was professed as a full member and took the three-fold vows of poverty, chastity and obedience (Denniston 1999, 7-8).

In 1943, Huddleston was sent to Johannesburg where the CR had had representatives since 1903. Father Raynes, the Superior of the CR who had built up the church and mission buildings in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, handpicked Huddleston for the job. Perhaps to gain the trust of his parishioners, Huddleston, unlike most white clergy, made his home in the black township of Sophiatown. There he met another Anglican priest, Michael Scott, who had already transitioned into a radical activist. Scott had lived illegally among African squatters on the fringe of Johannesburg and had declared that he was willing to face imprisonment for breaking racial laws. In later years, Huddleston admitted that when he had first arrived in South Africa, he was, “too cautious to be political” (*Observer* 1956b). By the time the National Party won the 1948 elections, however, Huddleston was converted from a social reformer into a vocal critic of the regime. With time, Huddleston recognized institutional racism as the reason for the injustices he witnessed, and believed that the downfall of the regime was the only path to change.

Huddleston first denounced the government publicly in November 1948, when he spoke in court against the eviction of 40,000 families in his parish. From 1950, a succession of Bills such as the Group Areas Act and the Bantu Education Act segregated housing and education respectively. This legislation became the target of Huddleston’s campaigns (Denniston 1999, 32). In February 1953 the *Rand Daily Mail* quoted Huddleston in a speech at an ANC rally in Johannesburg saying that,

It has been the teaching of the church throughout the centuries that when government degenerates into tyranny ... laws cease to be binding on its subjects ... The future of South Africa is in *your* hands ... I identify myself entirely with your struggle (as quoted in Denniston 1999, 137).

Huddleston’s acts of protest, lobbying, fund-raising and preaching were recognized by his

contemporaries. In one of the iconic protest meetings of the era, the Congress of the People in Kliptown in June 1955, activists conferred an honorary title on Huddleston for his service to the struggle. South African authorities too were cognisant of his activities. Huddleston became the object of government attacks in the media, and was blamed for African agitation. He was followed by the police, his offices were searched, and the authorities recorded the names of his friends and acquaintances (*Time* 1955c; Sampson 1956, 135; *NYT* 1956b).

A Media-Savvy Priest

The frequent coverage of Huddleston in the media, created and circulated a recognizable public persona centred on his Christian faith. His moral opposition to apartheid originated from the concept of the inherent dignity of man and the actions merited by this principle. Huddleston explained that,

I believe that because God became Man, therefore human nature in itself has dignity and a value which is infinite. ... Any doctrine based on racial or colour prejudice and enforced by the state is therefore an affront to human dignity and *ipso facto* an insult to God himself (Huddleston 1956, 17-18).

Translating this conviction into concrete acts in apartheid South Africa demanded collaboration with advocacy and opposition groups, deep involvement with parishioners and authorities, an understanding of the infrastructure, institutions and the ideology of apartheid, an ability to move between white and black South Africa, an easy rapport with both elites and the poor. This often resulted in confrontation: with the regime, with the police, with the church, with his order, with social reformers, and so on. Huddleston's high tolerance of conflict and unapologetic intervention in politics sat at the core of his public persona.

Huddleston responded to the intensification of racial legislation in South Africa with a media offensive. He maintained lifelong friendships with South African journalists such as Olga Horowitz of the *Star*, Hilda Bernstein and Ruth First (McGrandle 2004, 71-3; 76). In 1991, Huddleston remembered how in the early 1940s he realised that

I needed to reach the widest public I could. Television did not exist. Radio ... was strictly controlled and censored by the government ... *The Star* was the evening paper most widely read

by the English-speaking sector in the Transvaal. So, to *The Star* offices I went with my story (1991, 127).

In an office, behind a desk, at her typewriter, “fingers poised for action and ... a cigarette in her mouth” was Horowitz. There and then their fruitful collaboration had begun. “Without her,” Huddleston admitted, “I know I could not have reached across the barriers of racial prejudice or touched the hearts and minds (and pockets!) of the white community” (1991, 127). Huddleston also sustained strong relationships with foreign journalists such as Anthony Sampson and David Astor, owner and editor of the *Observer*. This earned him both acclaim and derision as many accused him of searching for vainglory and of focusing the attention of the public on himself rather than on the injustices he claimed to highlight (McGrandle 2004, 73). In an interview in 1992, when Horowitz was asked if Huddleston was “mad for publicity,” she replied, “Well, I have never known him mad for publicity for *himself* ... He is mad on publicity for the things that concern him” (James 1992, 10).

Huddleston’s media strategy is best exemplified in his campaign against the forced removals of 70,000 residents of Sophiatown. The impending event became the focus of Huddleston’s ‘holy anger,’ as Anthony Sampson described it. The plan for removal became a reality on 10 February 1955. Armed police filled the streets at dawn and under the confusion and scare oversaw the majority of the township residents load their belongings on army trucks and move to an improvised settlement away from the city centre. “By the end of the day,” wrote Sampson who covered the event for *Drum*, “the houses once teeming with families were a pile of rubble. Sophiatown was disappearing” (Sampson 1956, 185). Huddleston tipped off journalists in advance. In his memoir, Huddleston describes walking the township streets accompanied by a reporter from the British *Daily Telegraph* and another from the *New York Times* (Huddleston 1956, 178). Even reporters from small publications such as the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* in Florida had a representative on the ground. Huddleston described the people “soaked, all soaked to the skin by the drenching rain,” attempting to pile their “pathetic possessions” on police trucks. And then, “Above all this strange and depressing crowd, perched on top of a van of a police truck were more cameras filming the scenes below” (Huddleston 1956, 179). It was in this moment that Huddleston “deliberately” put his arm over Robert Resha the chairman of the

Transvaal Youth League of the ANC, “and looked up at the camera” (179). Alan Paton remarked to his own biographer that the words that many of them foreign journalists quoted, “and the face many of them photographed, were the words and the face of Trevor Huddleston” (Alexander 1994, 301). For example, when *Time* magazine reported on the story in March 1955, it focused exclusively on Huddleston, “the tall, gaunt Anglican priest” who “they” call Makhaliphile – Dauntless One (*Time* 1955a). The article described Huddleston in heroic terms: his bravery and determination admired by a mass of anonymous black South Africans. The journalist did not doubt the right of a white missionary to speak for his black parishioners, nor did most white activists in future decades (Dubow 2017, 312).

As the director of the mission school St Peter’s, Huddleston worked with and taught the future political and intellectual leaders of the struggle such as Oliver Tambo, Peter Abrahams, and Es’kia Mphahlele. Through his official and volunteer work, Huddleston became a cultural axis in a network of artists and writers. Anthony Sampson remembered that during his tenure as the editor of the star-making magazine *Drum*, seven writers and photographers were Huddleston referrals (Sampson 1956, 132). As a music enthusiast Huddleston convinced artists of the calibre of Yehudi Menuhin to perform for his parishioners in Sophiatown (Huddleston 1956, 200-1; *Cape Times* 2017). Huddleston reached out to any “distinguished artist” that was playing in Johannesburg to play in Sophiatown (Huddleston 1956, 201). Huddleston’s love for music also led to the establishment of the “Huddleston Jazz Band” in which the teenagers Jonas Gwangwa and Hugh Masekela first performed (*Harper’s Magazine* 1957). In a visit to the USA in 1956, Huddleston told the *New York Times* that American jazz musicians were great heroes of black South Africans, and that he has been “sending off any material [on the topic] he has been able to obtain” back to South Africa. Huddleston also hinted that he would “be happy to see that any instruments, music or other gift got into good hands” (*NYT* 1956a). When Huddleston met Louis Armstrong in that visit, he mentioned the teenager Masekela, and Armstrong handed him his trumpet to send to the talented youth.³

This proximity to artists may have inspired Huddleston’s early lobbying for a cultural ban on

³ Huddleston and Masekela repeated the story many times. For example, Bishop Trevor Huddleston, *Desert Island Discs*, 1988; *The Guardian*. 2018.

South Africa. From as early as 1956, Huddleston suggested that British and American artists and athletes “should refuse to perform in the country unless they are assured that the natives have equal opportunities with whites to attend the performances” (*NYT*, 1956a). Just before Christmas of 1955, Mary Benson, a friend and activist working for the Africa Bureau wrote to Huddleston about a recent party in which she had met English jazz musician and composer Johnny Dankworth. Benson shared with him Huddleston’s love of jazz, and Dankworth “offered to do a concert if his agent agrees” (Benson 1955, MSS. Afr S.1681). Indeed, on 15 October 1957 Dankworth performed in a concert organized by Christian Action to collect money for the 156 activists on trial in South Africa, and Huddleston gave a speech (Amistad Archives Box 104/43).⁴

Artists were as fascinated by Huddleston as he was by them. Acclaimed photographers such as Constance Stuart Larrabee, Bob Gosani, Jürgen Schadeberg and David Goldblatt shot his portrait. During his 1956 visit to the USA, Huddleston sat for the great Armenian photographer Yousuf Karsh who photographed individuals ranging from Albert Einstein, Audrey Hepburn, Martin Luther King Jr, and later Nelson Mandela.⁵ Some of these images became iconic representations of Huddleston and were absorbed into the visual memory of the anti-apartheid struggle. South African Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer, for example, wrote an essay in 1988 that originates with a portrait of Huddleston that she kept on her desk (2010, 433-437). Gordimer describes the image taken by David Goldblatt in 1952 at the Newclare squatter camp, Johannesburg,

It is a night scene, lit only by a tin brazier. The light from lozenges of incandescent coal brings forward out of the dark a pair of gaunt, tightly clasped hands, the long fingers tautly interlaced, making a great double fist. They are the hands of a white man (433).

Gordimer then states that, although she has no religious faith, in this image of Huddleston, “I see godliness in a way I can understand deeply” (433). Like other white activists, Gordimer was attracted to the alternative that Huddleston embodied: “an assurance that South Africa didn’t

⁴ Dankworth and Huddleston became great friends and along with Yehudi Menuhin they assisted Masekela to leave South Africa and take a place at the Manhattan School of Music (Levi, 2018, 990).

⁵ 10 March 1956, sitting #11302, <https://karsh.org/sittings/huddleston/?order=snumber>, accessed on 25 November 2018.

have to be as it was, that the barriers set up between black and white must come down in situations other and greater than private affinities and friendships” (437). Gordimer frames Huddleston as the guardian saint of white activists, “[C]ertainly, all whites in the struggle are under his sign” (435). This essay captured the role Huddleston filled for oppositional whites: a shorthand for protest against apartheid as a morally tainted project; an ideal of transracial resistance, of political partnership and civic duty.

As an Anglican priest working in Africa, Huddleston belonged on a continuum of European missionaries engaged in humanitarian causes outside Europe. Britain in particular, proclaimed a unique place within the history of aid, social protest and activism going back to the campaigns of abolitionists in the late eighteenth century. This tradition of aid, however, “emerged in connection with imperial governance” (Hilton et al 2018, e8). As the winds of decolonization began to blow, the ties between the church and the European colonial project came under scrutiny. By the late 1960s, this legacy was challenged from within the church. Theologians and practitioners demanded that the church recognize its role and lasting benefits from colonialism (Zalmanovich 2019). Huddleston’s political and material means derived exactly from this association. The Anglican Church amassed power through a plethora of services it offered the black population; services denied by the apartheid state (and earlier racial legislation). In Johannesburg, for instance, Huddleston presided over the education of 6000 black children through the nurseries and schools built by the CR. He was also the superintendent of the theological college St Peter’s, oversaw a hospital, churches and a nunnery and ran aid schemes (McGrandle 2004, 48).

Ecclesiastical networks that connected individual clerics in their local communities to the global community of faith and its international institutions and funding sources were an additional basis of power for Huddleston. In his analysis of the AAM in Britain, Skinner explains the “material importance” of these religious networks in shaping the moral debate about racial segregation and apartheid. Skinner demonstrates how they provided “well-established international channels for the exchange of information, ideas and material resources,” as well as enabling the movement of individuals between South Africa and the world (2010, 4). These networks were tightened, and at times established by Huddleston before the AAM was founded in 1959. They were an important

resource, and therefore a source of competition. The Anglican Church and high-ranking clerics such as Clayton, were suspicious of Huddleston's use of these networks and the consequent association of the church with marginalized figures such as Scott, Collins or Huddleston, himself (Skinner 2010, 3).

These networks propped up the young priest's credentials when he arrived in South Africa in 1943. But as racial legislation in South Africa extended and decolonization spread on the continent, it was beneficial for Huddleston to distance himself from the Church as a tool of colonial governance. Regular attacks from both government and Church had the side-effect of distancing him from the colonial project. Huddleston's decision to live among his parishioners in black townships, helped too. Contemporary and later texts reiterate the legend of Huddleston as a man steeped in local daily life, intimately familiar with the quotidian details and woes of his neighbours. Huddleston's own writings and public campaigning are replete with the names and stories of specific individuals in his community such the teenager Stephen Ramasodi who was denied the opportunity to exit South Africa and take up the scholarship Huddleston had arranged for him in the USA (149-154; *Time*, 1955, *Living Church*, 1955). The correspondence between Huddleston and George Houser from the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) starting in late July 1955, reveals the networks of activism and friendship established in the transnational response to apartheid. Huddleston recruited Houser to canvas ten "really eminent people" to sign a protest letter addressed to the South African embassy on Ramasodi's behalf (Huddleston To Houser 1955). Houser managed to get the signatures of luminaries such as Eleanor Roosevelt, the Christian Philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr and the Baptist pastor and Democratic Congressman Adam Clayton Powell (Houser To Huddleston 1956). In their correspondence Huddleston's belief in the potential of celebrity advocacy shines through.

Huddleston's position as a "fixer," a man who could secure jobs, help with bureaucracy and make important introductions, was captured in the short story collection by the black South African writer Todd Matshikiza. Matshikiza relates how when he arrived with his family in London, "...we flipped through the telephone book to ring our great friend father Trevor Huddleston to say, 'Hello there'" (Matshikiza 1961, 32). Like many others who did just that upon arrival, Matshikiza expected Huddleston to activate his vast network on Matshikiza's

behalf.

In addition to lending his personal attention to individuals in his community, Huddleston was a constant fixture at local town meetings, in courthouses, in the offices and houses of politicians and on the councils of various liberal initiatives. Poet, activist, and former gang member Don Mattera described for instance, witnessing Huddleston during a charged political meeting at the Odin Cinema in Sophiatown in June 1953:

As the people gave way for him to pass I remember moving towards him and I stood almost in his path. His long, bony fingers rubbed my hair and he smiled deeply and seriously ... There was a hush when Father Huddleston stood up to speak ... While he spoke ... uniformed policemen, all armed entered the hall and approached the Indian Speaker [Yusuf Cachalia]. Father Huddleston pushed madly through the crowd, his big wooden rosary firm in the thick belt around his waist. 'Wait, 'he shouted, 'we must not have violence here.' ... what force was there in him, that made others succumb? (Mattera 1987, 90).

Mattera's description, published in 1987, captures and repeats key components of the iconic persona of Huddleston as it was curated over the decades. His Huddleston is so intricately involved, he has to push "madly" through a dense crowd. Like Gordimer, Mattera too highlights Huddleston's hands, "his long, bony fingers." Here, the hands are not clenched in a fist but rather they rub the hair of a teenager, offering compassion over conflict. Mattera's description highlights two central elements in Huddleston's public perception: his association with children and with Christ. Many leaders, artists and intellectuals remembered Huddleston as a patron, and many photographers captured his image walking in a dusty street with children hanging to his cassock. The visual trope produced by the tall figure of the 'fader' with his little ones served to underscore the Christ-like image of Huddleston. It recalled the phrase from Matthew 19:14: "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" While this depiction showed the children as worthy of godly salvation, it also emphasized Huddleston's own sacrifice and suffering for the children. While associating Huddleston with the innocence of children and the politics of Christian love, it also recalled colonial and racialized hierarchies of power. Though not levelled directly at Huddleston, echoes of this critique surfaced in later debates about the desirability of transracial collaboration in the struggle.

The construction of Huddleston as a Christ-like leader of the meek is reminiscent of a darker figure, the pied piper leading children into harm. In early 1974, during Huddleston's tenure as Bishop of Stepney in London, Huddleston was accused of sexual harassment of four boys. The police conducted an investigation under the accusation of "gross indecency with young boys at the Bishop's House" (MEPO 26/348/01, National Archives). Huddleston did not contest the facts but argued that the acts were not sexual. The case was withdrawn "through lack of evidence" (MEPO 26/348/01) and most files are closed off till 2070. The allegations had curtailed Huddleston's prospects of being appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, as he was once tipped to become.⁶ The accusations were not made public and Huddleston's moral authority remained unscathed.

The Recall and Huddleston's Rise to International Fame

During his sojourn in Johannesburg Huddleston thought of himself as an "Old Testament prophet," accepted the label 'agitator,' and embraced the possibility of martyrdom (*Time* 1955b). This position was not palatable to his colleagues in the Church. The unease increased after Huddleston in an op-ed for the British *Observer* openly attacked the institution's reluctance to unequivocally denounce apartheid (1954). This enraged in particular, Geoffrey Clayton, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town between 1948 and 1957, who objected to apartheid but did not appreciate moving the debate onto the international stage. On top of the mounting critique from within the Church, the government increased its attacks on Huddleston. On 24 October 1955, the CR announced Huddleston's recall to England. Inadvertently, the recall and the reactions it spurred became an occasion to focus even more media attention on Huddleston, and provided him with further opportunities for public expression.

Huddleston suspected that Clayton "had a good deal" to do with it his recall, but he did not think the act was motivated by political pressure or that Clayton "wanted to get rid of me" (Huddleston 1970). Rather, "I am sure he felt that I was too heavily involved for my own spiritual health," and "he did care in case that I should be arrested or something else" (Huddleston 1970). In 1946

⁶ The falls outside the scope of this article. For a fuller exploration, including Huddleston's subsequent collapse and months-long depression, and the Church's cover-up operation, see McGrandle 2004, pp.151-160.

Huddleston was diagnosed as a diabetic, and his supporters feared he would not survive imprisonment. This fear was not unfounded. In December that year, 156 activists were swept up by police and imprisoned. They awaited trial for what became known as “the Treason Trial,” a series of trials that went on till 1961. The news of the recall emboldened apartheid supporters to attack Huddleston more viciously. The *New York Times* reported that an employee in the State Information Office of the Department of External Affairs wrote to Huddleston that, “[I]f ever a man deserved to be drummed out of a country, to be ignominiously deported as an undesirable immigrant or, in the last resort, to be strung up from the nearest lamp post as a renegade, it was you” (*NYT* 1955).

Huddleston’s banishment from South Africa was a symbolic act of denial tied to his growing celebrity status. Earlier, in an op-ed for the *Observer* in January 1955, Huddleston urged immediate action before the situation in South Africa reaches a “point of no return” (*Observer* 1955). In this piece, Huddleston maintained that Christians should offer themselves for service in Africa “with the deliberate intention of making a personal and a real contribution to the destruction of racial prejudice and the bitter consequences of its present triumph for the Church” (*Observer* 1955). Through his forced exile, Huddleston had been denied the opportunity for self-sacrifice both by the South African government and by his own order.

Thus the recall circumvented the potential role Huddleston could have played in the struggle, and exposed his privilege as a white member of the British elite. It revealed that ultimately, Huddleston’s political involvement was a choice for which he would not be forced to bear life-threatening consequences. The new circumstances enabled him to reinvent his role in the struggle in important and unconventional ways. His access to literary circles in South Africa and Britain opened the door for his most enduring act of protest – the writing of his memoir. Huddleston wrote *Naught for your Comfort* while vacationing with Dorrie and Alan Paton in 1955, and it was published to great acclaim in 1956. The memoir proved to be the most effective platform to date for Huddleston’s preaching.

The memoir was a scathing critique of the apartheid system told from the perspective of a participating witness to injustices. But it was also a love letter to Sophiatown and the creative and communal energy of its inhabitants. Because the neighbourhood was razed to the ground

months before the publication of the book, Huddleston's portrayal of it became a monument to its dispossessed community. Huddleston felt the burden of representation: "It is particularly important to me to try to paint the picture that I know and that is yet so elusive, for in a few years Sophiatown will cease to exist" (Huddleston 1956, 117). Its houses will be emptied from "the life, the laughter, and the tears of children" and will become "a grey ruin lying in the sun" (117). Its loving portraits of Huddleston's neighbours offered a contrasting representation of black South Africans to the one the regime circulated to justify racial discrimination and exploitation. The immense success of the book disseminated this portrayal of Sophiatown in the West, and made it the iconic portrayal of a lost era.⁷

The book's language of affect proved extremely effective for political mobilization. *Naught* inspired others to join the struggle and advocate the moral case against apartheid. Through Huddleston, Skinner argues, "antiapartheid became an act of alliance with, rather than a mere concern for 'the African'" (2014, 222). This aspiration for solidarity would become a defining strand of the AAM in Britain with which Huddleston was intricately involved from its inception in late 1959. The memoir's vivid language and clear alignment of moral values with anti-apartheid protest, made it especially damaging for the apartheid regime. James Sanders writes that the propaganda organ the South Africa Foundation (SAF) was founded in December 1959 "in direct response to the establishment of the Boycott Movement" in Britain (2000, 70) which Huddleston and a small group of activist had led. Just as anti-apartheid protest was gaining more traction worldwide, SAF could be seen as an early apparition of an "anti-anti-apartheid" mode of explanation, to use a recent formulation by Saul Dubow that he applies to 1970s pro-apartheid propaganda (2017, 319).

A Moral Authority on Apartheid

Huddleston's departure from South Africa occurred at the peak of his celebrity. His biographer estimated that within Christian circles his fame was only secondary to that of the Pope (Denniston 1999, 63). A CBS television crew documented his departure, and local and

⁷ The Library of Congress reprinted the memoir in their Scholar's Choice series. Works in this category are selected by scholars because of the cultural significance and their being "part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it" (Huddleston 1956, Scholar's Choice edition).

international newspapers covered it (67). En route to England, Huddleston embarked on a book tour in the USA sponsored by ACOA, where he gave public lectures and met with contemporary dignitaries such as Martin Luther King Jr, Louis Armstrong and Eleanor Roosevelt (Huddleston 1991, 56-7). Meanwhile, his publicists contacted BBC radio and television departments to coordinate future media appearances (Huddleston Talks I 1956-1962). It was agreed that avoiding “indiscriminate bookings” or a “first come, first serve” division of his time would be advisable (Ibid).

Huddleston landed in Britain on 13 April 1956. His publicists’ preparatory campaign bore immediate fruit. Two days later, the *Observer* published a profile and an item titled “Huddleston Blamed for Riots” was on its front page. The article reported accusations by the South African Minister of Finance and External Affairs that Huddleston was to blame for recent ‘riots’ in Johannesburg. Though Huddleston was absent, the riots were the “natural result of the irresponsible and inflammatory talk of Huddleston and his lefty friends” (*Observer*, 1956a). The profile introduced Huddleston as a “leading protagonist of the nine-million black people of South Africa,” and “a serious challenge to the Anglican Church” (*Observer* 1956b). The journalist emphasized Huddleston’s “uncompromising opposition to racial discrimination,” and resistance to “tyrannical laws by political means” (*Observer* 1956b). Like earlier articles, it focused on his “sensitive features, direct eyes and quiet, cultivated voice.” It delineated his career in Africa as “one of greater involvement with those he has sought to serve, unspoilt by any hint of paternalism” (*Observer* 1956b). A familiar visual imagery was translated to prose -- Huddleston “striding through the slimy townships in his long cassock, his arm round the nearest black shoulders, and with African children tugging and trailing behind him” (*Observer* 1956b). It then mentioned his jazz band and Menuhin’s visit to Sophiatown, thereby summing up Huddleston perfectly for English readers.

The next day the *Manchester Guardian* reported on a press conference in which Huddleston “faced the press, cameras, and a continuous barrage of questions about the racial problem in South Africa” (*Manchester Guardian*, 1956a). That night, the BBC broadcast an interview with Huddleston on its prestigious show “Panorama” (Huddleston Talks I: 1956-1962). In the next

few days, Huddleston appeared on three BBC radio programs geared to different audiences.⁸ A week later, Huddleston addressed a large crowd at the Central Hall, Westminster under the auspices of the Africa Bureau (*Manchester Guardian* 1956b). His appearances continued to draw crowds in upcoming months (*Manchester Guardian* 1956c; Denniston 1999, 70). The “incessant invitations to speak which came by every post” interfered with his role as Master of the Novices at the CR house at Mirfield, Yorkshire and most were rejected (Denniston 1999, 71). In the midst of this, Huddleston was grief stricken by his exile. “Partir, c’est mourir en peu,” he wrote, “... and I am in the process of dying” (Huddleston 1956, 13). Decades later, Huddleston still felt the “anguish” of his recall (*Observer* 1980).

Can the Exile Speak?

Huddleston’s distress was shared by most South African exiles. Like them, Huddleston was faced with a challenge: How to maintain authority to speak about a country one could no longer enter? A way around this dilemma was to think about racism both broadly and locally by protesting domestic racism in Britain and locating it within a global framework about the dangers of institutional racism. Thus Father Jonathan Graham, now the CR Superior, appointed Huddleston Prior of the London House in Notting Hill where Huddleston lived from 1958 to 1960 (Denniston 1999, 72). Huddleston returned to an urban site of poverty and racial strife—at once a familiar and a new experience. The so called Notting Hill ‘race riots’ of August 1958, became a formative moment in the history of ‘race relations’ in Britain, and for Huddleston’s future path to activism. From the 1960s, immigration dominated the political agenda, and Huddleston regularly vocalized his objection to overhauling of the country’s immigration laws (Zalmanovich 2018). In Notting Hill Huddleston befriended anti-colonial activists working in the Committee of African Organizations (CAO), and groups advocating for racial equality such as the Inter-Racial Friendship Co-ordinating Council (IRFCC). From his work with these groups, Huddleston concluded that Britain had “the seeds of a racial discrimination,” and that “Colour discrimination is the supreme issue of our generation” (Olden 2011, 7). This network of anti-colonial and leftist networks formed a vibrant circle of activists who founded the AAM on 26

⁸ These were: a show in French on 20 April 1956; “At Home and Abroad,” on the same day; “London Calling Europe,” 21 April, 1956 (Huddleston Talks I 1956-1962).

June 1959 under the auspices of CAO.

Unlike most other activists, however, Huddleston's celebrity also presented opportunities for action. Huddleston's repute and his respectable image as a white, Christian leader, and member of the British establishment, often opened doors closed to most, such as placing op-eds in leading newspapers. His "cultivated voice" and liberal demeanour helped counteract the representation of the liberation movements as violent, savage and communist – a representation that the South African regime was circulating. Sanders shows for example the risk in blurring these lines of distinction between "respectable" and "violent" protest through his analysis of the backlash that the 1968-1969 Stop the Seventy Tour created (2000, 88).

The analysis of Huddleston's deployment of celebrity highlights the ferocity of the 'war of representation' between the South African authorities and the global anti-apartheid movement as early as the 1950s. This confrontation grew to monumental proportions between 1972 and 1976 when the Department of Information launched a concentrated effort to "put a program of media manipulation" in place that used the Western media as its "central battlefield" (Sanders 2000, 3). The revelations regarding this campaign in 1978 resulted in the 'Information Scandal' that eventually led to the downfall of the Prime Minister John Vorster, and the Minister of Plural Relations and Development and Information, the Head of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), and the Secretary of Information (Ibid). The considerable investment in propaganda, however, continued for decades. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) estimated in the 1990s that about \$270 million was spent between 1978 and 1994 on various media campaigns by the apartheid regime (Nixon 2015, 8). Consecutive South African governments allocated hundreds of millions of dollars for this purpose while anti-apartheid groups operated on a shoestring budget. In this ecology, personalities such as Huddleston who could reach large and diverse audiences proved invaluable for the cause. Their presence on the global scene, necessitated the South African regime to direct great funds to propaganda campaigns. As this article has shown, the origins of this form of confrontation precede the 1970s, and its roots hark back to 1950s Johannesburg and the rise to fame of 'fader' Huddleston.

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