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The Quiet Editor: Ivan Vladislavić and South African cultural production

A pre-print draft of an article to be published in *the Journal of Commonwealth Literature*

Abstract

This article examines the literary and sociological significance of Ivan Vladislavić's "double life" (Lahire, 2010: n.p.) as both editor and writer. With reference to a number of his editorial roles as well as the joint projects he has worked on with writers and visual artists, the article considers how Vladislavić's work with others spreads symbolic value. Described by one of his clients as the "quiet editor", Vladislavić can be read as a new kind of author; what he terms "creative editing" (Steyn, 2012: n.p.) as a new kind of writing, through which more traditional models of authorship and literary production are thrown into question — less Bourdieu's (1984) "field of literary production" or Casanova's (2004: 82) "world literary space", red in tooth and claw, and more Howard Becker's "art world": a convivial "network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome" (1982: 25).

Keywords: Ivan Vladislavić; South African literature; South African visual culture; cultural production; art world

For almost 30 years Ivan Vladislavić has worked as an editor with a range of South African writers, contributing to the artistic realization of their work but concomitantly also to its — and their — marketability. For the most part this work has been carried out behind the scenes, or as the historian and travel writer Tim Couzens puts it in his candid account of their working relationship, quietly (2006: n.p.). In the first part of this article I argue that such private interventions in the production of literary texts constitutes a form of co-operative creative labour that contributes to the legitimacy of the work and enhances the

cultural capital of those involved, but in ways that do not entirely accord with the competitive logic advanced in those aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of literary production which have been deployed in a recent influential studies of world literature.¹

In the second part of the article I draw on the "personal reflections" of two of his highest profile clients, Tim Couzens and Antjie Krog, to consider how Vladislavić's preference for co-operative as opposed to collaborative projects relates to his experience of providing professional editing services while at the same building a reputation for himself as a writer operating at the interstices of literary and artistic fields. These accounts suggest that his input into the work of others is integral to their positioning in the literary field, and this in turn enables Vladislavić to traverse corresponding hierarchies of consecration and cultural practice (Bourdieu, 1984: 28). Although as a freelance editor he has operated outside the apparatus of institutional consecration since leaving Ravan Press in 1991, he has remained on the editorial board of this important independent publisher and over time has become immersed in both the publishing and art worlds. Vladislavić's unique investment in and importance to South African cultural production, most clearly emerges when one considers the totality of his literary labour in the context of what Bernard Lahire (2010) has called "the Double Life of the Writer".

In the first section of the article I draw on Lahire's (2010) sociology of the plural actor to suggest that Vladislavić's dual career — his dual *habitus* — as an editor and a writer has enabled him to mobilize what cultural sociologists call "media meta-capital" (Couldry, 2003: 668; Garman, 2014: 79) across the ostensibly discrete cultural fields of literary and visual arts production. This mode of working has certainly seen his own stock rise on the world literary scene in recent years, evidenced by his receipt of a \$150,000 Windham–Campbell Prize from Yale University in 2015 for "literary achievement as well as potential" (Yale News, 2015: n.p.). As an editor, his professional concern is to work behind the scenes to assist others in the artistic realization of their work. Yet the co-operative

nature of Vladislavić's *work with others* as a *named* editor, contributor, and collaborator has the effect of co-creating and spreading symbolic value. This is similar to what James F. English refers to as an "intraconversion" (2005: 48) of symbolic value as circulating cultural capital in his study of literary prizes awards. Through reference to his work with the journalist-writer Antjie Krog as editor of *Country of my Skull* (1998), with photographer David Goldblatt as co-author of *TJ/Double Negative* (2010), and with photographers Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse (and a range of other contributors) as the creative editor of *Ponte City* (2014), I discuss how Vladislavić navigates between the cynicism of "mutually exploitative" (Van Niekerk, 2011: 46) collaborations and what he terms "the bonded autonomy of a joint project" (Naudé and Vladislavić, 2014: n.p.).

The double life of the (editor-) writer in a global cultural marketplace

In his introduction to *Marginal Space: Reading Ivan Vladislavić* (2011), the first book length survey of Vladislavić's work, Gerald Gaylard argues that Vladislavić's uniquely playful brand of writing has participated in the worlding of a specifically South African aesthetic in the postapartheid era:

South African literature and literary studies is thus no longer exceptional; it has rejoined world literature for all that it is critical of that world. Its politically informed historical formalism is now beginning to ask questions about the effect and affect of postcolonial literature in the global milieu and attempting to redefine the sympathetic imagination as a consequence. (2011: 11)

Although this is not the particular point he intends to make, Gaylard's précis of the postapartheid South African literary field in this quotation is indicative of the particular kinds

of writing and criticism that have achieved international consecration over the last 25 years or so. Arguably it has been those South African writers and critics who have chosen to work in or on a mode of “politically informed historical formalism” characteristically seeking “to redefine the sympathetic imagination” who have achieved the greatest success in finding an international audience for their work. Of these writers, the most obvious names include Nobel Laureates J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, with a younger generation of expatriate writers such as Zakes Mda and Zoe Wicomb achieving some prominence — and Ivan Vladislavić now poised for entry into this pantheon on winning the Windham–Campbell Prize in 2015.²

However, in spite of recognition and varying degrees of consecration at the centre of what Pascale Casanova terms “world literary space” (2004: 82), with the possible exception of Gordimer all of these feted writers have nonetheless had to subsidize their strictly literary writing through other forms of employment often teaching and research positions in universities, or related work such as journalism, literary reviewing, editorial work and so forth. As Bernard Lahire puts it in “The Double Life of Writers”, through economic necessity writers almost invariably occupy *multiple* habitus, amongst which what might be termed the “literary universe” is more than likely to be secondary to whatever it is the writer has to do in order to pay the bills. The questions this straightforward observation raises leads to a rather more complex understanding of literary canon formation than one typically encounters in literary sociology:

How, then, do writers manage their social investments when their literary activity is only intermittent and only occurs as a function of the “blanks” or “gaps” that their other obligations — personal and professional ones especially — afford them? Can they “invest” with equal intensity in different social worlds, whether or not these are organized as fields of struggle? And when they participate in different “fields”

(literary, medical, journalistic, academic, diplomatic, et cetera), can they simultaneously invest in both fields and integrate the *illusio* (e.g., beliefs and values) of both? (2010: 446)

Such considerations are largely absent from the critical work that has played an instrumental role in the international consecration of the particular mode of writing Gaylard describes, and of the actual writers one might infer from his précis. The reason Vladislavić is so interesting, and I would argue so important, in this context is because of the way he has blurred the boundaries of his “double life”. As both a writer and a professional editor he integrates and yet also dispels the romantic *illusio* of the postcolonial writer, a figure who necessarily incorporates authorial self-consciousness in their work in order to navigate a globalized literary marketplace (see, for example, Brouillette, 2007: 68–69; Naudé and Vladislavić, 2014: n.p.).

From 1988 to 1990 Vladislavić worked as assistant editor for the radical *Staffrider* magazine. By championing black writers and publishing material primarily concerned with the lives of ordinary black people under apartheid, the magazine was instrumental in “both the making of the people’s popular imagination and the making of memory within the excluded South African society” (Manase, 2005: 55). Vladislavić’s role in this enterprise afforded myriad connections among Johannesburg’s multi-racial literary, artistic, and activist circles. By 1988 he had developed a sufficient profile in literary and publishing circles to move into freelance editing, while remaining on Ravan’s editorial board. With the publication of his short story collection *Missing Persons* in the same year he also began to develop renown as a writer in his own right, and has subsequently won a succession of national literary prizes. He received the Olive Schreiner Prize for *Missing Persons* in 1991; the CNA Literary Award for *The Folly* in 1993; the Thomas Pringle Prize for the stories “Propaganda by Monuments” and “The WHITES ONLY Bench” in 1994; the Sunday Times

Fiction Prize for *The Restless Supermarket* in 2002; the Sunday Times Alan Paton Award for Nonfiction and the University of Johannesburg Prize for *Portrait with Keys* in 2007; the University of Johannesburg Prize and M-Net Literary Award for *Double Negative* in 2011.

In 2016 Vladislavić's reputation continues to grow globally through international publication deals as well as the translation and reissuing of this body of work in a number of international markets. This trajectory reflects a more general shift in South African literary production, what Leon de Kock identifies in South Africa's institutions of literary consecration as a move towards "a more internationalist formalism, a preoccupation with the textures of textuality" in which criteria deployed by literary prize judges "seem largely indistinguishable in the final analysis from criteria used to judge the Man-Booker or any other world literary prize" (2009: 38). Vladislavić's status as having fully entered what Casanova (2004) calls the "world republic of letters" was marked by the Windham–Campbell award. However, the first *global* prize he received was four years earlier when Vladislavić won the 2011 Krazna–Krausz best photography book award for a cross-disciplinary collaboration with the already world-renowned photographer David Goldblatt, *TJ/Double Negative* (2010).

Discussing the genesis of *TJ/Double Negative* in an interview with Goldblatt and fellow South African writer Marlene Van Niekerk, Vladislavić responds to Van Niekerk's effusive speculation on the kinds of pleasures that must have been afforded by the project with more than a little wariness at what he implies to be the "conventional" mode of collaboration between writers and artists:

there's an issue here of the politics of art publishing. A lot of artists use writers to lend a particular kind of weight to their catalogues. And from a writer's point of view, they often simply regard these relationships with visual artists as a way of publishing

in an attractive book. So there is sort of a compromise, and sometimes a sort of mutually exploitative relationship that develops. (2011: 46)

Vladislavić is chary of the potentially cynical self-promotional ends to which some forms of cross-disciplinary collaboration might tend. The danger, as he frames it, is that the artistic autonomy of both participants is compromised through this relationship. His response to Goldblatt's invitation to produce some writing in response to a photographic series was, in his view, quite different. As he puts it, "You don't want to be a caption." (2011: 46)

Vladislavić further elaborates on his reticence to enter into interdisciplinary collaborations in a recently published dialogue with the up-and-coming Afrikaans writer S. J. Naudé (2014).

The "In Conversation" series is a promotional format commissioned by the UK-based literary magazine *Granta* which, ironically, seems designed to serve the "mutually exploitative relationship" Vladislavić distanced himself from in the 2011 *TJ/Double Negative* interview.

The conversation itself reflects directly on this irony, framed as it is by Vladislavić's opening question to Naudé in which he asks if the latter tailored his debut collection of stories *The Alphabet of Birds* (Naudé, 2015/2011) for different global markets. In the conversation that follows both writers address an article published in the *Mail & Guardian* (the leading

"quality" South African newspaper) by Leon de Kock (2014), in which the prominent academic and literary critic bemoans the impact of globalization on South African literature.

Naudé suggests Vladislavić's writing is characterised by a concern with what he describes as the "micro-local", but that this nonetheless feeds into a cosmopolitan aesthetic through the "interaction between your writing and other forms of art." (Vladislavić and Naudé, 2014:

n.p.) In moving the discussion from the external pressures exerted on writing by a globalized market to the aesthetics intrinsic to "cosmopolitan sensibilities", Naudé observes in

Vladislavić's body of work an enabling tension between his interest in art as *conceptual* practice and writing as *craft*.

This line of questioning enables Vladislavić to position his work with others as a counterpoint to the dominance of a globalized visual culture, which is most effectively realized through co-operative projects with visual artists. As he puts it, "You enter into the magnetic field of another imagination and meet with or assert a productive resistance." (Vladislavić and Naudé, 2014: n.p.) Such comments, in their content as well as the context of their publication, situate Vladislavić and his work squarely in Brouillette's Bourdieusian model, whereby "postcolonial" writers invariably struggle to access a globalized literary marketplace. For Brouillette, the articulation of artistic self-reflexivity

[i]nvolves writers incorporating into their aesthetic arsenal various kinds of meta-commentary: on the act of writing itself, on the status of literature within culture at large, and on their own careers as authors, especially as they recognise themselves as "tributaries" in a vast field of cultural exchange that operates substantially outside of whatever sphere they can be said to control. (2007: 68)

The implication of this instance of Vladislavić's meta-commentary on interdisciplinary collaboration is that it is the writer and their contribution that are most at risk of artistic compromise in this "vast field of cultural exchange". In these and other interviews (see for example Penfold, 2014; Steyn, 2012), as well as in playfully ironic depictions of the South African art world in his fictions — such as the artist Simeon Majara in *The Exploded View* (2004) and Neville Lister's transition from advertising's "frozen moment guy" to reputed artist-photographer in *Double Negative* (2010: 146) — Vladislavić adroitly

“exposes the artifice of artmaking” (de Kock 2012, 14–15); and yet he continues to co-operate with visual artists on “joint projects”, alongside his sole-authored work.

The mobilization of “meta-capital”

Graham Riach uses the term “collaborative collage” (2015: 93) to describe Vladislavić’s “frequent work” with visual artists. “By fostering a community practice that maintains the unique character of each contributor’s work”, Riach suggests that Vladislavić facilitates the “sticking together” of an artworld:

Vladislavić has found in collage a model for working collectively that upholds the individual importance of each contributing artist, while making something much greater than the sum of its parts. (2015: 93)

The suggestion here is that by comingling the work and worlds of editing and artistic production in this socio-cultural practice of “sticking together”, Vladislavić invests cultural production both with intrinsic autonomous value and extrinsic cultural legitimacy. Moreover, his co-operation opens the possibility of symbolic capital being translated between separate fields of cultural production. A career spent carefully navigating his particular “double life” has afforded Vladislavić something similar to what Nick Couldry (2003) has termed “media meta-capital”, a concept usefully summarized by Beth Driscoll in her work on the literary middlebrow as “a form of symbolic capital that can exert influence in other fields, and can under certain conditions be directly exchanged for symbolic capital in another field” (2014: 63).

Andrea Garman (2014) has observed a strikingly similar dynamic in the career of another prominent public intellectual from South Africa, the journalist–writer Antjie Krog — who, significantly, happens to be one of Vladislavić’s former clients. Garman reviews Krog’s

career and reconstructs her emergence as a public figure possessed of media meta-capital through a series of important moments of consecration and transition. The first moment is the public celebration of her juvenile poetry and subsequent mentoring by the then doyen of Afrikaans literature, Dirk Opperman. Then comes Krog's transformation into, and in Bourdieusian terms, legitimation as, "a voice of that struggle" (Garman, 2014: 90), when her poem "My Mooi Land" was read by ANC stalwart Ahmed Kathrada on his release from Robben Island in 1989. Finally, Garman examines a moment in the 1990s when a profile in *Leadership* magazine set in train a further process of consecration (among English speaking elites) but also opened doors into influential jobs in "hard journalism", including as editor working for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Hearings. From Krog's journalistic coverage of the TRC emerged *Country of my Skull* (1998), a quasi-autobiographical account of the TRC that brought international acclaim. One cannot but be struck by the homologizing effect of media-meta capital in Garman's précis of this definitive moment in Krog's career, quoted at length below. Notable for Garman is the way in which the book authored by Krog — but extensively edited by Vladislavić — sublimates not only the voices and trauma of myriad victims and perpetrators, but also the immense collaborative labour involved in the "work" of the TRC itself:

Krog's reportage, filtered empathetically through a personal account, was modified into a book under the editor's pen of Ivan Vladislavic [*sic*], and in 1998 *Country of My Skull*, a hybrid blend of reportage, memoir, fiction and poetry, was published to national and international acclaim. Despite the fact that thousands of voices of testimony had entered the public space to be heard for the first time, and many hundreds of other journalists had also reported on the TRC, it was the voice of Krog

that was seized on by the publisher to speak autobiographically on behalf of this experience and all South Africans involved in this process. (91–92)

Vladislavić the writer currently seems to be on a winning spree in the globalized game of South African cultural production. Yet this example of his integral involvement in Antjie Krog's most significant published work — the assemblage through which her media meta-capital is reproduced as “the specifically modern form of capital we call celebrity” (English, 2005: 51) — foregrounds the significance of his largely unseen co-operative *creative* labour as an editor with and for others. When one considers how some of his former clients have discussed his input as an editor in a special issue of the South African literary journal *Scrutiny 2* in 2006, and in particular the way it informs their sense of themselves as “authors”, it emerges that this editorial work is integral to the value that might be ascribed to the work of those associated with him, as well as his own writing. But it is at least partly because he chooses to enter into what he terms “joint-projects”³ from long experience of the liminal creative position of the “quiet editor”, influential yet largely uncredited, that Vladislavić is so highly sensitized to the ethics and operations of collaborative creative work. “In parallel with his writing career”, Greg Penfold notes in a 2014 profile for *Leadership* magazine,⁴ “Vladislavić has developed a reputation as perhaps South Africa's finest editor, exerting an unseen influence on some of the most prominent names on the literary scene [...] [In Vladislavić's own words, quoted by Penfold] Tim Couzens, Charles van Onselen, Jonny Steinberg, Antjie Krog, Chris van Wyk, Achmat Dangor, to name a few” (Penfold, 2014: n.p.).

“Personal reflections on Ivan Vladislavić as Editor”

A 2006 special edition of the South African scholarly journal *Scrutiny 2* contains “personal reflections on Ivan Vladislavić as an editor” by Tony Morphet, Antjie Krog, Fred de Vries, and Tim Couzens. “All four of the writers know Vladislavić’s writing well”, the editors of this special issue note, but they

also know him in his other public intellectual roles: as one of the most important editors in the country, as an art critic and as a commentator on cultural and intellectual matters. This is reflected in their representations of Vladislavić, which pay some measure of tribute to his importance in our cultural milieu, and his translation into other contexts. (Gaylard and Titlestad, 2006: 10)

This summary captures the way that Vladislavić’s editorial work not only spans different fields of cultural production: he is positioned as an authoritative figure who occupies a creative space between and across boundaries, among cognate fields in the arts, but also between the roles and habitus of public intellectual, renowned writer and the country’s preeminent professional editor. To return to Tim Couzens’ remarks, Vladislavić’s editorial style in this regard is aptly described as “quiet”. Quiet, insofar as the technical craft of editing is based on a correspondence and professional relationship that is carried out in private, primarily on the pages of a manuscript, a professional mode of co-operation that respects the privacy of the client and, in most cases, precludes any public acknowledgement of the editor’s contribution. And yet over time this work attains a public dimension as well, whereby both the formal and informal relationships that Vladislavić has developed with writers, and the influence he *is known* to exert across the field as a consequence, derive not only from those private editorial interventions but also through the more creative editorial work and joint projects that publicly carry his name.

In what he describes as a “tribute” (Couzens, 2006: 98) to the work of Vladislavić, Couzens suggests that it is not his own writing as such that will prove to be of interest to future generations, but rather Vladislavić’s editorial marginalia on his manuscript:

What is even more impressive, however, is the imaginative effort he puts into getting inside a book he is editing and make it his own [...] In years to come scholars will scramble for the typescript of *Murder at Morija* wanting to read the words and wisdom of a great writer. (2006: 100)

Marginalia, an informational mode of writing (annotation) intended for the sole consumption of a client, not the public, is the medium of Vladislavić’s professional craft. In Couzens’ formulation, however, it is also a vessel with which his creative authority, not just as an editor but as a “great writer”, may be conveyed. But the reflection does not merely pay homage to Vladislavić’s words and wisdom; it records the discussions between editor and writer that took place on the page as well as, most intriguingly, how Couzens *felt* about this process:

The ultimate reward comes when, at the end of an extended piece, you read: “This whole chapter is beautifully judged, Tim”. Best of all, for myself, were the interesting debates we conducted in the margins of the typescript. (2006: 98)

The manner in which Couzens reports these “debates” reveals some trepidation, with his work being judged by an editor he clearly has great respect for, but also the pleasure deriving from what he implies to be a co-operative labour with someone he has long mentored.⁵ There is a subtle shift in register at this point in the short essay, a segue from a straightforward first-person report to a free indirect narrative mode, with the effect

that it is no longer clear whether Couzens is simply reporting the “debates” that took place on or off those pages or actually quoting directly from the typescript marginalia:

Why is Morija not spelt Moriah as many people ask me? The answer is simple and a quick reference to Sam Duby’s copy of La Sainte bible indicates that the place where Abraham offered his son Isaac up for sacrifice (Genèse 22: 2) is Morija, once again reminding us of the French influence on Lesotho place-names and the Sesotho language.(2006: 98)

While Couzens provides some pointers as to who made which suggestions or compromised on a particular word or phrase for whatever reason, what emerges from his re-presentation of the process is that the final version of the text to emerge from this process was very much a co-operative endeavour. “These were amongst the hundreds of microdecisions that had to be made before the final text was complete”, Couzens notes. “Friends thought I was joking when I said that every punctuation mark, every single comma, has been carefully considered by the two of us” (2006: 98). Such a candid reflection sheds light on the under-acknowledged role of the literary editor in general, but it also testifies to the instrumental way in which Vladislavić’s editorial craft has contributed to the work’s artistic success and one can presume that of many other books. All this, yet until the publication of Couzens’ reflection, no public trace of Vladislavić’s input on the book, no means of determining the significance of his editorial services to Couzens’ career (or for that matter, the significance of Couzen’s patronage to his own).

In another of the personal reflections from the *Scrutiny 2* special issue Antjie Krog (2006) casts more light on the co-production of *Country of My Skull*, citing a conversation with Vladislavić that arches around the kinds of anxieties that afflict what she, significantly, terms the “insecure writer” — a figure who in Krog’s view is perpetually undone by a

separation anxiety particular to the “creative subject”. This subject remains abject, Krog suggests, in anticipation of the valorization that only the most trusted “outside reader” might provide. In contrast to the way the affective dimension of Vladislavić’s editorial labour emerges so prominently in Couzens’ reflection, Krog’s account — another example of Brouillette’s “meta-commentary”, based around a conversation with Vladislavić — more precisely distinguishes the unintended personal affects from the impersonal style that hallmarks Vladislavić’s co-operation. His editorial style, according to Krog, is not immediately to offer words of praise, gifting the sought-after validation — the psychic re-integration of a person who clearly lives in and through their work yet perhaps struggles to reconcile the competing investments and dispositions of the “double life of the writer”, as one might infer from Garman’s discussion of her career. Instead, Vladislavić is reported by Krog to claim

I would much rather put my changes and comments [...] on the page, so that the conversation is with the text, than discuss things with the author. I would rather talk to the text and let the writer answer back. End of story! (2006: 93)

And yet in Krog’s actual description of the pragmatics of the editorial work, the affective dimension of his editorial labour surfaces once again — “that wonderful ‘OK?’” — though in this instance more specifically in terms of the way it provides a foil for the author’s own creativity:

A perfect beginning for an editor — in my book: first a testing of one’s suggestion, then a short grammar lesson, then an alternative and then that wonderful “OK?” Ivan knows this [quoting Vladislavić again]: “Regarding yourself as a (creative) editor rather than a mere technician is bound to give you a big head. You put your creative energy and time into someone else’s work and then you start to think you have a

stake in it. In some ways, the interventions you make as an editor are analogous to the interventions writers make when they are revising.” (2006: 93)

With the exception that in the client’s work itself, the construction of a world of words, the editor occupies an integral yet also, necessarily, marginal position. For Vladislavić, “The editor who dwells in the book for a couple of weeks is a transitory figure, a squatter, compared with the writer who has lived there for years, building it from the ground up” (qtd. in Krog, 2006: 93).

As a transitory inhabitant Vladislavić might be instrumental in the aesthetic success of the writer’s text, but not always in a way that sees him publically recognized with a share in its ownership. His co-habitation adds value to the property, yet that property typically remains another’s. Nonetheless, as Krog goes on to note, his co-operation paradoxically becomes a means through which the artistic autonomy of the work is achieved:

As English is not my first language, I am never quite sure whether I am being too loud, too clichéd or too sentimental — admitting to the postcolonial effect described by Bill Ashcroft (1989: 189) of the centre imposing “its criteria as universal” — dictating an order “in terms of which the cultural margins must always see themselves as disorder and chaos”. But Ivan’s comments have the opposite effect: they affirm what you write in a way that says: the writing itself has already validated itself. (2006: 93)

Here, Vladislavić’s labour on another’s text amounts to an ethical commitment to that other. It opens — or at least, holds the possibility of opening — a new vector of intrinsic value: “the writing itself has already validated itself”. In this way, I suggest, Krog’s 2006 personal reflection anticipates and sheds further light on the way of working Vladislavić has more

recently described as his preferred mode of cooperation — “the bonded autonomy of a joint project” (Naudé and Vladislavić, 2014: n.p.).

Through both his technical and creative editorial work Vladislavić necessarily functions as a cultural intermediary and affords consecration in the Bourdieusian schema. But while his association lends external legitimacy, often through a transmission of media meta-capital, the more pragmatic aspects of his co-operation enhance the intrinsic artistic value of the work itself. This happens in the editorial services he is paid to provide for others, as well as in the joint projects which explore themes of common interest, such as the recent example of *Ponte City*, the photography book by Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse that won the prestigious 2015 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize just a few months after Vladislavić himself won the Windham–Campbell Prize. Vladislavić is a named contributor as both the book’s editor and the author of three of the 17 supplementary pamphlets that it contains. However when talking about the book in other contexts he indicates that he not only edited the book in the traditional, technical sense, he also “creatively edited” its literary components — the other 14 contributions were commissioned by Vladislavić — and played an important role in the book’s overall conception (Penfold, 2014; The Restless Derby, 2014). There is no mention of Vladislavić’s labour on Subotzky’s webpage and nor does he receive a mention in any of the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize publicity. However, on Amazon’s UK website the book is described as being “by” — and so the casual observer would be led to believe, *authored by* — Ivan Vladislavić as well as the book’s designer, Ramon Pez, and it is indexed to both of their Amazon.co.uk author pages. On Amazon’s US site, by contrast, the authorship is credited to Subotzky and Waterhouse with no mention at all of Vladislavić or Pez. In yet another credit iteration, the book is catalogued in the British Library with the following description: “Title: Ponte City: Mikhael Subotzky, Patrick Waterhouse / edited by Ivan Vladislavić; [book] designed by Ramon Pez; the Walther Collection”. These crediting discrepancies may be attributed to different cataloguing methods or differences in the

metadata supplied by the publisher. But that the Amazon retail platform promotes the book in its UK market via direct authorial credits to Vladislavić and Pez, rather than Waterhouse and Subotzky as it does in the US, is suggestive of the extent to which the co-operative labour (and the transmission of symbolic capital) that characterizes Vladislavić's work as the "Quiet Editor" is readily but also variably transmuted into commercial value in a globalized literary marketplace.

The example of *Ponte City* suggests that simultaneous with his growing reputation as what Couzens calls a "great writer", Vladislavić is becoming more confident in reclaiming the authority others have invested him with in his role as editor. He conceptualizes this role as an integral, creative component of book production. The example of *Ponte City* suggests that this form of co-operative creative labour is now beginning to be formally recognized, whereby the editor and designer are credited in commercial and institutional classificatory systems — even if, much like those aspects of the film industry that such literary productions seem increasingly to mirror, both the cultural field and market still privilege the author/auteur figure.

Gerald Gaylard and Michael Titlestad are right to ascribe an "insurrectionary playfulness" (2006: 6) to the "work" of Vladislavić's co-operative labour. The Quiet Editor, I have argued, is in effect a new kind of author and "creative editing", as he terms it (Steyn, 2012: n.p.) a new kind of writing. Across Vladislavić's body of work traditional models of literary production and authorship are thrown into question. The competitive logic of authors as discrete actors struggling for recognition in both national and international fields, recedes. In its place we see the emergence of different ways of producing and valuing books (as assemblages, as artworks) and of understanding creative authorship in terms of co-operative and co-producing agents "sticking together", to borrow Riach's (2015: 93) term. The domain of cultural production that emerges from this is less Bourdieu's (1984) "field of literary production" or Casanova's (2004) "world literary space", red in tooth and claw, and

more Howard Becker's "art world": a convivial "network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential the final outcome" (1982: 25).

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¹ See for example those discussions of writers from the “periphery” who invariably “struggle” to enter the “world republic of letters” (Casanova, 2004: 43), and the postcolonial writers who are compelled

to adopt self-reflexive strategies in order to enter the “global literary marketplace” (Brouillette, 2007: 68–69). The commonality is that writers are characterized as having to submit in one way or another to the norms prescribed by a world market for symbolic goods: to sell out, in other words.

² I am conscious of how tendentious and indeed symptomatic of the machinations of globalized cultural production this selection is. However, it is precisely because it is symptomatic — and perhaps would pass without objection in most contexts of international literary-critical discourse — that it is a useful, indeed necessary, gambit for the argument I wish to make. Questions concerning what contemporary South African literature “is”, much less still what it “should be”, from either a local or global perspective, are beyond the scope of this article, but receive extensive treatment in the work of de Kock, 2001, 2009, 2013; Jackson, 2015; Nutall, 2012; Twidle, 2012; Van Der Vlies, 2012).

³ As opposed to “collaborations”. In the *Granta* conversation piece Vladislavić attributes the distinction to his friend, the artist Joachim Schönfeldt, who, he says:

provoked me to write *The Exploded View* with a set of images, including some he calls “narrative accelerators”, draws the distinction between collaboration, in which two or more people work on the same product, and joint work, in which each is responsible for an element in a composite work. It’s a useful distinction. I cannot imagine writing a book with someone else, but the bonded autonomy of a joint project does appeal to me (Naudé and Vladislavić, 2014: n.p.)

⁴ Just as Garman cites Antjie Krog’s 1990s *Leadership* profile as being a definitive moment in her transition to a public intellectual figure, invested with “media meta-capital”, it is tempting to suggest something similar with Vladislavić’s 2014 profile. However, while the timing and potential audience are not quite right to account for Vladislavić’s recent *international* success, the article nonetheless offers a particularly thorough overview of Vladislavić’s career and pays particular attention to his role as a national “influencer”, in line with the Magazine’s audience and mission:

Leadership magazine is aimed at dynamic middle and senior business managers and directors, entrepreneurs, an influential political class and those who aspire to leadership roles, across all sectors of the economy. Leadership is proud to act as the host for some of

South Africa's greatest thought leaders, to provide them with a podium to express their opinion. (Leadership Magazine, 2013: n.p.)

⁵ Vladislavić acknowledges Couzens' formative role in his development as a writer in the dedication and Author's Note that appends *Portrait with Keys* (2006):

As a young student at Wits in the 70s I chanced upon a guided tour led by a young social historian called Tim Couzens. There was nothing formal about it. A few of us just piled into a kombi and drove around Joburg while Tim told stories — about the Doornfontein yards, Vrededorp, Langlaagte, the American Board Mission School, the Bantu Men's Social Centre, Hindu temples, mine compounds, lunatic asylums, and other remarkable things he would later put in *The New African*. It was a revelation" (197).

The book Vladislavić mentions here, *The New African*, was the first text he edited at Ravan Press in 1984.