THE FIRST UTTERERS OF WORDS are also indisputably their sole and sovereign owners, for words are the ways in which thoughts are transmitted outward in space and forward in time. Given this, and since the point at issue in the following papers concerns precisely the treatment of words, and since copy-editing represents the first departure from an original text, a note to readers on the ground rules of the following exchange is in order. When Mustafa Kemal Mirzeler submitted his paper, it was edited in the usual fashion—although given the content, with rather more attention than usual. When it reached its final state, no further changes were permitted and the version that follows is identical in every respect with that to which Ben Knighton was asked to respond. In turn, Knighton was given 4000 words (up from 2000) to respond as he saw fit, and this response has not been altered in any way either, not even copy-edited, which explains the differences in style and presentation between the two. In the belief that he/she who initiates a discussion should have the last word as well as the first one (see the practices of *Current Anthropology* and *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, for instance) Mustafa Mirzeler was given 2000 words in rebuttal and this has been edited in the usual ways and he has approved this editing. This state of affairs is encapsulated in what follows. Making cases and countercases of this nature adequately inevitably requires a methodology that can become all but stultifying before it's finished; the hope, however, is that at least some readers will find at least some edification in the results. From the point of view of *History in Africa*, this exchange both initiates and closes the matter.

[DH]

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