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Marginal Literatures, Marginal Figures and Marginal Genres in South African Literature

Editors

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The Marginal

Johannes A. Smit

Some of the assumptions which have appeared in the corridors of time are that society's institutions learn from history, or that, in taking the excesses of history into consideration, institutional protagonists have society at large as their concern. There may even be a general feeling that the historical confession facilitates individual and/or social refinement - that, in the mirror of history's abyss, we may even become reconciled despite the past determinations which run like unbridgeable ravines through the collective South African psyche. Alternatively, some would wish to 'forget the past', to start over anew - given the promises of the constitutionalised new dawn over the Southern African landscape.

Such optimisms may, however, register a serious lack - e.g. by not recognising that any mythology progressively musters its own rejuvenated or even new exclusions, subjugations and repressions. Once the institution has thrown away its historical crutches and feeble attempts at rejoining a seriously dislocated society, it starts to move according to its own laws—again.

The paucity of recognising and understanding the fact that every dawn has its noon, twilight and even midnight corroborates Rilke's view in *Duino Elegies* (cf. Tanner 1994:17) when he said:

> For Beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure, and we are so awed by it because it serenely disdains to annihilate us (Stephen Mitchell trans.).

This tragic wisdom was also captured by Silenus, Dionysus' friend (cf. Nietzsche 1983:601):

> Miserable transient race, children of chance and hardship, why do you force me to say what it would be much more charitable for you not to hear? The best of all things is something you will never be able to comprehend/grasp: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you - is to die soon (a.t.).

If South Africa has indeed started on its way to becoming a nation, some of the primary questions which should be asked - as the young Nietzsche realised in a different context - are: How can existence become bearable once we recognise that all is

construct and that every construct, every positivity with its rules and regularities simultaneously alienates, divides, sets itself up against, banishes, incarcerates? - not least, concerning the organs, language and labour. Secondly, within the value - pleasure binary, why does the human being pursue and assert value and truth rather than pleasure and untruth? - are there ways in which one can deal with modernity's excesses?

Alternatively said: Why do we enjoy and are not only pleasured but also transfixed by tragedy, estrangement? Why do we, in reality, delight in suffering, but in the public sphere as in speech, give pain an automatically negative role in life?

These, I think, are two of the questions - paradoxical as they are - which provide the decor for this issue of *Alter*nation - and precisely because of the 'new dawn'.

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First and foremost is not the simplistic view that defending of paradox brings enlightenment - neither that South Africa is currently riddled with silent reversals of privilege - nor that literature is branded unserviceable. The main reason, rather, is that posed by the rational optimists, the killers of tragedy, those propounding the Socratic maxims: virtue is knowledge; all vice is from ignorance; the virtuous man is the happy man. It is before the economy of and the belief in the omnipotence of reason that tragedy and with it, pleasure itself, are banished. Even though he narrowly escapes oversimplification, Nietzsche's (1983:632f) explication still rings true - that in Socrates'

> quite abnormal character, instinctive wisdom appears only to *hinder* conscious knowledge in some instances. While in all productive people instinct is the creative and affirmative power, and consciousness assumes a critical and cautionary role, in Socrates instinct becomes the critic, consciousness the creator - a monstrosity per defectum (e.i.o.).

Reflecting on how man has been tricked by his belief in technology and its alliance with either an ancient or futurist mysticism, Wilhelm Reich (1975:366) echoed similar sentiments from a different angle when he said:

> [Man] dreams about how these machines make his life easier and will give him a great capacity for enjoyment .... And in *reality*? *The machine became, is, and will continue to be his most dangerous destroyer, if he does not differentiate himself from it* .... The advance of civilization which was determined by the development of the machine went hand in hand with *catastrophic misinterpretation of the human biologic organization*. In the construction of the machine, man followed the laws of mechanics and lifeless energy. This technology was already highly developed long before man began to ask how he himself was constructed and organized. When, finally, he dared very gradually, cautiously and very often under the mortal threat of his fellow man to discover his own organs, he interpreted their functions in the way he had learned to construct machines .... *The mechanistic view of life is a copy of mechanistic civilization.* But living functioning is fundamentally different; it is not mechanistic. The specific biologic energy, orgone, obeys laws which are neither mechanical nor electrical (e.i.o.).

To this argument, one can invoke Foucault (1982:296-300) who - albeit in different context and nearly forty years later - added the analysis of modernity's discourses of economy and language to that of the organs. He points to man's recognition of language as object of study, language as discourse itself and language's critical value. Such recognition, however, merely functioned as recompense within the economy of the institution. What to some degree escaped modernity's orders, however, is literature (read: tragedy) - a literature which was being produced as colonialism flooded its new worlds[1].

Concerning the economic, again, Hegel (cf. Avineri 1974:147ff,152) already pointed to the excesses of industrialisation - not least the overproduction of consumer goods which stands in direct inverse relationship to the increase of abject poverty and a civil society paid with taxes drawn from industry without the means to purchase into modernity's promise of opulence and comfort. Even though this is one of the few (if not only) questions he raised to which he never found an answer, and despite his own proposals for state intervention and Keynes' answer concerning the focus on public works which does not produce immediate consumer goods, the main question also facing South Africa is that of poverty.

So, who or what speaks for humanity's sexual energy, her literature and her poverty?

Only tragedy.

Maybe, tragedy belongs on the highways and byways, on the streets, on the pavements, on the city's garbage dump, in jail and in the rural field - spaces where time knows no progress nor fortune. These are the realms of the poor, the excluded, the incarcerated, culture's forgotten, the overlooked and often manhandled - tragedy's aristocracy, tragedy's sages and civilisation's discontent.

[1] On the further division: canon - minor literature, cf. esp. Deleuze & Guattari (1992) on: 1) a minor literature written within a minor language or a language which is not officially recognised; 2) a minor literature within a major language; and 3) a critical oppositional literature written in a major language; also North's (1994) excellent work on the dialects/dialectics of [Afro-]American language/literature.

Maybe, literature belongs with its characters and to tramp with wisdom, the author's vocation - fittingly captured in Cecil Abrahams' (1990) title for his collection of essays on Bessy Head: *The Tragic Life*.

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In terms of the value - pleasure binary, Derrida - as did Hume - attempted to bring this fact into the centre, most eloquently summarised by Eagleton (1992:28):

> The aesthetic begins as a supplement to reason; but we have learnt from Derrida that it is in the manner of such lowly supplements to supplant what they are meant to subserve[2]. What if it were the case that not only morality but cognition itself were somehow 'aesthetic'? That sensation and intuition, far from figuring as reason's antithesis, were in truth its very basis? The name for this subversive claim in Britain is David Hume, who, not content with reducing morality to a species of sentiment, threatens to collapse knowledge to fictional hypothesis, belief to intensified feeling, the continuity of the subject to a fiction, causality to an imaginative construct and history to a kind of infinite intertextuality. For good measure, he also argues that private property - the very basis of the bourgeois order - rests simply on our imaginative habits, and that political order - the state - arises from the *weakness* of our imagination (e.i.o.).

Everything is constructed and it is due to the weakness of our imagination that we believe otherwise. What more can one say?

Freud (1985:339) himself initiated the social uses of his theory of the unconscious - which he similarly held, only became manifest with the rise of modernity - when he contended that 'civilization [or culture] and its discontents' indicate the possibility of a 'pathology of cultural communities' or in current parlance, a socio-cultural account of the marginal - the sub-cultural. Premised on the fact of humanity's hostility towards culture, Freud (1985:263) argued that this may be because of the conflict man experiences between the pleasure principle and his invention and continuous development of culture. Seen as 'developed in order to "*control* our instinctual life"' (Freud 1985:266), all culture(s) - not least as it is institutionalised - have their discontents - individually, but also socially. The social unconscious arises due to modernity's 'cultural or sociological pressures' (Clark 1982:423). This understanding has been developed in primarily three ways, in the *social unconscious - political economy nexus*; the *psycho-analysis - time and space nexus*; and the *social unconscious - pleonexie nexus* (cf. Van den Berg 1970).

[2] Cf. esp. Derrida (1982:1-28; 69-108; 1987; & 1993:251-277) and for the vocation of literature and literary scholarship in deconstructive perspective, cf. Gasché (1986:255-270).

In the *social unconscious - political economy nexus*, the unconscious as 'repressed physiological (libido) and biological (death and life instinct) needs' (Freud) and the 'social and economic historical forces' which 'pass through an evolution in the process of man's socio-economic development' (Marx) share 'common ground' (Fromm 1986:101,106). This indicates at least three perspectives (cf. Fromm 1986:99,107n1). Firstly, the unconscious does not only come before the conscious but more importantly that '[t]he logic of the historic process comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the historic process' (Luxemburg 1961:93). Secondly, as 'collective unconscious' the social unconscious symptomatically effects activities which reveal certain aspects of social reality not held in social consciousness (Mannheim 1936:33ff). Thirdly, since social and economic historical forces also have an individual element, the 'repression of the ordinary natural desires' (cf. Marx & Engels 1939:423), such repression causes one 'passion' to be separated off from the 'whole living individual' only to satisfy that one. As such, it 'assumes an abstract, separate character' and is then determined not by consciousness (Hegel's Spirit) but by '*being*' or 'living' -

> the empirical development and self-expression of the individual, which in turn, depends on the conditions of the world (*Weltverhältnisse*) in which he (sic.) lives (Marx & Engels 1939:242).

The individual becomes 'the slave of the one alienated passion [—ritual index of his institutions] and has lost the experience of himself as a total and alive person' (Fromm 1986:100).

In the *psycho-analysis - time and space nexus*, it is especially the rise of western hegemony with its emphasis on social transformation and the accompanying negation of others' (strong) cultural differences and boundaries under the aegis of western civilization, that the social unconscious was born. Social structure/society which is seminal to individual life (Benedict 1934) was not acknowledged but suppressed - if not destroyed - resulting in the separation of particular people (at particular time-space nexuses) for purposes of control, leading to collective neuroses (cf. Horney 1937; 1939). Under the hegemony of one (western) culture, people had to continuously repress the cultural values and norms into which they have been socialised.

Within western rationalism, positivism, science and technology, people repress desire. Here, it is the contradictions in western society which bring about neuroses, i.e. the contradictions between competition and humility, the creation of needs and their mere partial fulfilling and ultimately, the hypostetising of personal liberty in the face

of the reification of strict rules (cf. Van den Berg 1970:234,236f). In African context, Mphahlele (1974:41) says - in a text which should be compulsory reading for any aspiring academic/student - of this split:

> Ambivalence, ambivalence. Always having to maintain equilibrium. You walk with this double personality as colonised man. You have to cope with the presence of foreign rule and its white minions. Now you have to cope with what they left on your mind. So you will always be a colonised man. Only, political independence ought [!] to help you turn that state of mind into something dynamic. The dialogue between the two selves never ends. The pendulum swings between revulsion and attraction, between the dreams and the reality of a living past and the aspirations, the imperatives of modern living. Ambivalence.

In the *social unconscious - pleonexie nexus* the danger is that there may arise a conflict between the different social selves - not only two - into which an individual is socialised. That an individual is socialised into a variety of 'social selves', 'different social consciousnessess' which society provides as possibilities, has to learn to live as 'a plural self', or has to exist as a multiple personality, has been variously articulated[3]. In situations of transformation, or in disintegrating societies, the individual must execute one or more of the selves. Concerning that social self, the individual then has a loss of memory, an *amnesia*. The executed social self is then relegated to the social unconscious. It then follows that the social unconscious is the result of the disintegration of society or the generalised other into separated and disassociated antagonistic groups while the individual does not have social access to the executed generalised other anymore. In the context of *acculturation* dynamics - an individual's learning of appropriating and rejecting certain elements in the group to which it belongs - s/he may experience *euphoria* or *disphoria*—euphoria when the individual appropriates and experiences what society (a significant other) condones; disphoria, when this relationship is distorted (cf. Sullivan in Mullahy 1954)[4].

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[3] For a uniform society, cf. James (1891-1908); for multiform societies, cf. Durkheim (1933); for antagonistic groups in a society, cf. Simmel (1908); Sorokin ([1923]1967; 1947); for a social self related to a significant other with which relations are broken, cf. Ferenczi & Rank (1924); Gerth & Mills (1954); for disintegrating societies, cf. Mead (1934).

[4] For a further elaboration on issues broached in this article, see especially the excellent little book of Herbert Marcuse (1979).

Since its inception, *Alter*nation - as did the CSSALL (cf. Smit & Van Wyk [1998]) - has attempted to clear spaces different from those we know and in which we are socialised and institutionalised. Different from past homogeneities, it has also attempted to create a forum from which scholars could dialogically play in on existing (past) discursive hegemonies. In addition, this project has as aim - in the *interregnum* or the twilight/dawn - to inscribe existing discourses into the general text of the South African literary and language margins - to uncover 'some diverse set of meaningful concerns' (cf. Dreyfus 1993:312f) which could provide an insight into 'our' disparate cultural landscape. This, ultimately, will hopefully not only contribute to an institutional recognition and appreciation of 'our' diversity but also feed into Njabulo Ndebele's (1994:9) statement concerning the future of literature in South Africa when he said:

> The role of literature in this situation [] is not an easy matter. It throws up a problematic of its own within the broad cultural crisis I have been attempting to understand. Writers, rather than critics, are likely to provide the ultimate direction. Hopefully *critics* will pose the kind of questions that will assist *writers* in their work (e.a.).

As possible resource for the 'direction'[s] Ndebele intimates, this issue of *Alter*nation was conceived under the joint editorship of Johan van Wyk, Lindelwa Mahonga and Jannie Smit. It is neither intended as the pursuit of some victimised marginal within a context of political intolerance, nor as an attempt to re-state the antinomy between romantic privilege, independence, capriciousness and cut-throat competitiveness, exploitation and avarice. Rather, it aims to put in the limelight the pleasure/ tragedy of the enigmatic, the sub-cultural - an attempt to experience the marginal as caught up in the inevitability of a normative politics. As such, it wishes to be a supplement, a parergon - the divisioning site where the person's but also society's 'splits' - our common tragedy - become more obvious but also more perceptible for the conscious hazard of creative patterning in the folds of an emerging South Africa.

Through various twists and turns and focusing attention on some of the criss-crossing boundaries and limits which make South Africa such a boundaried and margined landscape, authors in this issue of *Alter*nation provide an angle on the South African literary panorama from different perspectives. Precisely because each perspective is situated and conditioned by particular circumstances - raising the curtain on tragedy in a particular way - they provide some idea of what a South African literature may yet be.

But maybe, this issue's function is nothing else - or more - than something like the Old Comedy's *parabasis* - to ventilate a matter of public if not mass interest; or to hold up a number of imaginary mirrors, in the face of the new Socratic: If tragedy's

unhappy consciousness emerges in the in-between-world of self-consciousness's deceptive certainty of itself and its satisfaction of desire through the sublation of the other (Hegel), then it is in the effects and experiences of tragedy's inessential marginality that both artist and critic may find their imaginative ground and South African 'society' its mirror.

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Marginalia[1] on Marginality

Hein Viljoen

> Wie orden en dink, boer altyd tussen twee ryke,
> dus asem ek vry in hierdie grenslandlug
> (Blum 1958:8).

Marginal notes on marginality—in the margin of what is already in the margin of. Of what? Some vast page of society—a society page. And I in the margin of that. My motto is by Peter Blum, a marginal Afrikaans poet who wrote a lot about marginal states and marginal figures. Celebrating the serenity of his estate at Ferney, he here presents Voltaire as conscious of being marginal between big France and little Geneva—conscious also of feeling free in this marginal state that contains 'all the elements of the good life'. The two lines of the motto are not easy to translate, since *boer* means 'to farm', but also 'to haunt' or 'to frequent'. An approximate translation could be:

> He who structures and thinks, always haunts/ farms between two realms,
> I therefore breathe freely in this frontier air

Speculating on marginality: where does the limit of marginality lie? The far out fringes of the very fringes, the outer, colder, darker regions of society. Does it have a boundary? What is beyond this boundary? Which boundary is implied by the idea of marginality? For if we take the metaphor seriously the margin presupposes a certain demarcated space or terrain which it surrounds. Literally, the margin is the empty space demarcating the writing or print on the page. The margins of literature, of (polite) discourse. And where is that? The border of a page, the margin of some vast text spanning the whole country, power, society, literature or language?

The notion of marginality has played a crucial part in conceiving relations between different groups and cultures, especially in postcolonial thinking. And indeed, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (1995:49) attributes much of the melancholy of postcolonialism for its lost innocence having been institutionalised, much of its vagueness and amorphousness, to 'an inadequately enunciated notion of the margin'. In what follows I will try to enunciate the notion a bit more adequately by making five

[1] 'Notes written in the margin of a book or manuscript by a reader or annotator' (Cuddon 1992).

notes in the margin: one on the margin and the written page, one on being marginalised, one on the marginal and the liminal, one on the centre and the periphery of the semiosphere and, finally, one on the marginal and the postcolonial.

1st note: The written page and the margin

A quote from the Dutch poet of the fifties, Lucebert, might shed some light on the matter. As well it might, since his pseudonym is a combination of *luce* (light) and *bert*, *bernt* (burning)—'burning with light'. It also alludes to Lucifer, literary 'light-bearer', the name of the principal devil, but in Dutch also the word used for safety matches.

> het boek rekt zich slaat haar ogen op
> wordt zichtbaar. blank zijn haar armen
> haar borsten zijn zwart zwart (Lucebert 1974:211).
>
> the book stretches herself opens her eyes
> becomes visible. white/blank are her arms
> her breasts are black black.

These enigmatic verses embodies the book as a sensuous woman. Opening the book reveals the white margin like a woman stretching her arms. The written pages (or poems) are her black breasts, iconically repeated. Not one, but two centres. The page has become flesh—erotic and life-giving.

As this example indicates, speaking of marginality implies that we think of society as both like and unlike a giant page or book with some things or some people written in or relegated to its margins. For the metaphor to make sense, it seems, society has to be understood as high society, the in-crowd, the dominant or hegemonic group. At the very least it requires a conception of culture or society as like a clearly demarcated space—a space with well-defined boundaries where it is desirable to be as near to the centre as possible.

This is problematic, since a margin does not logically imply a centre, only a bounded space. Besides, a printed page doesn't literally have a clear centre. One might pin-point the central line and the central word or letter on that page, but my contention is that the idea of marginality is not really based on an everyday experience or general knowledge of centrality (Lakoff & Turner 1989:60). Rather, the idea of a centre presupposes an underlying metaphor like *Society is a circle*—magic or not—which is based on an everyday experience of centrality.

In any case, since marginality is based on a writing/print metaphor, it seems to be not centred on the logos, but on writing—it is not logocentric, but grammocentric or grammologic. What does it mean to talk of a grammocentre? With a mark as its

origin? The secondariness of the letter as centre? Marginality seems to indicate a boundary around a certain space without a centre. Still, it is nearly impossible to think of a margin without also thinking a centre where categories of relevance are laid down, decreed, written, where laws are enacted. Yet the margin is a space beyond writing—beyond the categories—virgin, unoccupied. It is a parergon: alongside the written page, not part of it, yet also not part of the context. A zone of undecidability.

If we talk about a vast text, to which text are we appealing? To the book of nature, the book of society (its agenda of significant events or issues, for example), the cheque books of the financiers or the book of law or the Law, the Book itself (the Bible)? The metaphor means that we conceive the world as one big book with in its margins a few notes—to clarify a point, to raise a question, to sum up, to indicate the outline of the argument or a topic, to note a disagreement, to gloss. The margin is a space where the other can make his mark—can have his voice heard. It is the part where nothing has been written (yet)—empty, virginal. A space where men will want to write on—to cite from *The sound of music*. The pen is the penis.

By a strange logic, the margin is therefore a privileged place for writing. Academics at our institution were exasperated when, to cut costs, exam books were printed without margins. Where can the master then write his advice to the student? If there is no margin, where can the one with the final say, make his mark and by doing so, subject the writing/the text to his mastery? To write in the margin, it seems, is to desire to subject.

What can one write in the margin of society to enhance your own subjectivity? What lies beyond the margin, the tympanum or the hymen?

2nd marginal note: Marginalised—displaced from the centre, ignored, powerless

In contrast with this desire to master, to be marginalised generally means 'to be at the periphery', 'far removed from power or influence', 'virtually beyond the reaches of power', 'not quite powerless yet not powerful'. Definitely not in the centre, central or powerful. It also means: 'looked down upon', 'considered unimportant', 'ignored', 'negligible', 'pushed from the centre'; it indicates those who cannot be heard or won't be regarded as making sense anyway. To be marginalised is to be less than human; to be subhuman.

This is the situation of the magistrate in *Waiting for the barbarians* (Coetzee 1981) after he returns from taking the barbarian girl back to her people. He is displaced from his position of power at the margins of empire (in the province) and stripped of what power he had. He is silenced, jailed, and ignored. He is on a limbo, role-less, status-less, no longer protected by any law or structure, exposed to the whims

of those in power. The normal social rules no longer apply to him. He becomes marginal in the sense that he finds himself 'on the borderland of any recognised and relatively stable area, either territorial or cultural' (Fairchild 1964:183) and the implications of the term—of 'dissociation, unadjustment, and some degree or form of abnormality' (Fairchild 1964:183)—apply to him. Contact with the barbarian culture has made his own culture and the assumptions of empire strange to him—he now 'finds himself on the margin [of two cultures], but a member of neither' (Stonequist 1937:3). He has become, in the original sense of the term proposed in 1928 by R.E. Park, a *marginal man*.

As we know from personal experience, to be marginalised means to look longingly at the centre—to be bound in a dialectic of desire for being somewhere or someone else. Coetzee's magistrate perhaps does not long to be elsewhere, but to return to his old sense of self—the innocent state in which he has not yet realised that he is but an instrument of empire, that he was part of history and cannot live outside it.

If we deconstruct the opposition between centre and margin, it becomes clear that the marginalised serves to mark the limits of society, keeping the space of society intact. This social space is usually supposed to be a finite and bounded, homogeneous and unstratified space, stretching as far as one can see.

From conceiving culture and society as a space it is but a small step to the country as the space of the nation—the geographical borders within which the central structuring idea of the nation can emerge. Or is it the other way round: culture is like a country? Culture is a demarcated space (like a country) where one can live, and breathe freely? Here the metaphor of the book and its margins clashes with two of the strongest guiding metaphors of modernity: the geographical space of the country and the imaginary space of the nation. Within the country's defendable borders we can feel safe; within the nation we can have an identity. Both these metaphors are based upon the idea of a bounded self: personhood as a clearly demarcated space, not only protected by high suburban walls, but also by constitutional walls of rights and obligations (Nedelsky 1990). Behind these walls in a kind of sacred place the bounded self can realise its full potential (Adler 1989).

In any case, being excluded from the centre leads to loss of self-esteem and dignity and a negative self-perception. Marginal people lack recognition and respect and it is the task of multiculturalism and decolonisation to restore to them their sense of being themselves—to return them to their authentic selves and to open avenues of self-fulfilment and self-realisation to them. They have to be drawn back into the safe, bounded space of 'us' (Seshadri-Crooks 1995:50).

The cases of the magistrate (in Coetzee 1981) and of the marginal figures in the poetry of Blum clash with this view that the human is centred in a safe sacred space or *temenos*. Their experience indicates that one is only really fully human outside all

walls, in a marginal and exposed condition. Only then do you really exist. In other words, marginal man or woman is not subhuman at all, but truly, authentically human.

As the high suburban walls of our cities indicate, the safety of the nation is an illusion. The rainbow nation is not a safe space, but fissured by violence, injustice, clashing of interests and crime. Social space is not homogenous, but stratified. As Homi Bhabha argues, the nation is split and marginalised in itself by the double logic of narrating itself:

> The linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes, most commonly signifies a people, a nation, a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity. However, the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the 'nation' as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia or 'cultural difference' in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this displacement and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity (Bhabha 1994:140).

In other words, a nation is not a unity, but a DissemiNation—an appellation and a performance, a rhetorical figure created on a temporal plane by 'repeatedly [turning] the scraps, patches and rags of daily life into the signs of a coherent national culture' (Bhabha 1994:145).

But what does liminality entail?

3rd note: The marginal and the liminal as zone of contact and exchange

Victor Turner (1989) bases his views on ritual and theatre on van Gennep's analysis of ritual. Van Gennep distinguishes three stages in rites of passage: separation, transition and incorporation. In the separation phase, ordinary space and time is changed by rites and symbolic actions into sacred space and time—a space and time beyond ordinary space, outside ordinary time—and the ritual subjects are symbolically detached from their usual social status and often also spatially separated from the rest of the community.

In the transition phase—where they cross the margin or *limen* (threshold)—the subjects pass through an area and period of social limbo. In the third phase, the subjects are ritually and symbolically returned to a new 'relatively stable, well-defined position in the total society' (Turner 1989:24).

The transitional or liminal state is a state of moving away from one's usual status in the centre. Here a person becomes status-less, role-less. The subjects are often stripped of clothes and names and smeared with mud. People in such a liminal

state, like initiates in tribal schools, are often considered to be even sexless, as their nakedness symbolises. It is a state marked by spontaneity, concreteness, intense comradeship, and egalitarianism. Here, Turner (1969:126) writes, 'communitas emerges where social structure is not'. Communitas, the sense community, of being together with other people, emerges for Turner 'through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority' (Turner 1969:128). The point is that the essence of liminality, according to Turner (1989:28), is that it analyses culture into factors and allows them to be recombined in free or ludic patterns. In other words, the liminal is a zone of transformation.

In tribal societies it seems to be mostly the individual who is transformed from an immature state into a mature one, while society itself remains stable, and ritual might be said to stabilise society and to keep it from changing. But as Turner maintains, it is a fallacy to project tribal liminality without qualification onto modern society, since the industrial revolution is a watershed that, among other things, brought into being the ideas of work and leisure. After the industrial revolution participation in social ritual became optional, and distinguishes the liminal from the liminoid.

In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission such a liminoid state has been constituted. Participation is optional. Though not status-less, applicants for amnesty lose their ordinary status and even their status as accused or sentenced people under the law and acquire a special status of being exempt from prosecution. In this special liminoid state and according to its rules, through a kind of public confession the truth, is supposed to emerge.

People in a liminoid state upset the normal course of events, question normality. That which is not understood, questions society's assumptions. And society's reaction is not only to reject but often to declare such people to be of the devil's party. This demonisation is enacted in Peter Blum's sonnet 'Voltaire at Ferney' (1958:8). The poem ends with the image of little Geneva closing its gates against Voltaire as against the devil.

Waiting for the barbarians (Coetzee 1981) can be regarded as an extended meditation on marginality. As the example of the magistrate indicates, the marginal is an in-between—a zone between two different systems where contact and exchange becomes possible. In this instance a very crude exchange takes place: not of goods or meanings—there is very little commerce or communication—but of bodies: people get captured, are tortured and misused, some returned to their own. And understanding seems to be precluded from the outset. The marginal in this case also forms the boundary between the known and what is beyond the known; beyond knowing, perhaps. It is in any case impossible to know the other, yet enslaving the other seems to be necessary in order to have a sense of the self.

There seems, therefore, to be a link between marginality and the unknown. Is it

always the case that beyond the margin lies the unknown or the not yet known? Where the categories of the own system becomes dubious? Where there are no maps? Here be dragons? The margin is the zone where categories, systems of relevance become deconstructed, where the power to dictate/control meaning becomes irrelevant (or threatens to become so), where power is questioned and no longer applies automatically or self-evidently. This linkage to the beyond is frightening and for this reason what lies beyond often gets relegated to the devil.

This is the case in *Paljas*—Katinka Heyns' recent acclaimed film (1997). It tells the story of the restoration of the marginal family of Hendrik McDonald. McDonald is in charge of an insignificant railway halt in the middle of nowhere. In the affections of his wife and children he is equally marginal, though he desperately tries to maintain his status by lording it in his back yard. He infuriates his daughter with his clumsy efforts to find her a boyfriend. The old love songs, like 'Somewhere in France with you' he hums along with, suggest a nostalgia for better times. For his wife no longer shares his bed and the family's marginality or abnormality is marked by the fact that his young son, Willem, can no longer speak.

By mistake a circus train gets stranded on this halt. The marvellous world of the circus, where a pierrot can waltz through the Karoo veld twirling his umbrella leading an elephant by his trunk, gives us the first inkling that things might change. In trying to maintain what power he has before the unconventional circus people, Hendrik strikes a very clownish figure himself. Yet the pierrot, with the highly significant name of Manuel, remains behind, and it is he that starts a process of healing by showing Willem the power of play, song and dance, imitation, masks, costume and make-believe.

After a quarrel between Hendrik and Katrien, Willem runs away to his friend, Manuel. Manuel sends him back, but the police has already been called, and they discover Willem's *toorgoed* in the barn—the things he conjures with. The police suspect *duiwelsaanbidding*, satanic rituals. When the broader society learns about it, the power of society, the dominee and the church is marshalled. This indicates how closely the marginal and the demonic are associated. In the confrontation between society and Manuel, 'that Beelzebub', as one of the instigators call him (Barnard 1998:73)[2], is shot down as a scapegoat. Luckily, he is only wounded. But still, the power of art restores the frozen family relations, among other things by making Hendrik reveal that their exile to this small halt was a voluntary or self-marginalisation: he took the job, because he was jealous of his attractive wife. Willem begins to speak again and his sister resumes playing the piano.

[2] The actual film differs in some detail from the published script, but not in this case. In fact, the film is more explicit about the demonisation, for in the church scene Manuel is also referred to as 'duiwelskind'—son of the devil.

The film hinges on the meaning of *paljas* and *toor*. *Paljas* is a charm, a spell or a magic potion. *Toor* means both 'to conjure, to juggle', 'to charm, to enchant' and 'to bewitch'. White and black magic, art and the devil's art get confused. This place of limbo, of loss of status, loss of social integration is very aptly named *Toorwater*—Magic, Bewitching Waters. Willem's instruction into the magician's and clown's arts take place in the margin of the margin—in an old disused barn a little way removed from the station.

The transformative process is only complete after the family becomes fully demonised and is forced to leave the Volstruisdans, the biggest social event of the year. This leads them to realising their own humanity. 'I am Hendrik McDonald', McDonald says[3], and his whole family follows him in this. Realising that they are Other, strange, but still human means that they can be reincorporated into society as the final party scene indicates. Only by proclaiming the marginal to be authentically human reincorporation becomes possible.

Clearly, as *Paljas* indicates, imitation, make-believe, play, magic, art form a liminoid zone—it subverts; it questions by its existence; it heals and recreates. This film—just like Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1997)—reveals the regenerative and recreative power of the comic vision. To be human is to realise your own strangeness and existence; your own alterity and identity. This again proves that the marginal is the authentically human.

The liminoid state is the state traditionally occupied by art and literature. The anti-structure of such liminoid states threatens the boundaries, so they have to be policed (by censorship, for example). And art, so it seems, can flower only in such marginal states—somewhat hidden, somewhat withdrawn from the public eye. The marginal is a zone of transformation and metamorphosis, of (re)creating and healing.

4th note: The marginal and the semiosphere

In the first note I suggested that the metaphor of the written page problematises the notion of a centre. If society is to be conceived of as a bounded space, in what sense can we talk of its centre? Lotman's views (1990) on the semiosphere ties all the aspects of marginality that I touched on together in a grand (or totalising?) synthesis.

By analogy to the biosphere, Lotman proposes the idea of a semiosphere—'a universe of the mind'. He defines it as 'the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages' (1990:123).

As an example of the semiosphere he suggests that we (1990:126)

[3] These words are not in the script.

> imagine a museum hall where exhibits from different periods are on display, along with inscriptions in known and unknown languages, and instructions for decoding them; besides these are the explanations composed by the museum staff, plans for tours and rules for the behaviour of the visitors. Imagine also in this hall tour-leaders and the visitors and imagine all this as a single mechanism (which *in a certain sense* it is). This is an image of the semiosphere. Then we have to remember that all elements are in dynamic, not static, correlations whose terms are constantly changing.

The whole magnificent synthesis of the semiosphere is constructed on only two basic principles—binarism (or duality), and asymmetry.

Asymmetry is clear in the relation between centre and periphery. The centre is formed by the natural languages of a particular culture as the organising core. The semiosphere is always organising itself by self description—for example, by writing grammars and codifying laws. Here a dialectics of organisation and flexibility is at work. What the semiosphere gains by self description are unity and definition; what it loses are indeterminacy, a capacity for more 'information and potential for dynamic development' (1990:128).

The semiosphere determines how I describe myself, what counts as a deed, what exists. That is why what is beyond the boundary of the semiosphere is unknown, and regarded as evil, demonised. In the centre the norms and life more or less coincide, but at the periphery the norms contradict the semiotic reality underlying it (Lotman 1990:129). That is why the margin, the boundary is a zone of recreation and reconstruction. 'The area of semiotic dynamism', Lotman (1990:134) calls it.

Lotman suggests that social space is primarily defined by the notion of a boundary, which he regards as 'the outer limit of a first-person form' (Lotman 1990:131). In other words, it stretches as far as my own, our, safe, cultured world stretches. Beyond that, the world is theirs, hostile, dangerous, evil, chaotic (Lotman 1990:131). Lotman thus locates the centre of society in personal perception, which, to his mind, also accounts for the asymmetry of perceived space.

This is so because a very important way in which social space is defined is with reference to the asymmetrical human body—it has asymmetrical dimensions like up/down, left/right, front/back, male/female. Space is organised into an inside and an outside with a boundary between, Lotman (1990:133) argues. The boundary is the zone where new languages come into being. One of his examples is the upsurge of marginal forms of culture—a very important recent one being cinematography. Lotman regards boundaries as 'the hottest spots for semioticising processes' (1990:136). The boundary is that which demarcates, unites, but also allows contact and interchange. It is the zone where self description starts failing. A boundary is ambivalent, since it both separates and unites. It is 'a mechanism for translating texts of an alien semiotics into "our" language' (1990:136)—a filtering membrane where the outside is translated

into what is internal. In short, its function is to 'control, filter and adapt the external into the internal' (1990:120).

Lotman (1990:140) points out that the design of human settlements mirror the semiosphere. The most important cultic and administrative buildings tend to be placed in the centre; 'less valued social groups are settled in the periphery'—as happened under the Group Areas Act.

This is not the only insight that Lotman gives us into the present situation in South Africa. A new centre is at present defining itself—being encoded in the constitution and laws. Because it is still not strong enough to cover the entire semiosphere, there are different marginal or liminal groups—status-less, place-less, who will plunder and pillage until they can be reincorporated into a new community.

One further element of Lotman's amazing synthesis is dialogue. He models his view on the interaction between mother and baby and thinks two processes can be distinguished—a sending phase in which the mother smiles at the baby and a pause (in which the baby receives the message) before it smiles back. In the semiosphere, he believes, the margin is a place of incessant dialogue between centre and periphery, and the sender tends to be in the centre and the receiver in the periphery. Lotman therefore surmises that there is a cyclical process in the development of cultures—periods of high intensity (sending) alternate with periods of low intensity—periods of receiving. The history of cultures thus forms a sinusoidal pattern.

It is in Lotman's sense that we today can perhaps characterise Afrikaans literature and culture as marginal. In the usual sense of the word it can be regarded as displaced from the centre. It has become demonised in many respects. But in the heightened dialogue with the new emerging centre it is pouring forth, sending out a volcano of texts (in Lotman's phrase). Just like Postcolonial literature and art are sending back, pouring out what has been has received and recoded, Afrikaans literature is writing back to the centre—trying to (re)capture it.

Again, what Lotman's view indicates is that to be really human one has to be marginal. That is, in dialogue across the many boundaries that transect the semiosphere—which, in the final analysis, is like the sun, seething with semiotic activity:

> The semiosphere, the space of culture, is not something that acts according to mapped out and pre-calculated plans. It seethes like the sun, centres of activity boil up in different places, in the depths and on the surface, irradiating relatively peaceful areas with its immense energy. But unlike that of the sun, the energy of the semiosphere is the energy of information, the energy of Thought (1990:150).

Social space, in Lotman's view, is therefore not homogenous, but stratified and split by countless margins—and at each of them more information is created.

5th note: The marginal and the postcolonial

Lotman's analysis is grand and universal. Huge in scope it necessarily has to lose contact with local reality. Though it adds a number of arguments to the claim that the margin is a privileged site of semiotic activity, it doesn't offer much help with one of the problems of postcolonial times, viz. how to open up space for different cultures within a modern state without appropriating the other. Is it possible to conceptualise the field in a less asymmetric way? To not think in terms of centre and periphery? To think postcolonialism in a less oppositional way?

Of course, the picture of marginality that emerges from *Paljas* is over simplified, since real factors like race, nation and ethnicity are excluded. What does marginality become in a postcolonial context where these factors are in contention? Or rather, where marginality becomes a central site of innovation and critique?

Seshadri-Crooks (1995:59) argues that we can conceive of margin and marginality in two ways. The first is a spatial sense of the margin as a subject position—as 'the excluded other that must be coaxed into the centre through incorporation, inversion, hybridisation, revolution'. In this sense the margin is also a space of agitation, subversion, theoretical innovation that has become central in recent years. This sense of the margin also covers multiculturalism as 'marginality studies'—the effort to understand marginal cultures in their own right in order to restore to them their sense of authentic selfhood—to give them dignity and respect.

The second is 'margin as irreducible other—the condition for the production of our discourse (and all positive knowledge) that must be acknowledged as incommensurable and irrecuperable' (Seshadri-Crooks 1995:60). This second sense she traces back to Foucault: it is the margin as condition of possibility: the unthought and unsaid that makes positive knowing possible (Seshadri-Crooks 1995:60).

Seshadri-Crooks goes on to argue that these two definitions (the marginal as the excluded and as the limit) map out the 'realm of postcolonial scholarship' which is then duty bound to be self-critical of the enterprise of finding the final margin, the authoritative critical position and 'must rehearse continually the conditions for the production of its own discourse' (1995:66). The tension between the excluded and the limit seems to maintain the innovative power and the oppositional stance of Postcolonialism.

As discourse of the privileged margin Postcolonialism is inherently unstable, since a margin can have no centre, however much we desire it, and the metaphor of the margin continually disrupts the view of society (or intercultural relations) as homogeneous with layers and levels of margins. The idea of the authenticity and subversivity of the marginal position is contained by the fact that it is often a creation of global capitalism or of mimicry—miming the categories of the metropole. Even such an authentic marginal voice like Said's can only speak from a position from within the

metropole with the resources of the metropole (personal contacts, the New York Public Library) at his disposal.

Conclusions

In my marginal notes I have traced the idea of the margin through different permutations. In Blum's view, as he mimics Voltaire, the margin contains the elements of the good life and is a site of freedom, fecundity and a point from which the world can be surveyed intellectually. The analysis of the metaphor of the margin has pointed out that it does not imply a centre, though, perhaps, we do need one. Marginal man, being on the fringes of society, contrasts with our accepted notions of the bounded and enclosed self. Unlike the magistrate in *Waiting for the barbarians* (Coetzee 1981), who discovers in himself the wish to be outside history and remains for ever in a state of waiting, a state of limbo, being marginal has recently become a privileged subject position, which the centre wants to incorporate into itself. Incorporation or appropriation, however, leads only to a misrecognition of the other—forcing the other into our own categories. Turner's views on the liminal and the liminoid opens the way to regard the margin as zone of contact and exchange and of ludic recombination and innovation. The marginal thereby becomes a zone of regeneration and of the authentically human, as the analysis of *Paljas* indicates. Lotman's views on the asymmetry of the semiosphere amply support the notion that the margin is a semiotic hot spot, a zone of transformation. At the same time he posits a plethora of margins, since he regards social space not as homogeneous, but as fissured by innumerable margins where semiotic activity can take place. In so doing, he makes everybody marginal in some sense.

Lotman's view of the long term sinusoidal cycles of cultures is much too idealistic to fit the present situation of Afrikaans intellectuals. At our own margins (real or perceived) we can only devise strategies of creating new information, like Spivak's (1988) strategy of the *subaltern* or Bhabha's of *mimicry*, *hybridity* or *sly civility* (resp. Bhabha 1994:88, 112, 93). We cannot get outside history and reach a point of total authority, but by a kind of double movement we could on the one hand accept the hegemonic, but on the other try to enter into dialogue with it, to use and subvert it—and by our interventions try to bring about a change in the configuration of the signifiers.

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Writing from the Margins, or the Decentering of English Literature[1]

Erhard Reckwitz

Human experience, as insights provided by 'the linguistic turn in philosophy' have made abundantly clear, is prestructured and thus predetermined by language. Therefore, every sign we use is a 'signifiant signifié' (Sartre 1972:52), which implies that—instead of being a transparent window on the world—it is already replete with meanings derived from a more or less arbitrary construction of reality that, in a dialectic process, is subject to certain changes within that reality: '... the social world is seen through classifications which in their turn are motivated by the social world itself' (Lima in Cerquiglini 1983:511). The language game 'English' is in no way exempted from this process, especially in view of the more recent socio-political-historical changes brought about by what goes by the name of 'decolonisation' referring as it does to the assertion of the colonised's cultural identity in the wake of (in this case British) colonisation.

It is not only the primary code of language 'as such' but also the secondary linguistic code of literature that is affected accordingly:

> ... the linguistic centre of English has shifted. This is so demographically. Great Britain now makes up only a small portion of the English-speaking totality (Steiner in Schiff 1977:9).

George Steiner observes, and he was one of the first to foresee the potential for literary innovation such altered conditions are capable of giving rise to:

> So far as literature might be seen as an index of language energy, one finds that a significant portion of the writing being produced not only in American English, but also in African, Australian, Anglo-Irish or west Indian idioms, displays an inventive élan, an exploratory delight in linguistic resources, a sheer scope largely absent from the British scene (Steiner in Schiff 1977:18).

[1] First published in Reckwitz, Vennarini & Wegener (1994:281-296).

The literary scholar or the university teacher of English wanting to keep abreast with the immense widening of horizons resulting from this development is faced with a daunting task, namely that of completely overturning the existing canon along with its euro-centric priorities: He has got to leave behind the narrow confines of the English Great Tradition in favour of an anglophone world that is infinitely more variegated. In this context it is not surprising at all that it should have been a German-Jewish-French-British cosmopolitan like George Steiner who was one of the first to overcome the limitations of what constitutes 'English culture', along with their nationalist overtones, imposed by conservative critics such as F.R. Leavis, as can be seen from his programmatic statement:

> ... there is the obligation, the opportunity to make our sense of the history of the English language and of its literatures more comprehensive, more responsive to the great tributaries from outside (Steiner in Schiff 1977:19).

II

Such a premise goes a long way towards rendering meaningless any assumptions of essential and thereby central 'Englishness': A whole range of theoreticians with widely differing approaches such as Jacques Lacan (1966:89-97), Michel Foucault (1966), Jacques Derrida (1967), Edward Said (1978) or Niklas Luhmann (1987) have each shown that every concept of selfhood implies the construction and hence the suppression or marginalisation of the Other, a process where axiological considerations also come into play: '... the concept of good and evil is a positional one that coincides with categories of Otherness' (Jameson 1981:115). What is made clear by a statement like this is that the difference between self and Other is entirely based on a semantic 'détour' (Derrida) whereby the self is only definable in terms of what it is not. Thus any seemingly 'natural' 'metaphysics' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989:33) of Eurocentrism stands revealed as an artificial division of the world into a centre and its periphery that largely owes its existence to a combination of Western economic and military superiority which, in their turn, ensured Western control of the modes of symbolic representation. Only in such a context was it possible to posit the European self as the centre, or better, as the norm, and to despise the Other as a degenerate deviation from that norm. Put in very simple terms this meant: '... others have less humanity than oneself ... (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989:88)'.

III

> Clearly the dominance of the centre and its imprimatur on experience must be abrogated before the experience of the periphery can be fully validated (Kureishi 1986:31)

—this precisely would be the consequence arising from an understanding of the symbolic, and hence artificial, opposition between a centre and a marginalised periphery: 'The Empire Writes Back', to use a famous slogan coined by Salman Rushdie. What is at stake here is to deconstruct the old binary oppositions, thereby establishing proof that any self is inextricably enmeshed in a 'rapport de l'identité à l'autre' (Derrida 1990:11), an insight that automatically leads to the dissolution of those oppositions: '... the old either-or begins to break down' (Griffin in Hutcheon 1988:62).

Timothy Mo, in his novel *An Insular Possession,* has shown in a highly graphic manner to what an extent Europe's supposedly centristic and dominant position vis-à-vis its colonies had been, right from the start, a de-centered relationship of mutual dependence: The whole intercourse between Britain and her various colonies was, as he sees it, based on two economic triangles, 'the West Indian and Atlantic Triangle' and 'the East Indian Triangle' (Mo 1987:29-32), both of which intersected or interpenetrated each other to form a kind of David's star with either section being unable to exist without the other—African slaves were shipped to the West Indies and America, there to work on the plantations where the tobacco, the sugar cane and the cotton much needed by Britain were grown; the cotton in its turn was processed by white slaves in the mills of Northern England, to be exported to India where the opium was grown that was needed in order to pay for the tea and other goods imported from China to Britain. So much for the intricate mechanism of the two triangles.

Literature, especially the novel, cannot remain unaffected by such interdependences: The colonial and more especially the postcolonial novel produced on the fringes of the Empire is bound somehow to question the centre's assumption of centrality, in the process evolving its own particular aesthetics with the spectrum extending from the initial imitation via the gradual adaptation and transformation to the final rejection of the centre's narrative modes of representation. To what an extent the essential categories of the European bourgeois novel get challenged due to this, will be our main concern in the following.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), as Terry Eagleton has argued with typical aplomb, must be regarded as the most perfect example of a colonialist aesthetics in that such a radically modern departure from the more established means of novelistic representation could only have come into existence in a peripheral, semi-colonial backwater like Dublin:

> Modernism and colonialism become strange bedfellows, not least because the liberal realist doctrines from which modernism breaks free were never quite so plausible and entrenched on the colonial edges as they were in the metropolitan centres. For the subjugated subjects of empire, the individual is less the strenuously self-fashioning agent of its own historical destiny than empty, powerless, without a name; there can

> be little of the major realists' trust in the beneficence of linear time which is always on the side of Caesar (Eagleton 1990:322).

Eagleton's equation of Modernism and (Post)Colonialism is an extremely valuable insight placing as it does literary developments on the fringes of the Empire within the context of artistic achievements such as Modernism or Postmodernism that are normally considered to be the sole property of the centre. Seen in this light the (post)colonial novel's attack against European conceptions of the self and of the world at large is a double-barrelled one: Firstly it is directed against the bourgeois ideology, briefly definable as 'value order, meaning, control and identity' (Hutcheon 1988:13), secondly against the realist novel whose écriture, in the words of Roland Barthes, is the 'diagrammatic figure' or 'proportional analogy' (1985:248) of that ideology and can thus be construed as the very embodiment of European economic individualism. It is undeniable that classical realism with its emphasis on 'l'absolutisme de l'individue et des choses' (Kristeva 1969:107) was closely tied to the ideals and aspirations of the European middle-class. George Steiner is certainly right in stating 'the decline and partial rout' (Steiner 1979:342) of those ideals in a world that has changed quite drastically, and the tremendous thematic as well as formal upheavals of the novelistic genre have to be seen in this context.

Pierre Bourdieu has aptly demonstrated to what an extent European realism, especially when viewed against the background of modern or postmodern innovations the genre has undergone recently (or not so recently), is tantamount to a narrow-minded 'ethnocentrism':

> ... society, in granting certain representations of 'reality' the privileged status of realism, confirms its own tautological certainty that only the image of the world conforming most closely to what it considers to be reality is the one that is 'objective' (1974:163).

If one defines realism as the interplay between

> well-made plot, chronological sequence ... the rational connection between what characters 'do' and what they 'are', the causal connection between 'surface' details and the 'deep', 'scientific laws' of existence (Waugh 1984:7)

the main novelistic categories of character, action, space and time that combine to make up its representation of the world lead to narrative situations where reality is always shown as being reliable as well as transparent. These quasi-mythical European 'fantasmes du réel' (Lyotard 1988:19), however, must be overcome in order to make us realise that there are numerous other possible constructions of reality that are not

commensurate with our categories of perception, thereby exposing the classical Western novel that usually goes by the exclusive name of 'The Novel' as the merely 'regional version' (Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa & Madubuike 1985:19) of a genre that is multifarious in the extreme and that gets practiced all over the world and under socio-historical conditions that differ vastly from the European context.

IV

The postmodern transformations and the ensuing decentering of the narrative situation by which all traditional notions of what constitutes character, action, space and time have become overturned (Hoffmann 1988:145-224) thus creating the strange sense of unreality prevalent in the postmodern novel, are equally to be found in the (post)colonial novel, always of course bearing in mind that in this case the conditioning factors, because of an altered cultural context, are different. But even so the analogy holds, as will first be shown by analysing how the closely interwoven categories of character and action get undermined.

While the alienation of the postmodern self basically derives from the fact that it is no longer free to dispose of its cogito because of constant interference from the unconscious as well as the distorting power of language, the (post)colonial subject is faced with an even more complex situation: For the colonial 'mimic man' (Bhabha 1984:125-133) neither the unconscious nor the language he uses nor the crises he is faced with are his own because they have been superimposed from the outside: In a colonial 'politics of dominance and subservience' (Ashcroft et al. 1989:35) there is a vast potential of alienation where numerous factors combine to render self-determined action and a sense of selfhood extremely difficult if not altogether impossible. What has also to be taken into account is the fact that the ego, as Michel Foucault has argued, is a fairly recent European 'invention' of mankind, and that subject positions in other non-European cultures are much less clearly defined.

The repercussions this has for the écriture of the novel, as already indicated in the quotation from Terry Eagleton, are more explicitly stated in Timothy Mo's opposition of the Western and Eastern tradition of writing:

> ... our Western novel ... addresses itself rather to the individual as hero or heroine, from the delineation of whose dilemmas, material and moral, most of its energy and interest springs (Mo 1987:361).

Against this is to be set the Chinese novel where, since individuals have 'no intrinsic importance in themselves', 'the adventures of a group' form instead the focus of interest (Mo 1987:361). This applies equally to other non-European literatures as Lewis

Nkosi has shown with regard to African novel-writing where, as he rightly observes, the clash of individual and communal values which the European model is principally based on, remains a more or less alien element because it is 'essentially hostile to African traditional society' (Nkosi 1981:4-6).

All these diffusions of the individual naturally determine the formal properties of the (post)colonial novel, especially in the way the action is structured: Where subjects, for one reason or another, are not in control of their acts of volition and cannot, or do not want to, determine their own course of action, there is not to be found the usual linear sequence of implementing an action complete with its syntagmatic 'parcours' (Greimas in Du Sens 1970:179) from volition via knowledge and capacity to the final deed plus the ensuing change of affairs brought about by it. All there remains are strangely incomplete 'reduced forms of action' (Hoffmann 1988:176) where passivity has superseded activity and imagination has displaced the reality principle. The normal step-by-step logic of action with its implications of causal necessity has thus been supplanted by a contingent, loosely associated series of events.

The consequences such a deformed (post)colonial logic of action has for the plot-construction of the novel have also been suitably developed by Timothy Mo:

> ... the Western novel ... unfolds itself along a path which to all intents and purposes is linear .... It may ramble, but essentially it proceeds along a course of cause and effects, each contributing to the momentum of the whole. The plot is a veritable engine which advances along its rails to a firm destination (Mo 1987:359).

The Chinese novel, however, along with other non-European manifestations of the genre, is a departure from this norm:

> [It] moves in a path which is altogether circular. It is made up of separate episodes ... which may refer only unto themselves and be joined by the loosest of threads (Mo 1987:359) .

All this goes hand in hand with a different concept of time: European culture, as Mo puts it, is 'committed to progress and advance', whereas the Chinese one 'looks in upon itself and has no notion of progress but a spiral decline from a golden age to a brazen one, in letters as well as in all else' (Mo 1987:359). The two opposing notions of time are best metaphorised, as Mo does, as a mighty river against a calm lake. It is noteworthy in this context that the non-European concept of time comes very close to resembling the postmodern assumption of living in an era of post-histoire or of negative progress where all the old historical teleologies no longer seem to be viable. Another factor responsible for the loss of linear 'temporality' and hence for the further 'spatialisation' of time under (post)colonial conditions is formed by the numerous

non-synchronous elements prevailing in a hybrid, syncretistic world of mass-communication where tradition and modernism, past and present or future, because of the clash of cultures representing vastly different stages of development, are strangely intermingled and inverted (Ashcroft et al., 1989:36-37)

For the écriture of the novel this means that the Aristotelean notion of narrative as mimesis praxeos with a clearly defined beginning, middle and end is no longer a viable one. In a novelistic tradition where events and actions are arranged in a chronological order a 'natural' sense of temporality is capable of evolving from which the linear progression of the narrative 'then-and-then' (Ricoeur 1988:108) borrows its irreversible quality. Such a temporal ordering gives rise to the notion that we are, in fact, dealing with what can be termed 'referential time' or 'time as such' which is felt to be homologous with the linearity of narrative discourse—hence the conception that narrative is marked by 'une coincidence temporelle avec son objet' (Genette 1969:60). With an aesthetics of non-temporality, however, where narrated time manages to free itself from the linear constraints of narrating time imposed by the syntagmatic scanning order of its linguistic presentation, it is the achronical coexistence of events that reigns supreme: Events and the narrative meanings derived from them are all part of a 'spatial form' where the temporal perspective, contrary to any 'natural' chrono-logic, freely vacillates between past, present and future and time is subjected to the non-referential, geometrical configurations of purely aesthetic structures utterly devoid of any time element.

'Space becomes temporalised, time becomes spatialised' (Hoffmann 1988:115)—this postmodern insight is at one with Derrida's opinion that the incessant referral of any sign to its simultaneously existing yet unmentioned Other causes both a 'temporisation' as well as an 'espacement' of meaning. With regard to the (post)colonial novel this has the effect of isolating narrative situations to such an extent from their context that they become mere episodes that are logically as well as temporally unrelated with what went on before or what comes afterwards, even to the extent that they congeal to become timeless tableaux or reflexions, or proliferate to turn into extensive descriptive passages that render any ongoing and coherent chronology impossible. Thus, to use Umberto Eco's words, a 'poetics of action' has been supplanted by a 'poetics of cross-sections' (1965:222-227). The only principle of coherence remaining in this case consists in formal patterns of paratactic, circular, contrastive, serial and other relational kinds of arrangement.

Mutatis mutandis such non-Aristotelian ways of telling stories can also be found in oral narratives where the narrator constantly digresses or repeats himself so that '

> the transformation of experience into story is achieved only partly (if at all) according to the rules of 'closed' literary narrative (Jauss 1984:344).

This is of major importance for the (post)colonial novel, as Salman Rushdie's (1985:7f) or Chinweizu's (1988:xvii-xl) emphasis on the relevance of the oral tradition for Indian or African writing has shown. At any rate, what is rendered extremely difficult by an anti-teleological type of narrative is the sense-making operation of the reader because where the narrative has no 'natural' or 'fixed' end-point, dictated by its chronologic, it is more or less impossible for the reader to arrange all its facets of meaning in such a way as to form a coherent whole that satisfies his desire to know what the story is 'all about'. The (post)colonial novel is thus the very artistic embodiment of a 'new and overwhelming space which annihilates imperial time and history' (Ashcroft et al. 1989:34), of a spatial concept of time that is aimed directly at subverting the centre's arrogant assumption of linear time or history being all on its side.

Space as—in the sense of Kant—that category where changes of our perception of the world are made visible is not, of course, exempted from the process of decentering described so far: A subject incapable of acting that is forced to withdraw into passivity or imagination, a fragmentarised spatial time—all these are not the distinguishing qualities of a universe where space is a stable entity. Whereas the centered subject experiences geographical or social space as a reliable communal or physical environment—in Raymond Williams' words as 'knowable community' (Williams 1974:14)—this is rendered fluid or unstable when the alienated (post)colonial subject encounters it as 'unknown, unknowable, overwhelming society' (Williams 1974:14). As soon as experience becomes precarious any observation of space gets refracted into a multitude of aspects that resist being assembled into one coherent picture. This means that space which is normally something immobile becomes changeable and hence temporalised. The loss of reality induced by a fluid spatial dimension has been described by the Indian author Amitav Ghosh as

> the knowledge that normalcy is utterly contingent, that the spaces that surround one, the street one inhabits, can become suddenly and without warning, as hostile as a desert in a flash flood (1989:200).

Moreover, in a (post)colonial world village temporalised space becomes an entity equally as syncretistic as spatialised time: Just as the blessings of Western civilisation (to name but a few: Coca Cola, Hilton Hotels, Toyota cars) are to be found in Bombay the same as in London, there is also the chance, in a kind of reverse process, of the culture and values of the periphery encroaching on those of the centre, which would be the clearest possible proof of the theory that 'the centre no longer holds' (W.B. Yeats), of things falling apart not on the despised fringes but at the very centre of the world.

This becomes tangible in the hypothetical changes of the European environment imagined by Gibreel Farishta, one of the protagonists in Rushdie's Satanic Verses: If the average temperature in London were to rise by only ten degrees centigrade the city would change beyond recognition—there would be an abundance of palm trees and other exotic plants everywhere, the social and sexual mores of the inhabitants would improve considerably because their natural British reserve would give way to emotional spontaneity. Especially the loss of the protestant work ethic would mobilise resources of creativity that have been lying dormant for so long. This would become most strikingly visible in the improvement of English football: Instead of powerful kick-and-rush play one would get more refined ball treatment and better intellectual control of the game. 'The tropification of London' (Rushdie 1988:354f) would indeed be a late but perfect revenge wrought by the periphery on the centre because the supposedly negative qualities of the despised Other would thus finally catch up with the self, or as Hanif Kureishi has argued: After thirteen years of Thatcherism certain parts of South London look just as dilapidated as some of the less nice areas of Calcutta, complete with large numbers of Indian shops and take-aways (Kureishi 1990:224).

V

The four main constituents of the narrative situation we have dealt with—character, action, space and time—normally stand in a relation of proportional analogy with 'the real structure of human experience' (Cervenka 1978:93), as the Czech structuralist Miroslav Cervenka has put it. The transformations described so far, however, have led to the dissolution of the usual actantial as well as spatio-temporal contiguities to such an extent that the result achieved is 'a considerable deviation from everyday experience' (Cervenka 1978:123). The spectrum of deviation extends all the way from an irrealism that is mainly due to a discontinuous écriture withholding from the reader 'la consolation des bonnes formes' (Lyotard 1988:31) via a wildly fabulating, magical realism where the real and the 'phantastic' intermingle right to the metaphorically distorted world of the grotesque. One may safely say that all these types of irrealism are to be found in (post)colonial fiction.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the world as presented through the looking-glass of the (post)colonial novel is not compatible with a stable European-bourgeois conception of reality. In addition to the general tendency of all oppressed to seek refuge from a dire reality in the realm of imagination the (post)colonial novel, because of its experience with systematically distorted realities, is imbued with a sense of how much reality 'flickers', to use a Baudrillardian formula, since its world is, after all, nothing but the inauthentic, symbolically constructed simulacrum of an original that is not there in the first place. Sometimes those fictitious constructions are so vio-

lently imposed that reality never again recovers from the harm inflicted upon it by the various powers that be. A perfect example of this is the way Chinua Achebe in his novels analyses the transition from pre- to postindependence in Nigeria and the new interpretations of reality caused by such changes.

In view of such distortions it is small wonder that the chronotopos in the (post)colonial novel should frequently be a 'phantastic' or grotesque one, especially as 'phantastic' in this context does not involve a 'positive' widening of consciousness in the sense of removing barriers normally erected to contain its energies. On the contrary, the phantastic is here conceived as a negative force:

> ... via the distortions of the conventional surface of things the spuriousness of 'normal' reality gets exposed, thus laying bare the otherwise hidden essence of being in all its depravity (Hoffmann 1978:126).

All of this leads to a healthy mistrust of the realist mode of narration whose implicit endeavour it is to pass itself off, in spite of its manifest partiality as well as its limitations, as the only thinkable version of reality, or as Colin MacCabe has argued:

> ... the whole text works on the concealing of the dominant discourse as articulation—instead the dominant discourse presents itself exactly as the presentation of objects to the reading subject (Rice & Waugh 1989:134-142).

This tendency on the part of the dominant discourse to repress all other voices and their differing constructions of reality is counteracted in the (post)colonial novel by a 'systematic refusal of any such dominant discourse' (Rice & Waugh 1989:134-142). Accordingly the texts are often refracted into a multifaceted polyphony, thereby unashamedly laying bare their own status as mere artefacts without any claim to referentiality. Thus the dominant discourse is made to compete with a host of other voices.

The postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty has formulated the epistemology to go with such an aesthetics of plurality: 'True' reality can never be seized absolutely in, as it were, vertical acts of representation, but only as a horizontal sequence of artificial interpretations that need revising time and again and whose endless regress implies the polyphony of a plurality of truths all of which are endowed with the same rights (Rorty 1982:92).

As the discourse of realism ever since Julia Kristeva has been discredited as being unashamedly 'paternalistic' or 'phallocratic' it is best countered by a narrative style that may be considered as the appropriate female mode of signification. Omar Khayam, the first-person narrator in Rushdie's novel *Shame* who first sets out to write

the story of his life solely guided by the limited range of his male perception of things, finally comes to realise:

> ... the women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my 'male' plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its 'reverse' and female side (1983:173).

If power is installed via discursive constraints on what can or cannot be said, then the first step to emancipation consists in making heard the previously suppressed voice of the Other. 'Le multiple, il faut le faire ...' (Deleuze, Guattari 1980:13)—such a demand is adequately fulfilled in the (post)colonial novel which is—in the sense of an iconical 'form enacting meaning' (Leech & Short 1981:242)—the formal manifestation of its own content by being the very epitome of centrifugal multifariousness.

Timothy Mo has described the multiple textual or discursive realisations this may lead to in the non-European novel as a loose sequence of

> poetry, fable, song, and essays, lists of goods, recipes, formulas for patent medicines, and even spells, [all of] which ... may appear altogether dispensable and supernumerary to the author's requirement as failing to advance the tale or deepen the reader's understanding of its characters (Mo 1987:359).

Sometimes such syncretism goes so far as to completely blur the discursive borderlines existing between various genres as is the case in Mothobi Mutloatse's Proemdra, a portmanteauword made up of prose, poem and drama. In a text like this the generic identity of the novel as an essentially narrative type of discourse has been forsaken altogether.

To sum up: Through the dysfunctional, truly 'menippean' (Kristeva 1969:107) syncretism of its discourses the (post)colonial novel quite consciously resists any easy identification of its formal or thematic potential. The specific way in which it helps to dismantle the classical narrative model of representation that, as has been shown, owes its chrono-logical coherence to a socio-historical context, is the essential contribution the non-European novel is capable of making to the overall picture of the contemporary English novel: Helping to free it, as the third important innovation of the genre after or alongside Anglo-American Modernism and Postmodernism, from its self-imposed limits of vision so that finally we Europeans '[devenons] conscient de la relativité, donc de l'arbitraire, d'un trait de notre culture ...' (Todorov 1982:317).

Thus the English novel has 'inherited' from the outside, from the periphery, such a vast aesthetic potential that more often than not it appears to be 'more english than English' (Ashcroft et al. 1989:195). At least in the realm of literature Todorov's

postulate is thereby fulfilled: 'Vivre la différence dans l'égalité' (Todorov 1982:310). Put otherwise: Seen in this light Babel was not a regrettable accident in the history of human communication but, on the contrary, a unique stroke of good luck (Steiner 1975).

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Duytsman altyd kallom: Icke Hottentots doot makom

Ampie Coetzee

> The title is a quotation in broken 17th Century Hottentot-Dutch said to be from the Khoikhoi; meaning: Dutchman always says: I kill the Hottentot (Quoted by Willem ten Rhyne, 1686).

This is part of a project on the genealogy of South African literature; and this is no more than an introductory chapter on the 'origins' of this literature.

It is problematic to think about genealogy or beginnings. When Friedrich Nietzsche considered genealogy he used many words: 'Entstehung', 'Herkunft', 'Abkunft', 'Geburt', 'Ursprung', 'Anfang' (Foucault 1977:140). These variations in meaning attempt to create the concept of a beginning. But the extent to which a beginning is dependent on constructs is quite clearly stated by Nietzsche in his 'The Genealogy of Morals':

> There is no set of maxims more important for an historian than this: that the actual causes of a thing's origin and its eventual uses, the manner of its incorporation into a system of purposes, are worlds apart; that everything that exists, no matter what its origin, is periodically reinterpreted by those in power in terms of fresh intentions (Nietzsche 1956:209).

And he goes on:

> No matter how well we understand the utility of a certain physiological organ (or of a legal institution, a custom, a political convention, an artistic genre, a cultic trait) we do not thereby understand anything of its origin (Nietzsche 1956:209).

The comments of our major modern literary historians, J.C. Kannemeyer and Michael Chapman, on beginnings are brief. The aim of their endeavour was mainly to identify and canonise literature in South Africa. Chapman:

> In relation to European settlement ... it makes sense to discuss the start of written literature among the Xhosa, the earliest indigenous people in southern Africa to encounter the colonial and missionary presence in a systematic way. It also makes sense, in the context of European settlement, to consider the beginnings of Afrikaans expression (1996:72).

And Kannemeyer, in writing about early Dutch writing in South Africa: 'This literature one can then consider as the origin of Afrikaans literature' (1978:24).

I have to go beyond what is today considered as Literature. I have to go to a vague place somewhere in an uncertain time where peoples from Europe met and confronted the indigene on the southern shores of Africa. From the conquests that followed our present identities—or dissolution of identities—were constructed: in the texts that intruded and created a South Africa.

The only certain beginnings we have are the texts of these contacts, confrontations and conquests. We also have a methodology for reading them, introduced by Michel Foucault in the Foreword to the English Edition of *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*:

> What I wished to do was to present, side by side, a definite number of elements: the knowledge of living beings, the knowledge of the laws of language, and the knowledge of economic facts, and to relate them to the philosophical discourse that was contemporary with them during a period extending from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (1970:x).

To simplify, there was: taxonomy, the theory of wealth, language. A 'network of analogies' existed in the early times of colonisation between classification of nature, the analysis of wealth, and language as representation. In the classification of the indigenous people representations—in language and drawings—were disseminated throughout the 'civilized' world. Of these the Khoikhoi were represented as the most disgusting (Hodgen 1964). As early as 1719 Peter Kolb in his *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* already complained about the 'falsehoods and imperfection' in the accounts of the people about the Cape of Good Hope. He talks of the 'vanity of travellers, the prostitution of mercenary pens', and that 'the authors we have upon the Hottentots, not only differ widely in the most essential points of history, but hardly have the good luck to hit upon the truth in any one article' (Kolb MDCCXXX1:25). And yet, when *he* represents their language, he says, for instance:

> Their language is certainly a composition of the strangest sounds that ever were uttered by any people ... some look upon it as the disgrace of speech; others deny it the name, as having nothing of sound or articulation that is peculiar to man in it (Kolb MDCCXXX1:32).

And, particularly the following:

> Hence it is, that they are look'd upon as a whole nation of stammerers ... (and) ... the unaccountable motions and postures of the tongue to which their own language subjects them, renders them, for the most part, hardly intelligible when they come to speak (Kolb MDCCXXX1:32).

In fact the Hottentots have no language. Not only do they struggle to speak the coloniser's language, which already makes of them barbarians, but the language they speak among themselves represent them to the coloniser as mutes[1].

How, then, can we know anything about them from the texts we have?

Seeking the voice of the 'other' has been attempted before in postcolonial times, in other countries, in other contexts. The work of Tzvetan Todorov comes to mind (*The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other* 1984), and the projects of Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 1988). But to supplement the old narrative, or to rethink it in terms text and narrative may be a fruitful exercise for the changed South Africa. Perhaps, you may wonder: should it not be a reader from the world of the previously colonised to undertake a task such as this? Why would a descendant of the colonisers be interested in seeking out the voice of the marginalised? Postcolonial correctness?

One could answer in various ways; but for this project the relationship between the marginalised 'other' and the genealogy of a South African literature is the prime motivation. The white literatures in this country could not have come into existence without the colonised 'other'; or: could not have been produced without creating the 'other'. Then the question also has to be asked: to what extent was the 'same' dependent on the creation of the 'other'? What is ultimately the difference between the 'same' and the 'other'? Now that there should in South Africa ideally/idealistically be no more difference in the colonial sense between them and us, we might re-inscribe them into our colonial texts of the past.

If only these texts were monodimensional.

Within the classifications of nature; and this would also include the indigene (for instance: even in Kannemeyer's modern literary history there is a chapter 'Dier, Inboorling en Folklore in die Verhaalkuns' (Animal, Native and Folklore in Narrative Art)—within this classification there is representation: of the traveller-writer, anthropologist, quasi-scientist through his (there are no women in my research so far) particular armed vision, and the representation is descriptive. But sometimes the writer

[1] 'The first, spontaneous reaction with regard to the stranger is to imagine him as inferior, since he is different from us: this is not even a man, or if he is one, an inferior barbarian; if he does not speak our language, it is because he speaks none at all, *cannot* speak, as Columbus still believed' (Todorov 1982:76).

attempts to give voice to the indigene: instead of talking to or about them, he lets them talk. Within his text of course.

I would like, briefly, to examine such an example. The story of Eykamma. But the epistemology of this kind of reading should take not only the contents of a text into account, but also text as discourse. The following is from Olfert Dapper's (1636-1689) *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten* (1668), which was apparently a compilation, from manuscript accounts, as Dapper never, it appears, left Holland. The story he tells here does not agree completely with the official records, and the official records do not agree with each other. A close reading of all the various texts and of their translations to English from 17th century Dutch provides another narrative: that of the text.

Here is a translation of Dapper's version:

> One morning in June 1659, after the war had already lasted three months, five Hottentots (including this Doman) were overtaken by five of our horsemen as they were running off with two cattle which they had stolen from a certain free burgher. A sharp skirmish ensued. The Hottentots, seeing no possible means of flight nor desiring any mercy, defended themselves valiantly. They wounded two of the horsemen, one through the arm and under the lower ribs, and the other in the spine. But our countrymen repaid the debt by wounding three of them with the gun, and stabbing the other two dead with their own weapons. One of the three who were shot, a man named Eykamma, was taken to the Fort on a horse, with his neck pierced, his leg shattered, and a severe wound in the head; but Doman, with the other, escaped by jumping over a stream eight feet wide, after which flight proved their best weapon and salvation.
>
> The wounded Eykamma, brought into the Fort, was asked why his people had made war against our countrymen, and tried to cause damage everywhere by killing, plundering and burning. Well-nigh overcome by the pain of his severe wounds, he replied by asking why the Dutch had ploughed over the land of the Hottentots, and sought to take the bread out of their mouth by sowing corn on the lands to which they had to drive their cattle for pasture; adding that they had never had other or better grazing grounds. The reason for all their attacks, he continued, was nothing else than to revenge themselves for the harm and injustice done to them: since they not only were commanded to keep away from certain of their grazing grounds, which they had always possessed undisturbed and only allowed us at first to use as a refreshment station, but they also saw their lands divided out amongst us without their knowledge by the heads of the settlement, and boundaries put up within which they might not pasture. He asked finally what we would have done had the same thing happened to us. Moreover, he added, they observed how we were strengthening ourselves daily with fortifications and bulwarks, which according to their way of thinking could have no other object than to bring them and all that was theirs under our authority and domination. To this our men replied: 'your people have now once for all lost the land around the Cape through war, and you must accordingly never dwell on the idea of getting it back again through peace or through war'.

> Eykamma died on the sixth day. His last words were that he was only an insignificant person, but that he thought we should summon his chief to the Fort and discuss with the latter the possibility of restoring to each what was his, or of making whatever arrangement might be found best to put an end to the reciprocal damage and inconvenience. This being approved, two or three Dutchmen were sent to request Chief Gogosoa to come to the Fort so that a mutual treaty of peace could be established. But the attempt was all in vain; for although the blow mentioned above had scared them, they nevertheless carried on fighting with the same vehemence wherever they saw a chance, so that we could think of no means of bringing this dispute to the most suitable close (Schapera 1933: 15-17).

The editor of the collection of essays on the early Cape Hottentots, from which this piece is taken, I. Schapera consistently criticises Dapper for his inaccuracies and deviations from the original records[2].

There are basically, as far as I can determine at the moment, two texts from which Dapper could have construed his story: the one from a diary inscription of Commander Jan van Riebeeck, dated 19th July 1659, and the other from a letter he sent to the Directors of the VOIC in Holland, on the 29th of July 1659[3], reporting the incident (and, perhaps, also from a letter despatched on the 29th of July 1659, as well as a diary inscription on the 12th of Aug. 1659, cf. Schapera 1933:14 and 16). Without taking the original Dutch versions into account (Van Riebeeck's style is quite complicated and sometimes ambiguous) these two texts differ from Dapper's narrative in the following aspects:

- the name of the wounded Eykamma is not given;
- more detail is given about the skirmish;

[2] For example: 'Dapper's version of this episode, while substantially accurate, does not agree in every particular with the official records ...'; 'The paragraph is evidently based on van Riebeeck's despatch of July 29, 1659, to Batavia ...'; 'This statement was actually made not to Eykamma but to the Capemen when they came to sue for peace ...'; 'Once more Dapper is inaccurate ...'. *The Early Cape Hottentots*, described in the writings of Olfert Dapper (1668) Willem ten Rhynbe (1686) and Johannes Gulielmus de Grevenbroek (1695). The Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town, 1933.

[3] Leibbrandt, H.C.V. 1900. *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope. Letters Despatched from the Cape. 1652-1662 Volume III.* Cape Town: W.A. Richard & Sons. And: 1958 *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck. Volume III. 1659-1662. Edited and with an introduction and footnotes by H.B. Thom, for the Van Riebeeck Society.* Cape Town & Amsterdam: A.A. Balkema. And: 1957 *Daghregister gehouden by den Oppercoopan Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck. Deel III. 1652-1662. Teksversorging en taalkundige aantekeninge deur Dr. D.B. Bosman. Geskiedkundige aantekeninge deur Dr. H.B. Thom. Uitgawe van die Van Riebeeck-Vereniging. Ter geleentheid van die 300ste Van Riebeeck-dag.* Kaapstad: A.A. Balkema.

- the wounded, captured Hottentot does not say what Eykamma is saying;
- the reason for the actions of the Hottentots is not given;

What is particularly significant is a footnote attached by the editor of the text, Schapera:

> In the Journal this passage is not clear, but with the help of a description of the fight, which appears in a letter to Batavia dated 29 July 1659, one can easily understand the meaning. Doman, so it is stated, received a shot in the back but nevertheless had a hairbreadth escape. According to the prisoner—a Kaapman who spoke Dutch reasonably well (this would then be Eykamma. AC)—the Hottentots were dissatisfied that the Europeans had taken possession of their land, and Doman had encouraged the Hottentots to set fire to the houses and the grain and to attempt to overpower the fort (1933:101).

Schapera's intervention as editor, two and a half centuries later, adds another text to Dapper's collage; and my tinkerings more than half a century later gives consistent life to the text, in that it becomes part of a discourse.

In this matter of the discourse of text we have then in Dapper's narrative a stitching together from various official notices of a skirmish which took place between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi. A narrative and a report. The official diary and letter are the reports submitted to an authority, in this case Van Riebeeck's masters: the Dutch East India Company; and for these reports there were set guidelines, a kind of master-text in a specified form designed to give the necessary information about the indigene and their conditions of existence[4]. This would then be a record: accurate and within spatial and temporal proximity of the indigene and of any events occurring. Memory and reportage reduced to the minimum. The official report would be like a classification—a classification of events. The moment of textualising being the creation of the moment in history.

This kind of report is not intended as a representation of the Khoikhoi: its production was in the service of commerce. Dapper's narrative, however, is part of a description of 'Kaffraria or Land of the Hottentots'—therefore a representation. If one thinks in terms of two of Foucault's three categories for the attainment of knowledge in the Classical Age—language as representation, the classification of nature (the classification of living beings, 'living beings ... viewed through a grid of knowledge constituted by *natural history*' 1970:128) and the analysis of wealth—we have here an example of classification becoming representation. Representation through narrative;

[4] 'Om ervoor te zorgen dat die informatie adequaat was, werden er richtlijnen meegegeven voor zaken waar de journaalhouder op moest letten. Het pakket met richtlijnen dat voor die eerste expeditie onder leiding van Christian van Hoesum in februari 1659 werd opgesteld ... bleef vrijwel ongewijzigd in gebruik tot de expeditie van De la Guerre (1663-1664) ...' (Huigen 1996:28). Note the six guidelines Van Riebeeck himself set up (p. 29).

and narrative as construct. The facts we have to take into account in the discourse of the text are: the Khoikhoi were a nation of incomprehensible stutterers, they could not express themselves in another language: they were experienced as mutes; the text Dapper created is made up of bits and pieces: a stuttered text. A stuttered text relating the story of a stutterer.

In the representation of the 'other' in travel writing, classifications, reports, diaries it seems that the genetics of the text has to be taken into account. For whom was it written? Who or what, therefore, controls it, has power over it? What is the determining master text? The discourse of the text is part of the discourse on its beginning—and the beginnings of texts are concurrent, complicit with South African literature. But at the moment I can say no more than quote Foucault:

> Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times (1977:140).

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A Semiotic Response to Space in South Africa: Indigenous Rock Art and Colonial Travelogues as Marginal 'Writing on the Earth'?

Marilet Sienaert

The notion of spatiality, examined in terms of the different ways in which people respond to the geographic space around them, is a central issue in current postcolonial studies. A variety of semiotic systems record these different forms of engagement with the land, thus linking culture and nature in ways that are inherently relational and contextual. In South Africa these semiotic formations are especially significant in the context of our history of colonisation, contested borders, and in the more recent *Apartheid* past, of urban migrations and forced removals of people from the land. As a semiotic response to space, these systems also merit special focus as regards the problematic issue of land (re)distribution.

To elaborate on this, and by way of example, I examine the way in which two 'marginal' semiotic systems, namely South African rock art and early colonial travel writing, engage with the land. Moving beyond the facile binary opposition of Europe versus Africa suggested by my choice of examples, I focus on the fact that, in spite of apparently opposing ways of relating to geographic space, both these seemingly marginal systems posit similar positions of *power* vis-à-vis the land. In the light of the ongoing debate on space appropriation, it seems important to examine to what extent power, as expressed by the constructed authority of the semiotic system, is of a contingent nature.

South Africa's early hunter-gatherers—I avoid the problematic Bushman / San nomenclature (cf. Chapman 1996:21f) as far as possible—were not a homogenous group, and some generalisation due to my particular focus will therefore inevitably occur. I also realise that to consider rock art only in terms of a semiotic system—as I am doing here—is in itself incomplete: Like all artwork it is neither mere representation, nor a mere grouping of signs and symbols (cf. Skotnes 1996:234).

To briefly illustrate one way in which South African rock art can be seen to relate to the land, I follow a mainstream approach in current research (Lewis-Williams et al 1989, and Parkington et al 1996), according to which the paintings express shamanistic engagement with nature, a practice central to the existence of this ancient

people. By its very nature shamanistic experience, induced for example by dancing or rhythmic clapping, was meant to impact on the land through rain-making activities, or when participating in the hunt through out-of-body experiences. Already in Bleek's (1968:331) research from the late nineteenth century there is reference to somatic movements (presentiments) named *!qwe,* and which denote 'letters ... in their bodies'. Rock paintings can be seen as a kind of pictographic writing; a transcription of somatic power activated by the trance. In its simplest form the art takes the form of entoptics, (the geometrical zigzags, dots and grids seen in rock paintings), and in its most complex form as iconic hallucinations, (such as the depiction of geographical features, people and animals) (Lewis-Williams 1988:136).

On the other hand however, as shown inter alia by Skotnes (1995:327) and Lewis-Williams (1988:134), the boundary between 'this world' and 'the world of the spirit' does not figure in the Bushman perception of reality, and is a Western construct. The trance experience expressed through the rock art thus constitutes a bridge between nature and culture which transcends the difference between mental image and material landscape. Depictions of people and animals are for example often integrated with entoptic phenomena, thus combining representation of the observed landscape with forms which originate entirely in the mind, such as a giraffe with an entoptic ' grid' contained within its body.

Neuropsychological research (Siegel 1977) on altered states of consciousness has shown how ordinary perception of space and time falls away during trance states, an experience so overwhelming that it can be described only by way of metaphors. However, as subjects move into the deepest state of trance,

> they stop making such comparisons and assert that things *are* indeed as they have described them. Brilliant white entoptic dots, for example, are no longer *like* stars; they *are* stars. Metaphor becomes empirical rather than comparative (Lewis-Williams 1988:136f).

The figurative script on the rock is therefore neither the representation of perceived reality nor merely a symbol of ineffable somatic trance energy. Through its shape, colour, texture and context it is claimed to have a life of its own, and constitutes the irreducible *complement* of so-called *n/um* power activated during trance. One is reminded of Derrida's *'originary* metaphor' (Derrida 1981:218); its very 'beingness' preventing it from merely representing that which cannot be materially expressed. Therefore, the rock painting cannot be said to *describe* the spirit world, it *is* that world. To corroborate this, the sacred songs recorded by Bleek and Lloyd in the nineteenth century show the ancient click languages to be practically stripped of adjectives. Critics suggest that this is the result of the close correspondence perceived between word

(sign) and thing, which philosophically reflects the indivisibility (or one-ness) of the real and the mythic (cf. Chapman 1996:25). For the shaman artist then, the rock art does not merely translate shamanistic experience, but integrates and contains both the real world and the world of the spirit; the physical landscape as well as the mental experience of that space.

To decipher a one-to-one relationship between visual sign and mental concept is therefore severely limiting. Literally inscribed into or on to the landscape, the rock art embodies a single process through which the signifier and signified are so interpenetrated that they become merged, and the dichotomy of subject (the artist), and object (depicted image), similarly dissolves. As generally accepted in contemporary art and literary theory, but now referring to ancient African art practice in particular, anthropologists claim that

> there is no division between object and its beholder; it can no longer be taken for granted that art—as object, music, or theatre—is separate from the person who experiences it (Forster 1993:30).

In similar fashion, a shamanistic reading of the rock art would specifically insist on the physicality of the surrounding space being integrated into the semiotic practice. Not only does this refer to the land literally becoming the medium, (on account of the natural plant dye and antelope blood applied as colour pigment), but also that shapes and irregularities in the rock surface participate in the signifying process. A shamanistic reading would also foreground the spatial relationship between the rock surface and the viewer as being an essential component of meaning. For example, rock paintings are often found high up on the ceiling of caves, or in places where the geographic position of the rock face forces the viewer to lie on his or her side or back. The composition of the work—often consistent and thus suggestive of conventions as regards 'orientation and organisation' (Parkington et al 1996:231)—does not always relate spatially to a viewer's normal standing position. Similarly, the sometimes circular compositions defy gravity and disorientate the viewer; a disorientation understood as being part of the paintings' shamanistic content. Any attempt therefore to re-orientate these paintings according to Western notions of framing, as is often the case when reproducing them for publication or research purposes, deprives them of an essential facet of their meaning (cf. Skotnes 1995:323).

To sum up this first example of the way in which a seemingly marginal semiotic system engages with space, the rock art can be said to intertwine organically with the land: the rock face itself, the spatial relationship between the viewer and the painting, as well as the composition, all participate in a signifying process which complements or correlates with the shaman's altered state of consciousness. Space (the land-

scape and all it contains, including the rock surface) and the subject that stands in relation to that space (the shaman artist or viewer) are irrevocably linked in a reciprocal relationship, and can be read as essential components of the signifying practice itself. Thus by its very nature the rock art mirrors but also transcends the blurred boundaries between subject and object normally associated with contemporary literary theory: As a semiotic response to the landscape it seems to speak from *within* the space with which it is engaged. However, in spite of the semiotic symbiosis of nature and culture suggested by this holistic intermingling of signifying features, the rock art nevertheless represents a position of power vis-à-vis the land, a notion to which I will return in my closing argument.

My second example of the way in which an equally 'marginal' semiotic system elucidates engagement with geographic space is the travel writing of the early colonial travellers to South Africa. The rather vague notion of 'space' to be explored, rapidly lead to its appropriation through language; the landscape 'remain(ed) alien, impenetrable, until a language (was) found in which to win it, speak it, represent it' (Coetzee 1988:7). Through naming, classifying, mapping, and also through the practice of sketching or painting, the new land was fixed into a European grid of knowledge and control. Although most of these early travellers were official delegates to South Africa or were on missions to the East, some were just passers-by or hunter-explorers. All their writing however, was set to gain the approval and admiration of a specific audience, namely their peers or employers in Europe. As testified by the multiple editions and cross translations of the period, the conviction with which these texts present themselves as the master discourse became the measure of their success. In seeming contrast then, to the way in which the rock art speaks from *within* the land with which it is engaged, early colonial travel writing apparently appropriates it from *without*: a notion widely expounded by theorists such as Said, Spivak, Fanon and many others. For the sake of my closing argument I will briefly elaborate on this by way of specific examples.

The irony of naming geographic features which already had indigenous names was often missed by the colonial travellers, as when the French missionary Arbousset (1836:113f) mentions that the mountain his party has designated on their map as *Mont aux Sources*, is called *Pofung* by the 'natives'. Theorists such as Said (1978) and Viswanathan (1989) draw on such examples to show how colonial texts create and naturalise 'knowledge' of both the colonising self and the colonised *other*—in this case, the land. In this regard Carl Linnaeus' system of classification, published as *The System of Nature* in 1750, was an effective instrument in taming the 'other': every plant, animal or mineral encountered, could hereby be placed in a hierarchy and given a Latin name, a process which suggested order and control over the new land. Even the unfamiliar southern sky was submitted to a similar procedure when the French Jesuit astronomer L'Abbé de Lacaille classified close on 10 000 planets during a stay

at the Cape from 1751 to 1753. The effect of this on navigation and the associated imperial impulse is self-evident. (For a fuller account of the naming practices and other related points on early European travellers to South Africa, see Sienaert & Stiebel 1996:91-101).

The mapping of terrain by the colonists is often singled out as a form of graphic control over the blank and potentially threatening landscape, a semiotic activity which further enhances the sense of power evoked through naming and classifying. Politically motivated, mapping is never a neutral activity:

> A map ... is an instrument of power / knowledge. The mapper, in mapping, simultaneously exercises power over the charted terrain and gains enormous empowerment through having assimilated it as a field of knowledge (Penn 1992:22f).

In conjunction with mapping, the description of landscape or space in colonial travelogues is considered to reveal the strangely disembodied, passive gaze of what Pratt (1992:7) calls 'the seeing man': the European (male) subject of travel writing 'whose imperial eyes look out and possess'. Postcolonial theorists stress the way in which the landscape is physicalised and given female features, or seen from an elevated position such as a hill-top which, in conjunction with clichéd phrases such as 'the opening up of Africa' (compare Livingstone 1875:189), suggest a subject-position of power *vis-à-vis* the new land. To consolidate this view, critics have, for example, highlighted the way in which many typically African features were specifically seen in terms of economic development. Thus Livingstone (1875:729) writes of the grasslands in Natal, that 'every acre of good land ... may be made to produce an average of two tons of hay', and Barrow (as quoted in Pratt 1992:61) refers to a swamp 'that by one single drain might be converted into a very beautiful meadow'. This compulsion for 'improvement' or economic development is considered so striking a feature of colonial writing that Pratt (1985:126) calls it the 'reverie convention', thus once again foregrounding the confidence and implied authority of the colonial subject.

Considered equally symptomatic of this superior attitude is the way in which illustrations of the period subscribe to the aesthetic conventions of Europe and seem to ignore the reality of the African landscape. As potentially threatening subject the land thus appear tamed and is made harmless by viewing it through the familiar European lens. This refers particularly to water-colours or engravings made on the travellers' return to Europe, and which were often based on verbal descriptions or basic sketches brought from the colonies. A case in point would be engravings depicting the Khoi in the classic pose of Greek sculptures (cf. Tachard, 1688:74f) during the Neo-Classical period in European art. In verbal descriptions of landscape too, the visitors see what their European frame of reference has taught them to expect; the authority of the seer

remains unchallenged. Colour, for example, is defined by its absence, as when Burchell (in Coetzee 1988:42) stipulates: 'In Africa we look in vain for those mellow beautiful tints with which the sun of autumn dyes the forests of England ...'.

Although Said (1993) amongst others has now retreated from the binarist paradigm often associated with postcolonialism, the way in which the land is presented in the early travelogues certainly provokes a reading which presents the relationship between 'centre' and 'margin' as a binary opposition by which the European *self* has appropriated, misrepresented and disempowered the African *other*.

It seems essential however, to avoid this trap of postcolonial indignation which would in my examples of semiotic response to space translate as an opposition between the seemingly non-aggressive and holistic stance of the rock art, and the explicit authority and domination of space in the travel-writers' accounts. The fact is that both these 'marginal' semiotic systems express control of the landscape. In spite of the holistic way in which the rock art seems to speak from *within* the space with which it is engaged, it nevertheless implicitly aims to control the land through, for example, the shaman artist's rain-making activities and out-of-body participation in the hunt. This notion of control can be extended to the semiotic practice of tracking: the hunter identifies and traces his quarry by scanning the earth in a way reminiscent of the coloniser's so-called appropriating gaze. The Bushman literally 'reads' what is 'written' or 'depicted' in the sand, (cf. Reuning & Wortley 1973:30,74), and relies on his scanning and creative ability to accurately judge distance and anticipate the whereabouts of his prey (Liebenberg 1990:45). In a similar fashion the colonist, for example, scrutinises geographic features to mentally project future economic development of the land. The dominance implied by the colonial travellers' naming and mapping activities is more explicit, but the semiotic practice of both groups clearly represent positions of power in the way they engage with the land: Only when brought into conflict would one become the dominant mode. As such they constitute a kind of 'writing on the earth' (Van der Watt 1993:23) which to this day has left clear ideological traces. In the context of the postcolonial and ongoing issue of space appropriation—which includes the navigation of *cultural* space—they therefore illustrate how historical shifts in power formations inevitably 're-draw, re-name and re-inscribe the land to match the day' (Sienaert and Stiebel 1996:100).

Problematising the notion of marginality, as in these examples of indigenous rock art and colonial travel writing, should also caution against the facile juxtaposition of literatures within a multicultural society such as South Africa. Even if our position in history denies us an objective theoretical base through which to reconstruct voices from the past, we can neither speak *only* on behalf of the pre-historic shaman or the colonial travel writer, nor allow the textually embedded 'voice' of the *other*, (in this case the *land*), to be effaced or ignored.

Nor can the problematic *self-other*, (or *centre-marginal*), contention be sidestepped by focusing, as I have done here, on semiotic systems which on the surface avoid the possibility of sustained dialogue by engaging an *other* which by its very nature as landscape seems inherently silent. Even if that was the case, and it is not, the notion of alterity would simply be transferred to the difference of response to African space. Any postcolonial practice which ignores this dynamic, would disregard the polyphony of discourse in general, and ironically recreate precisely the self-referential authority claimed by colonial power. As a dangerously reactionary reading then, such practice would simply promote cultural separatism.

What the above suggestive exercise of Africa versus Europe then attempts to highlight is that in spite of surface appearances, both semiotic systems under scrutiny posit identical positions of power *vis-à-vis* the land, albeit by different means. Moreover, as exemplified by constant shifts of socio-political power, the *centre* which underpins the system also has to be seen as a contingent construction, which like the semiotic systems to which it pertains, always remains relational and contextual.

Does this then, in the context of cultural, political and societal flux, paralyse the individual as an agent of intervention? By subscribing to the analogy whereby Rorty (1991:218) compares 'distinctions between cultures, theories, or discourses' as differing 'grammars', one can respond that, similar to the way in which people are able to learn the grammar of a foreign language—or even acquire total proficiency in such a language—it must be possible for one culture to actually understand and creatively engage with another.

Only when keeping in mind that all discourse is inscribed and informed by a multitude of voices, can the binary opposition of *central* versus *marginal* collapse and reveal the positive, defamiliarising effect of juxtaposing culturally different semiotic systems. Such juxtaposition demands that oppositional and antagonistic elements be negotiated, (and not negated), and that a space be created for cultural 'translation and hybridity' (Ching-Liang Low 1993:187).

Critical awareness of the way in which these past semiotic systems bridge the nature-culture divide creates precisely such a space, and allows the *self—other* dialectic to be constructively re-explored. The notion of *marginal* versus *central* falls away as the contingent quality of power is revealed by the constructed authority of semiotic systems in general—a process which not only dislocates obsolete subject-object relationships, but also suggests common denominators for significant cross-cultural understanding.

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'//Kabbo's Intended Return Home' (1873) and *The Conversion: Death Cell Conversations of 'Rooizak' and the Missionaries—Lydenburg 1875*: Marginalised Early South African Testimonies

Helize van Vuuren

N-ka !xoë e //xara-//kam
(My place is the Bitterpits)
(Bleek 1911:298).

I

Stemming from increasing interest in Holocaust literature, 'it has been suggested that testimony is the literary—or discursive—mode par excellence of our times' (Felman & Laub 1992:4). Since November 1995 when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission started its work under Bishop Desmond Tutu, testimony has become part of the fabric of a South Africa trying to come to grips with its past. The efficacy of the healing power of this painfully slow process was recently remarked upon by dr. Sean Kaliski: 'It will take decades, generations, and people will assimilate the truths of this country piece by piece' (Krog 1997:5). //Kabbo and Rooizak's testimonies can be seen as part of the truths of South Africa's history. The contending voices and identities encapsulated in these testimonies illustrate something of the historical and sociopolitical tensions in this multicultural community.

Transcripts of //Kabbo, the Bushman convict's dictation in 1873 was preserved in English and in his home language, /Xam, by the German philologist Wilhelm Bleek in *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* (1911). The testimony of Rooizak, a Swazi labourer awaiting his death sentence in 1874, was recorded by the missionary Albert Nachtigal in German, and sent to Berlin after his death. A hundred years later Peter Delius found the document in the East Berlin archives and translated it into English. The story of Rooizak's conversion was annotated by the historian and published as *The Conversion. Death Cell Conversations of 'Rooizak' and the Missionaries—Lydenburg 1875* (1984).

The elderly /Xam man with three names—//Kabbo (meaning 'dream'), Jantje or /uhi-ddoro—spent July and August 1873 telling the frail, middle-aged dr. Wilhelm

Bleek his life story. After having spent some time in the Breakwater jail in Cape Town for stock theft, and then almost three years in the Bleek household in suburb of Mowbray with the sole purpose of dictating as much as he could of the narratives and customs of the almost extinct /Xam, //Kabbo was intent on returning home: 'Thou knowest that I sit waiting for the moon to turn back for me, that I may return to my place' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:299). He left a month and a half later for his 'place' at Bitterpits near Kenhardt in the north-western Cape. Two years later both of them had died.

In August 1874 a Swazi migrant labourer, called Rooizak, was arrested on a farm near Lydenburg in the northern Transvaal after a fight with a Pedi man called Majan. Majan died in the fight and although Rooizak protested his innocence claiming that it had been a fair fight, Rooizak was imprisoned. For five months he did hard labour in Lydenburg prison, till the court passed the death sentence in February 1875. For one and a half months he was kept in solitary confinement, awaiting the confirmation by the Executive Council of his death sentence. During this period he tried to hang himself in desperation, but was cut loose:

> it is a terrible thing to be condemned to death and to have to wait so long for execution. I wished to be dead but was stopped. I don't want to live on like this. I want to die now (Delius 1984:24f).

The German missionary Nachtigal started ministering to him, together with a mission convert who spoke Seswati, John Podumu. Nachtigal kept notes of Rooizak's spiritual development to send to his Berlin headquarters later. On 19 April the sentence was confirmed and after baptising Rooizak at 4 am on Thursday 22 April, he was led to the gallows and executed.

On a factual level the life testimonies of //Kabbo and Rooizak might seem not to have much in common except that they both originate from the end of the nineteenth century. Yet close analysis proves otherwise. They are both colonised subjects under colonial rule, waiting passively (the one to go home, the other for his death) and in the power of colonisers. In the interim they give their testimonies, locked up intimately with an interlocutor of another culture, speaking a different language—the one a German philologist, the other a German missionary. Both //Kabbo and Rooizak were illiterate. Their testimonies are, however, preserved in written form, after having undergone various processes of translation and mediation. Bleek spoke German and English and was still mastering the /Xam language.

II

In the case of both these testimonies there are interviewers or interlocutors (philologist and missionary) who elicit responses, and who mediate the testimony. In both

cases translation into a further language is part of the mediating process.

Stemming from increasing interest in Holocaust literature, 'it has been suggested that testimony is the literary—or discursive—mode par excellence of our times' and that 'films like *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann ... or *Hiroshima mon amour* by Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais, instruct us in the ways in which testimony has become a crucial mode of our relation to events of our times' (Felman & Laub 1992:4).

With literary studies becoming increasingly interdisciplinary it is not strange that more attention is focused on forms of cultural discourse such as testimony where one finds a 'superimposition of literature, psychoanalysis and history', or phrased differently, elements of the historical, the clinical and the poetical (Felman & Laub 1992:6,41). With reference to Holocaust literature Shoshane Felman remarks how

> The story of survival is, in fact, the incredible narration of the survival of the story, at the crossroads between life and death (Felman & Laub 1992:44).

This remark is equally applicable to the preservation of the /Xam narratives in the Bleek & Lloyd collections of 1911 and later—even with the cautionary reminder of the inevitable loss that must have occurred between transmission from the oral mode into the written, and the mediation processes which the material must have undergone at the hands of Bleek and Lloyd.

Felman and Laub describe the typical conditions of the 'testimonial process':

> there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an other—in the position of one who hears. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody (1992:70f).

Testimony also foregrounds the role of memory which is essential 'in order to address another' (Felman & Laub 1992:204) and 'to appeal to a community' (Felman & Laub 1992:204). What is normally testified to, is a 'limit-experience ... whose overwhelming impact constantly puts to the test the limits of the witness and of witnessing' (Felman & Laub 1992:205). The individual voice of the testifying witness also tends to represent an absent community on whose behalf the testimony is made.

Yet it needs to be stressed also that one must be careful to 'politicize the fact of trauma and to broaden, even universalize, the perspective of victimhood' (Hartman 1995:546) because human life itself can be seen as 'an endless adaptation to the "traumatizing" ... which persists from birth to death' (Hartman 1995:546). Hartman sees the relevance of trauma theory for literary studies in three elements: (a) the grappling with issues of reality, bodily integrity, and identity (1995:547), (b) it concerns

itself with 'disturbances of language and mind' which are central to literary preoccupations (1995:548) and (c) the entrance of the new ethical theory 'tries to break down the reproductive tyranny of the education system' (1995:549).

III

I would like to suggest that these testimonies can both be read as sites of conflicting cultural values. //Kabbo structures his narrative around a constant juxtaposition of 'here' in the Bleek household where he is forced to do 'women's work' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:301) and where the others (servants as well as Bleek family members) do not speak his language, and 'there' where he wants to 'sit among my fellow men' and listen to stories. Out of this juxtaposition comes his sense of alienation and yearning to end his last days amongst his own people. In Rooizak's story his incomprehension of the alien legal system and religious ideas suggests the missionary zeal of Nachtigal as an alienating imposition of one culture upon another.

Both testimonies have a prison experience as starting point and cause of trauma. In //Kabbo's case he feels as though he is living in exile. Rooizak's trauma is not only the fear of pending execution, but also the imposition of the evangelising fervour of the missionary, who constantly keeps harping on his sin and his awaiting fate.

'//Kabbo's Intendend Return Home' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:299-317) can be read as quintessentially a text expressing the typical psychological characteristics of the exile. He waits for time to pass so that he may go home: 'I sit waiting for the moon to turn back for me, that I may return to my place' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:299). In his imagination he travels to his home, so 'that I may sitting, listen to the stories which yonder come' (Bleek 1911:301). Then reality yanks him back to 'here' at Mowbray where he feels alienated, for 'I do not obtain stories; because I do not visit ... they do not talk my language' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:301). This leads him into another fantasy flight to his home and a description of what life is like under his people, the 'Flat Bushmen' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:301). They go to each other's huts, they smoke and tell stories. What //Kabbo is describing, is a sense of joyful and relaxed community—presumably what he misses most in Cape Town. He states: 'I feel this is the time when I should sit among my fellow men' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:303). As an old man, he longs to be with his own people to share communal life before he dies.

Tropes of travelling by road, and of movement then take over as he describes the journey which he envisages back up north. The description ends with the imagined arrival. In the fantasised arrival scene //Kabbo describes himself in the third person, suggesting 'Entfremdung' of the self:

> He will examine the place ... he may examine the water pits; those at which he drank. He will work, putting the old hut in order (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:305)

The visualised arrival ends with //Kabbo seeing himself in the third person as an old man ('he grew old with his wife at the place' Bleek & Lloyd 1911:307). Immediately hereafter he launches into a lengthy flashback. Here he switches back to the immediacy of the first person, and the passage reverberates with vitality as he describes himself:

> I felt that I was still a young man, and that I was fleet in running to shoot .... For, I was fresh for running; I felt that I could, running, catch things. Then, I used to run (and) catch a hare (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:309)

After the extended flashback //Kabbo reverts back to everyday reality, to 'here' at Mowbray. He expresses intense determination to depart soon: 'I do not again await another moon'. Now he talks about the boots and gun which Bleek promised him, and he is again conscious of his old age and past hardship:

> starvation was that on account of which I was bound .... For a gun is that which takes care of an old man .... It (the gun) is strong against the wind. It satisfies a man with food in the very middle of the cold (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:317).

//Kabbo's trauma is one of lengthy exile and what he describes in his testimony is the condition of exile, an important theme in South African literature of the apartheid era. The central trope in his narrative is that of the 'stories' which he misses, which represents communality and social life amongst his kindred. He juxtaposes himself as a fleet-footed, hare-chasing young man with himself as an old man, faced by starvation unless Bleek can send a gun to help provide for food in his old age. The silence in the text is the period of imprisonment at the Breakwater prison. The only reference to this ordeal is the euphemistic word 'bound' in the phrase 'starvation was that on account of which I was bound' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:317).

***

Rooizak's testimony is even more heavily mediated—first by Nachtigal and a hundred years later by Delius. Upon the missionary's first visit he asks how the prisoner feels. Rooizak formulates his sense of trauma thus:

> I am to be executed unjustly and I am filled with horror at the idea of having to die such a demeaning death (Delius 1984:21).

Nachtigal expresses his wish to minister to the needs of Rooizak's soul. His response is: 'I know nothing of this and I feel nothing for it, but I will listen to what you have to

say' (Delius 1984:21). It transpires in the conversation that Nachtigal has no interest in or comprehension of the African belief system which Rooizak describes

> Their spirits lived on after their deaths. They are here on earth. But they are capricious and have to be placated by sacrifices (Delius 1984:22).

Nachtigal tries to inculcate in Rooizak some concept of his deed as 'a grave sin' (Delius 1984:22) and that God is like a king who 'will forgive' (Delius 1984:22). Rooizak misunderstands the forgiveness and says, 'Then help me. I will gladly do anything to escape hanging' (Delius 1984:22). Soon hereafter he tries to hang himself in his cell. The trope of 'hanging' thus becomes central in the narrative. But he is discovered and 'from this time onwards ... he was chained' (Delius 1984:24).

On the missionary's next visit Rooizak eloquently describes the effects of solitary confinement (a central trope in South African prison literature):

> I cannot stand this fear any longer ... I am forced to sit here alone. My solitude tortures me and fills me with despair. Some days I sleep to still my mind but then my nights are spent in waking terror. How can they be so cruel as to keep me waiting so long for my death? (Delius 1984:25)

When next visited by Jonas Podumu (Nachtigal is said to be incapacitated by 'a bout of savage headaches' Delius 1984:29), Rooizak is exceedingly calm because of a vision that he has had: 'I dreamt that I was taken away to a beautiful land where, feeling weak and strange, I sat on an anthill' (Delius 1984:30f). He describes how Jesus appeared to him as a 'shimmering white person' (Delius 1984:31) who greeted him and told him to go back and 'behave well' (Delius 1984:31), suggesting a traumatised psyche, obsessed with ideas of guilt. Hartman remarks on the relation between trauma and dream that 'In literature especially, shock and dreaminess collude. Where there is dream there is (was) trauma' (1995:546).

Not content with the peace that has descended over the Swazi prisoner, both Podumu and Nachtigal proceed to badger him so as to test whether his newly professed Christian faith rings true. This hectoring in the name of Christianity seems particularly cruel and suggests torture more than anything else.

Upon confirmation of his death penalty we read that

> Rooizak was given alcohol to ease his shock. He became drunk and started to dance as best his chains would allow in the confines of his cell (Delius 1984:40).

Later he 'wished death to all whites'. When Nachtigal arrives the next morning Rooizak consciously introduces racial discrimination into the discussion: 'Isn't it unjust to sentence me to death in my absence? I am treated like this because I am black' (Delius 1984:40). The last vestige of resistance in him comes to the fore in the taunting question: 'why is God's word not observed when a white kills a black?' (Delius 1984:41). Thereafter he succumbs to the missionaries' ministrations and is baptised at dawn on the morning of 22 April. Echoing one of the dignitaries, Rooizak stated 'I will soon be in paradise' (Delius 1984:45) just before he was killed.

The whole traumatic process lasted seven months. Rooizak's testimony, like //Kabbo's, thus also entails a long waiting, it entails a journey—but a spiritual journey—from near death through attempted suicide back to life. Through the terror of solitary confinement and back into the momentary release of a vision, and then back to the painful interrogation by the missionaries, until eventually he finds release in death. In the intense dialogue between the Swazi prisoner and the evangelists nothing is more striking than the conflict between their different cultures, different justice systems, different customs and the absolutely powerless situation that Rooizak finds himself in. In spite of the heavily mediated nature of this text it is still one of the most striking South African testimonies of one man's trauma and spiritual torture. It also eloquently illustrates intercultural conflict in action.

IV

'To attack and damage the memory of a people means to attack its roots, put its vitality at risk', stated Ferrarotti recently (1994:2). No matter how mediated, or how often translated, in the marginalised testimonies of //Kabbo and Rooizak we find preserved memory as part of South Africa's history and conscience.

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James Barry's Corporeal Archive: An Hermaphrodite at the Cape

Lannie Birch

> Since today it is known that it is sometimes impossible to determine the true sex of a person from external characteristics alone, it is possible that Barry was a hermaphrodite (Kirby 1976:186).
>
> How then to expose the causal lines as retrospectively and performatively produced fabrications, and to engage gender itself as an inevitable fabrication, to fabricate gender in terms which reveal every claim to the origin, the inner, the true, and the real as nothing other than the effects of *drag* ...? (Butler 1993:318).

Balzac's gothic story *Sarrassine*, published in 1830 (Barthes 1975), reveals the narrative power of sexual ambiguity. The narrator seduces a mistress with the tale of the Frenchman, Sarrasine, who falls in love with an Italian opera singer, La Zambinella. On discovering that 'she' is a male *castrati*, Sarrasine laments

> To love, to be loved! are henceforth meaningless words for me, as they are for you. I shall forever think of this imaginary woman when I see a real woman.

Sarrasine is condemned to an awareness of sexual artifice, a knowledge with which he cannot live. La Zambinella embodies the constructed and illusory nature of femininity itself, which is the source of a mysterious aura. His existence accuses women of being fictions. This unsettles the possibility of romantic narrative as the only closure in La Zambinella's love story is precisely the revelation of his fabricated gender.

Fictions of duplicitous sexual identities, whether gay, transvestite or transsexual are a recurring theme in modern literature and media since the nineteenth century. James Barry, renowned as a surgeon and administrator of nineteenth century colonial medical institutions at the Cape, is the protagonist in a range of such fictions, which

pursue the question of whether Barry was man, woman or hermaphrodite[1]. His anatomy is enshrouded in stories which lay claim to his sexed body as both their motivating mystery, and their point of closure. Journalists and biographers 'deduce' the doctor's biology, from the documents of his history—colonial records, letters, popular accounts, medical hypotheses constructing a narrative in which all biographical background becomes secondary evidence to the primary question of his biological sex. The feminist diagnosis of Barry's womanhood wishes to vindicate a place for women in both history and science, whereas the medical approach demonstrates the powers of science to reveal the truth behind the anatomy of this 'feminine' medical man. But both approaches have the same aim. They point to the mutual construction of narrative pleasure and the 'scientific' exposure of the sexed body, a body lost in the weight of documents that order it[2].

James Barry is described in Gelfand and Laidler's *South Africa: Its Medical History 1652-1898* as 'one of the most outstanding medical practitioners to have ever practised in South Africa' and, they argue, 'one of the foremost social reformers' (Gelfand & Laidler 1971:132). He is famous for performing the first successful Caesarean section operation in British history in 1826 and for his influence on Cape medical institutions during his posting from 1816—1828. He structured and organised the makeshift existing colonial medical institutions, as well as prisons, leper colonies and food and drug dispensers[3]. But 'he' is also known in feminist biographies and in

[1] I take my license to treat Barry here as a 'fictional' protagonist partially from Hayden White's comments about the narrative similarities between 'scientific' forms of investigation (including *historical*) and works of the '*imagination*'. White acknowledges the obvious point that hypothetical or imaginary events interest the literary writer, whilst the historian is limited to observable events. But, as he notes, 'both the forms of their respective discourses and their aims in writing are often the same' (cf. White 1978:121).

[2] Barry's body can be read as a documented artefact, stored and ordered within the colonial, medical and journalistic archives. Foucault argues that history has become a process of insistent and self-conscious questioning and ordering of the document. The concern with the place of the record belongs to the impulse to create a 'continuous history' in the face of the decentering of origins inaugurated by the anti-theological nineteenth century theorists. Thus the archive itself substitutes the memory of origins, for '[c]ontinuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity ...' (Foucault 1972:12).

[3] Gelfand & Laidler thus devote one chapter to 'The Barry Period 1816-1826' and another to the topic 'Barry continues his Reforms'.

popular media[4] as 'the first woman doctor in the world' (Rose 1973). Burrow's (1965:80) medical history introduces the him as:

> one of the most romantic figures in the annals of medical history as well as an enduring enigma to all would-be biographers .... On his death ... Barry was found to be a woman or so, at any rate, states the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Taylor's *Medical Jurisprudence* refers to Dr Barry's case as one of the most extraordinary cases of concealed sex on record, and *The Lancet* of 1895 contains letters bearing the testimony of at least half a dozen high-ranking army officers (some medical) who had known personally that he was a woman. One had shared a cabin with him on a ship, another *had actually examined him* and been sworn to secrecy in Trinidad where Barry had a bout of fever ... a third had known him in Malta and yet a fourth as a student in Edinburgh, *where Barry was aloof, always refused to be drawn into pugilistic contests and habitually wore a long surtout.*

Since his death in 1865, popular anecdotes have appeared in the press delighting in the irony that this exemplary nineteenth century 'medical man' was a woman. These accounts tend to emphasise Barry's worldly demeanour, which seems to obscure a conflicted inner life. This anecdote, which appeared in *Personality* magazine almost a hundred years after his death, implicitly invests its cartoon protagonist with a 'personality':

> It was cool before dawn, that morning in 1817, for the south-easter blew strongly through the garden; but the small knot of people on the lawn did not notice it, for they were witnessing a duel.
>
> Back to back the two principals stood. One was good-looking, tall and broadshouldered; the other, short and slightly built, the rather effeminate face dominated by a large nose. Ill-matched physically, the equalising factor was the pistol each carried in his right hand ....
>
> The cause of the encounter was an incident a few days before. A pretty, buxom lady called to see the Governor on private business, and was closeted alone with him. Dr Barry, who was in the ante-room, was a priveleged person and a favourite of the Governor, but was also renowned for a sharp wit and a biting tongue. After the interview had lasted for some considerable time, Barry observed, in a sneering tone: 'I say Cloete, that's a nice Dutch filly the governor has got hold of ...'.
>
> Advancing on the doctor, he (Cloete) pulled Barry's long nose, saying: 'Retract your vile expression you infernal little cad ...' (Burman 1962:25).

[4] One relatively recent article describes Barry as 'the most eminent Women's Libber .... [She] was a Cape Surgeon who beat distinguished men at their own game, and, best of all, shut up about it' ('Snuff King was first Caesarean' *The Argus* Monday, November 11, 1974).

Barry's opponent was Captain Josias Cloete, aide de camp to governor Lord Charles Somerset at the Cape. Rumour has it that Cloete became a life-long friend of Barry's, and was heard to boast after his death that he was the only man in the British service to have fought a duel with a woman. Mr. McCrindle reports that Barry himself claimed he had killed a man in a duel, thus breaching his dandyish reputation[5]. The story magnifies the absurdity of the doctor's bravado, given his feeble physique. The mark of his masculinity is not his bodily stature, but rather the pistols and his sexual innuendo. But his 'vile expression' of male salaciousness reveals itself to be a feminine jealous pique once we discover that it was 'a woman who fought the duel'. The narrative implicitly resolves this offensive, petulant and absurd caricature of a 'gentleman' into a romantically self-styled woman, preserving her incognito through exaggerated belligerence[6].

It seems that Barry was seen as deviant by his peers. A placard placed in Dreyer's corner in Longmarket Street, insinuated an 'unnatural' homosexual relationship with the governor, referring to Somerset as 'Barry's little wife' (Gelfand & Laidler 1971:161)[7]. Commentators frequently refer to the untoward influence that Barry had with Somerset as 'mysterious', especially as their views diverged considerably on matters of public interest. Barry harangued officialdom about the neglect of hygiene

[5] Isobel Rae (1958:111) recounts that when Barry was in Jamaica in 1860 'he' told his friend Mr McRindle 'about a duel in which she had killed her opponent'.

[6] Barry stories tend to revel in his macho intolerance and bravado. One correspondent describes his arrest on St. Helena Island in these terms: 'He dared anyone to touch or lay a finger on him, so that the grim visages of the guard actually, so far as the rules of the service of their stiff leather stocks allowed, tittered at the little diminutive woman-man making use of such bombastic words. However, the upshot was that he would not give up his sword to anyone but the Governor himself, and they were actually obliged to get horses and rode up to Longwood, Dr. Barry's sword being buckled to his side as impudently as possible'. 'The Soi-disant Dr. Barry' in *The South African Advertiser and Mail*, 21/10/1865, p. 2, Col. 5.

Another anecdote typically emphasises his intolerance of fools. The next entry in the *Advertiser* recounts Barry's treatment of a clergyman who had requested the doctor to draw his tooth. He apparently sent a farmer in his place who reported to the reverend that he had been instructed by the doctor to 'draw the tooth of a donkey'. 'Dr Barry', in *The South African Advertiser and Mail*, 30/10/1865, Col. 3.

[7] A rhyme mocking Barry's 'unnatural' devotion to the Governor apparently sprung up in the 1820s: 'With courteous devotion inspired/ Barry came to the temple of prayer,/ But quickly turned round and retired/ When he found that *his* Lord was not there'. Cited in *The South African Advertiser and Mail*, 21/10/1865, p. 2, Col. 5.

and good diet and the misuse of the treadmill and beatings in the prison[8]. Gelfand and Laidler present him as relentless in exposing corrupt administrators, and his consequent commitment to a free press, tackling the Governor to reverse his order to suppress the *South African Commercial Advertiser*. Paradoxically, however, his 'deviant' influence makes sense if he is actually a woman. He mysteriously took leave in Mauritius in 1819, and as this is the only unrecorded period of his life, June Rose (1977:46) speculates that he may have left the Cape to have Somerset's child. This suggestion would make 'her' relationship with Somerset sexually 'natural', if taboo.

Accounts that name Barry as a 'woman' try to infer her motives from her biology and the more intractable record of colonial service. Olga Racster and Jessica Grove (1935), for example, create a fictional romantic narrative for the young, female doctor who flees to the colonies to escape an abusive husband. I have heard rumours that a Hollywood film is currently being produced that presents Barry as a liberatory and transgressive female cross dresser, taking on a male world. These accounts explain away his affected machismo and naturalise his hypermasculinity as a defensive feminine facade. More than this, however, they gesture towards the unknown histories, the feminine impulses and experiences, the stories uncovered by delving, through gender[9], for psychological depth within the external codes of his public identity.

I have suggested that as an administrator of the developing administrative and classificatory order produced for and magnified by colonial administration[10], Barry regulated the professional and the physical body by producing quantities of official documents, labels, lists and letters. But the mysteries surrounding his own body are symptomatic of the unsettling vacuousness of the document. Both June Rose and Isobel Rae cannot definitely establish her parentage, birth-date or familial relations. Rose suggests that Barry was the 'daughter' of Mrs Bulkeley, the sister of the artist, the elder James Barry (1977:18), who is in turn described as the child's uncle by Kirby (1970). Parentage becomes a key to the mystery of his sex. Rose (1977:20) implies

[8] Cf. Gelfand & Laidler (1971:190f). The authors describe the filth, disease and injury that prevailed in the prison when Barry inspected it in 1824, and Barry's continual complaints to the Governor about those responsible. He had to insist that no children be put on the treadmill with older people, as they risked rupture. He found prisoners without beds, with untended broken bones and insubstantial diet.

[9] I use the term 'gender' here, because commentators on Barry equate sex with gender, assuming for narrational purposes, that female anatomy would make Barry a 'woman'. However, following Butler, I regard gender as a performance, separate from biology. Accordingly I have used the pronouns for Barry that are appropriate to the particular discourses under discussion.

[10] Carlo Ginzburg (1980:27) points out 'to the link between colonial administration and the rise of classificatory techniques, such as the fingerprint, which was pioneered in Bengal in 1860'.

that the elder Barry's patron, the well known feminist Lord Raglan, Earl of Buchan, may have brought up his own illegitimate daughter as a boy in order to educate her. Rae (1958) found letters of introduction from the Earl of Buchan to the younger Barry in 1810/1811, which may lend support to this theory. Rose (1977:18) speculates further that the child was the offspring of the artist himself, or of her mentor, the South American revolutionary, General de Miranda—both men were known as womanisers and may have shared a common mistress. Despite these speculations, interest in the doctor's unknown origins is made to serve the 'mystery' of her sexual anatomy. The question of his birth date plays a similarly instrumental role. Rae (1958:2) dates Barry's birth to 1797, which would mean that she registered at Edinburgh University at the age of thirteen. The headstone on her grave gives her age as '71' making her birth date 1794. Rose believes that Barry was born in 1799. She makes the suggestive observation that in Barry's own statement of his date of birth in army records, the words are smudged 'as if she chose to be known only by her public persona' (Rose 1977:17).

Both the record of Barry's life, and the subsequent interest in his biological sex can be seen in the context of the 'disciplinary regime' of modern society, described by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978). Foucault suggests that the rising documentation of populations is part of an increasing control and regulation of human bodies, reflected by the obsessive interest in sexuality. Barry, born in a period where births are not recorded (Rose 1978:18), died in another episteme, where deaths are not only recorded, but require details about the individual corpse—not least of which is sex. The documentary and institutional regulation of populations in the nineteenth century generates an obsessive interest in 'individuality', but obscures the subjectivity signified by the marks of identity. As I hope to show in later discussion, it is the claim that Barry may be a 'hermaphrodite' that simultaneously gestures towards his uniqueness, and contains his otherness in a category that is, finally, not a mediator between the binaries of masculine and feminine, but a curious variation on masculinity[11].

In South Africa, Barry is recorded as a probable hermaphrodite in both *The South African Dictionary of Biography*, and the *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* as Kirby is the biographer for these texts. Rae, however, sees to it that the *British National Dictionary of Biography* registers Barry as a woman. Both draw their interpretations from the same documentary evidence. In the same way, anecdotes published in the wake of Barry's death were mostly drawn from a single source—the

[11] Marjorie Garber suggests that in tranvestism and increasingly among transsexuals, the conversion from a man to a woman does not threaten the signification of the penis but ultimately confirms its power to resist the prospective threat. It seems that the biological form of intersexuality, hermaphrodism, serves the same purpose for some commentators (Abelove et al 1993).

article 'Dr Barry: A Mystery Still', in Charles Dicken's magazine, *All the Year Round*. Fragments in the *South African Mail and Advertiser* and the *Kaffrarian Watchman* derive from this account, the rhetorical play of obfuscation and revelation:

> His Excellency spoiled him. He became a kind of tame imp, encouraged as amusing and harmless enough; but, like such imps, he took advantage one day of his position and was impertinent. He had the entree of the governor's private cabinet. One morning, sauntering in, he had the assurance to make some querulous remarks on an official document lying on the table. Finally he worked himself into such an offensive pet, that his Excellency resolved to give him a lesson; so, snatching the little fellow up by the collar of his uniform, he swung him over the window sill—a few feet above the grassy garden—and shook him. James screeched and cried peccavi. He was forgiven and never offended there in the same way again. Still, every one was persuaded that such *unwarrantable humours* as he exhibited were only tolerated by reason of certain influences that *remain a mystery at this day* (1867; e.a.).

These mysterious 'influences' that the writer refers to seem to be the same partially identifiable figures that provided the letters of introduction for Barry wherever he went. These letters, possibly those of Lord Buchan, or from a connection with the Somerset family, seem to have bought him the privacy that allowed him to keep his 'secrets', bypassing military medical examinations and gaining the governor's immediate support. What is interesting in this article, however, is that, despite the headline, the primary 'mystery' *is* resolved. The author claims that:

> news reached the registrar-general of the discovery [that the body is female], and he at once called for a report from the proper authority. The report was 'that after a post mortem examination, it was found that Doctor James, of her Majesty's service, was not only a woman, but had at a very early period of life been a mother!' (1867:2).

While the question of Barry's sex is solved, the 'mystery' of his double life is preserved, infecting his whole being, from his behaviour to his social networks. But to arrive at its closure, this story flouts the evidence that there was no official interest in Barry's sex and, intriguingly, no post-mortem.

On the 25 July 1865, Barry, at this point Inspector General of Hospitals, died in London of diarrhoea, caused by sewage problems in the city. The following day his death was recorded and his age entered as 70 years, his sex as 'male'. Sophia Bishop, the charwoman who laid him out, put her mark next to this record. She also informed Barry's doctor, McKinnon, that the body she had laid out was that of a 'perfect female'. Later that year, Doctor McKinnon wrote to George Graham, the Registrar-General, to give an account of his conversation with Sophia Bishop:

> She then said that she had examined the body and that it was that of a perfect female and further there were marks of her having had a child when very young. I then enquired 'how have you formed that conclusion'. The woman pointing to the lower part of her stomach, said from marks here (i.e. striae gravidarum). I am a married woman, and the mother of nine children and I ought to know.
>
> The woman seemed to think that she had become acquainted with a great secret and wished to be paid for keeping it. I informed her that all Dr Barry's relatives were dead and that it was no secret of mine and that *my own impression was that Dr Barry was a hermaphrodite.*
>
> But whether Dr Barry was male, female or hermaphrodite I do not know, nor had any purpose in making the discovery as I could positively swear to the identity of the body as being that of a person whom I had been acquainted with as Inspector General of Hospitals for a period of 8 or 9 years ... (in Gelfand & Laidler 1977:136).

In McKinnon's account 'identity' refers to the doctor's official title of 'Inspector General of Hospitals'. Similarly for Burrows 'the question of Barry's sex is unimportant, apart from providing human interest' (1958:81). P.R. Kirby suggests that the War Office held the same attitude. That it never officially denied that Barry was a woman is 'hardly surprising, since the matter must have been regarded there as quite unimportant ...' (Kirby 1965:233). Yet Kirby himself, and the medical historians, investigate the question in some detail. Having spent a good deal of energy proving that Barry was a hermaphrodite, Kirby concludes, paradoxically, that he was male. However he was

> unfortunately feminine in appearance. This handicap made him irritable and intolerant and yet he managed to become a 'distinguished medical man' (Kirby 1965:237).

His personal foibles, such as his peevishness, high voice, vegetarianism, white poodle and fondness for umbrellas, suggest his unique and individual sexual status, yet he remains essentially masculine. Kirby's conclusion dramatises the desire to both name indefinite gender and to disavow its significance as a question of private 'curiosity'.

Biological sexual definition, then, drives a narrative which seeks to close the gap between public identity and private character, the archival document and the mysterious and unfathomable history it indexes. Eve Sedgewick's work on the 'Epistemology of the Closet' (Abelove et al. 1993) suggests that in the twentieth century, homosexuality occupies this impossible space between the discursive fields that structure knowledge. The discourse of 'coming out of the closet', as she observes, is subject to 'contradictory constraints', in which

> the space for simply existing as a gay person ... is in fact bayoneted through and through, from both sides, by the vectors of a disclosure at once compulsory and forbidden (Abelove 1993:47).

This impossibility points to the fact that gayness is a matter of public concern, regulated by law, whilst the offence of 'coming out' is precisely that of speaking publicly about one's 'private' life. Whilst Barry himself seemed to be under no such discursive constraints, it could be argued that his body is[12].

Yet his colleagues decline to resolve the question by examining his body. Foucault's (1980) account of another hermaphrodite, Herculin Barbin, who died three years after Barry, forms a striking contrast. Barbin's body is scrutinised in detail by one doctor during her life, and at least three after her death in Paris in 1868.

In her own narrative, Herculin, or Alexina, is raised in several convents as a young woman, and is educated to be a school mistress. During her adolescent years, she has strong, unnamed feelings for her fellow students, later having an extended sexual relationship with her female colleague, Sarah. However, after an illness, a doctor discovers her genital anomalies, and she returns to her home town to be examined in more detail by her doctor, Chesnet. Chesnet decides that 'Alexina is a man, hermaphroditic, no doubt, but with an obvious predominance of masculine sexual characteristics' (Foucault 1980:128). It is the presence of ovoid bodies and spermatic cords in the divided scrotum that are the 'real proofs of sex'. Alexina, or Herculin, is then reclassified male at the age of 22. This ends her arguably lesbian relationship and sends her on a search for a man's work in Paris. After six lonely years of being unable to retain a job, or to master the codes of male existence, she commits suicide in a tiny room in Paris. As Auguste Tardieu describes the tragedy, this 'error' in civil status led Barbin to live for twenty years 'in the clothing of a sex that was not his own, at the mercy of a passion that was unconscious of itself' (Foucault 1980:122).

The doctors are unanimous in their agreement that the subject is male. As she is infertile, and cannot clearly be excluded from either sex, the question is how do they make this determination? Goujon, the doctor who performs the autopsy, notes:

> The formation of the external genital organs of this individual permitted him, *although he was manifestly a man*, to play either the masculine or the feminine role in coitus, without distinction ... (Foucault 1980:131; e.a.).

[12] Monique Wittig makes an analogous argument that the female subject is forced to speak her gender in language, whilst gender in language is rendered 'natural and invisible. As an ontological concept that deals with the nature of Being, along with a whole nebula of other primitive concepts belonging to the same line of thought, gender seems to belong primarily to philosophy .... It is no longer questioned in philosophy, though, because it belongs to that body of self-evident concepts without which philosophers believe that they cannot develop a line of reasoning and which for them go without saying, for they exist prior to any thought, any social order, in nature' (Wittig 1986:63f).

Moreover, the very identification of genitals becomes a problem, as male and female parts dissolve into metaphorical equivalents for one another. Both Goujon and Chesnet feel that the 'organ' could be an enlarged clitoris as well as a penis. Goujon's account makes an even more interesting unintentional parallel. He argues that her 'vaginal cul-de-sac is nothing other than the canal of the urethra'. Later, however, he describes the urethra as a 'vaginovulvar canal adapted to urine' (Foucault 1980:131).

The need to escape this self-referential descriptive world forces the doctors to assert difference, to choose one sex. As Goujon states, 'the fact is that *hermaphroditism does not exist in man and the higher animals*' (Foucault 1980:139; e.a.)—there are only malformations. As Foucault notes, hermaphroditism and the concept of a 'true sex' becomes the arena in which the body is forced to yield its meaning:

> Biological theories of sexuality, juridical conceptions of the individual, forms of administrative control in modern nations, led little by little to rejecting the idea of a mixture of the two sexes in a single body, and consequently to limiting the free choice of indeterminate individuals .... From the medical point of view, this meant that when confronted with a hermaphrodite, the doctor was no longer concerned with recognizing the presence of the two sexes, juxtaposed or intermingled, or with knowing which of the two prevailed over the other, but rather with deciphering the true sex that was hidden beneath ambiguous appearances. He had, as it were, *to strip the body of its anatomical deceptions and discover the one true sex* behind organs that might have put on the forms of the opposite sex (Foucault 1980:viii; e.a.)[13].

Perhaps the difference in the treatment of these bodies by their respective medical establishments can be traced to the different discourses that these two figures inhabit in their lifetimes. Barbin's story comes to light in her biographical account which she leaves as a suicide note. This tale can be read as a domestic novel, which combines aspects of gothic and sentimental fiction with a modern presentation of the mysteries surrounding sexuality and feminine desire. As Tardieu himself comments, Barbin's 'struggles and disturbances' are 'not surpassed in interest by any romantic novel' (Foucault 1980:123). In Barbin's case, the sensual charge of her cloistered upbringing with young educated and pious women acquires a new dimension. Her passionate, but in many ways feminine sexual responses are at once ethereal and erotic. This ambiguity is later figured in the clinical question of whether she has an 'imperforate penis' or

[13] Jonathan Dollimore also notes how 'An old and enduring model of sexual difference, developed most powerfully and resiliently by Galen in the second century AD, had stressed the homologous nature of male and female reproductive organs; women were said to have the same genitals as men, only inside rather than outside .... In the eighteenth century, this model gave way to another based on absolute differences of kind' (Dollimore 1991:251).

an enlarged clitoris; the impossibility of feminine desire, and especially desire for other women, is resolved by reclassifying her a 'man'. Scientific discourse tries to resolve the confusion of the narrator's deeply conflicting (but entirely 'normal' sounding!) struggle with her own sexuality and the narrator herself turns to scientific discourse to explain and contain the ambiguous story of multiple desire and complex biology[14].

In the eighteenth century, castrati and stage performers provoked general anxieties around gender instability. Jill Campbell observes,

> The arguments of the antitheatricalists ... had used cross-dressing as a paradigm for the moral dangers of the theatre, making gender the ultimate preserve of natural identity to be broached, in its most scandalous extremity, by theatrical impersonation, and setting up the theater as the forum in which the boundaries of gender might be tested (Campbell in Nussbaum et al. 1987:65f).

But late twentieth century criticism, especially that which has emerged out of gay and lesbian studies, has come to celebrate the performative nature of gender:

> If a regime of sexuality mandates a compulsory performance of sex, then it may be only *through that performance* that the binary system of gender and the binary system of sex come to have intelligibility at all (Butler 1993:318; e.a.).

And yet, if we follow Freud and Lacan, this performance is critical to our entry into subjectivity and language.

***

[14] The narrator frequently finds herself physically and emotionally moved by the presences of the women around her. Her first such moment takes place in her convent school, when, terrified by a thunder storm, she jumps into the bed of her teacher: 'When my first moment of terror had been allayed, Sister Marie-des-Anges gently called to my attention the fact that I happened to be naked. Indeed, I was not thinking of it, but I understood her without hearing her.

An *incredible sensation* dominated me completely and overwhelmed me with shame.

My predicament cannot be expressed ....

A total confusion reigned in my thoughts. My imagination was ceaselessly troubled by the memory of the sensations that had been awakened in me, and I came to the point of blaming myself for them like a crime ...' (1960: 32f).

What is interesting is that her affections for her fellow students and teachers are tolerated and enjoyed; they seem to be simply an exaggerated version of how the cloistered girls treat one another emotionally and physically. Yet for Barbin, her emotions only make sense with the hindsight about the cause of her unspeakable passions.

> Do we truly need a true sex? With a persistence that borders on stubbornness, modern Western societies have answered in the affirmative. They have obstinately brought into play this question of a 'true sex' in an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures (Foucault 1980:vii).

Recent criticism has become increasingly concerned with the epistemological and ideological implications of gender difference (and its destabilisation) in Western thought since the Enlightenment. Nancy Armstrong argues that the Enlightenment breeds a new woman who is the 'guardian and guarantor of private life' and thus becomes 'the first example of modern psychology' (Armstrong & Tennenhouse 1987:11). Her work suggests that conduct literature produced a woman whose femininity resides in moral depth, rather than the surface glamour of the aristocratic woman. The household, a marriage of this private femininity with a public, active, progressive masculinity, helped to

> generate the belief that there was such a thing as the middle class well before one existed in any other form (Armstrong & Tennenhouse 1987:12).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to interrogate the philosophical and ideological significance of gender division, this link between the household and both modern government and the modern idea of the subject suggests some of what may be at stake in defining a 'true sex', and with it supporting both an epistemology and a bureaucracy generated within and productive of the public/private divide[15].

In the stories of James Barry and Herculin Barbin, hermaphrodism can be regarded as a trope that figures and resolves the anxiety around the threat to a stable, 'true' sex. It offers scientific substance to the hollowness of a gender discourse that cannot account for the contradiction between the doctor's masculine identity and his feminine body, or Barbin's complex subjectivity in which his woman's body experiences 'masculine' desire. The 'mystery' surrounding James Barry seems to stem from his gender but permeates his biographical record. His body itself could not resolve this mystery (Kirby 1976:186). In an era when medicine is enthralled by the biological possibilities of sexual ambiguity, the medical establishment refused to examine his body, perhaps knowing it would be futile to interrogate a body belonging to the im-

[15] Cf. also Kaja Silverman (1992), who argues that modern western ideology is founded on the 'dominant fiction' that the phallus, the transcendental signifier which comes into being through a threat (that of castration) is commensurable with the penis.

penetrable, masculine world of examiners and classifiers. Perhaps the true mystery here, figured as sexual anomaly, is the irredeemable gulf between public code, and the private 'self', the classified body and its lived intensities. Thus as Kirby (1976:186) puts it:

> Since today it is known that it is sometimes impossible to determine the true sex of a person from external characteristics alone, it is possible that Barry was a hermaphrodite.

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Cetshwayo kaMpande in Zulu Literature

N.N. Canonici & T.T. Cele

There is a very large *corpus* of literature that could be regarded as 'marginal' in South African terms, because it is not accessible to the majority of readers, being written in African languages. This is not a healthy situation for a country that professes multilingualism as one of its greatest assets. In an effort to break the barriers erected by language limitations, this paper presents one of the most popular figures in Zulu literature, namely king Cetshwayo kaMpande, the last independent Zulu monarch.

According to Harold Scheub (1985:493), modern Zulu literature has developed along two main directions, reflecting two great concerns: the glories of the historical past and the problems caused by the infiltration of western religion, education and ways of life.

> These two broad areas of early literary activity were to combine in the 1930s in imaginative literature, thereby producing the crucial conflicts which have profoundly concerned southern African writers for decades: the urban, Christian, westernized milieu versus the traditional African past.

These conflictual directions often take the form of tradition versus innovation; of deep humanistic values versus their obliteration in the industrialised society, of rural versus urban setting.

The historical figure of king Cetshwayo can be seen as the ideal personification of such dichotomy, as he lived it in himself and in the people he ruled. Pushed by events that represented the inexorable tide of history and which were perceived as bearers of revolutionary innovations over which he had scant control, he felt power slipping through his fingers, and made a determined effort to barricade himself in the fortress of tradition, which he tried to revitalise. The oral poet describes him as obstinate and self assured, with appellatives such as *uNdondelakuyalwa* (He who is reluctant to take advice), *uSalakutshelwa* (Who refuses to be told) and *uSalakunyenyezelwa* (Who refuses to be warned). While many of his subjects went along with him and his ideals, several felt the futility of his efforts, while outsiders, namely the colonial government, considered him as an anachronism to be ruthlessly disposed of and moved

out of the way. His resistance gave rise to the tragedies that culminated in two separate, but linked, wars: the 1856 battle of Ndondakusuka, where he fiercelessly fought for the affirmation of his right of succession and decimated the Zulu army in the process thus mortally weakening the nation; and the 1879 Anglo-Zulu war which, after alternate fortunes, saw the complete demise of the kingdom.

Cetshwayo's life

He was born in 1827 to Mpande and Ngqumbazi, allegedly lobola'd by king Shaka on behalf of the Zulu nation, therefore Mpande's *uNdlunkulu* or chief wife. He is supposed to be the heir to Mpande's clan, and to his kingdom once Mpande becomes king in 1840 with Boer support.

Various events in his youth reveal that he is brave and that he is being groomed for kingship.

After 1853 Mpande begins to fall under the amorous spell of Monase, a wife given him by Shaka, who was believed to be pregnant with Shaka's child, Mbuyazi. Mpande favours Mbuyazi for the kingship, against the advice of his councillors who uphold the traditions regarding succession, and begins to slander Cetshwayo's character. He lays several traps to place Cetshwayo in disfavour with the people. Eventually there is open war between the two princes, that culminates in the bloody 1856 battle of Ndondakusuka, where the whole army of Mbuyazi is destroyed and Mbuyazi with five of his brothers is killed.

Mpande begrudgingly accepts Cetshwayo as his heir, and the prince begins to effectively rule the kingdom because Mpande can no longer move about.

1872: Mpande dies, cursing Cetshwayo: 'Your kingdom will be very brief because of your lack of respect for your father!'

1873: Theophilus Shepstone (Somtsewu) crowns Cetshwayo king of the Zulu and imposes the so called 'coronation laws', according to which Cetshwayo must respect the borders with Natal and must avoid bloodshed.

The main events of Cetshwayo's reign:

The disobedience of the girls from the iNgcugce regiment, when they are forced to marry the men from the iNdlondlo regiment who are about 15 years older. Several girls are murdered.

The Boers' occupation of the Zungeni land on the northern border without the king's permission. Cetshwayo cannot accept this. Shepstone promises to intervene on his behalf with the Natal government, but then changes sides when it becomes expedient to appease the Boers after the annexation of the Transvaal republics. Mbilini

kaMswati carries out a disturbance campaign against the Boers with Cetshwayo's tacit consent.

The murder of the adulterous Sihayo's wives on Natal soil by Sihayo's son, Mehlokazulu.

In December 1878 the Natal government reacts fiercely by sending an impossible ultimatum according to which:

- Cetshwayo must pay 600 heads of cattle in reparation;
- He must hand over Sihayo and Mehlokazulu for trial in Natal;
- He must stop Mbilini's guerrilla attacks against the Boers;
- He must re-instate the white missionaries expelled from Zululand;
- He must disband all his regiments, thus destroying the kingdom's social organisation.

The king is furious at these conditions and, after vain attempts at conciliation, declares war to defend the physical and moral integrity of his kingdom. On Bishop Colenso's (Sobuntu) advice, the army is instructed to fight a defensive war and not to cross the Natal borders.

On 22 January 1879 The Zulu *Impi* surprises the British army at the Sandlwana hill and utterly destroys it. This is perceived as one of the most glorious moments in Zulu history. Some Zulu regiments, however, pursue the fleeing British, against Cetshwayo's orders, and are annihilated at Rorke's Drift. Another Zulu army defeats the British at Hlobane. The British obtain reinforcements from overseas and defeat the Zulu at Gingindlovu and then finally at the capital, uLundi. Cetshwayo is taken prisoner and sent to Cape Town in exile. The colonial government takes control of Zululand and divides it into 13 chiefdoms warring among themselves. Cetshwayo obtains permission to visit Queen Victoria in London in 1883 and is returned to a divided and subjugated Zululand soon afterwards. He cannot accept the substantial restrictions on his movements and power, as he is now a British vassal. He dies quite mysteriously in 1884, under suspicion that he might have been poisoned by the British.

There are seven major works in modern Zulu literature that portray events that happened during Cetshwayo's time. Two major historical dramas, *Mageba Lazihlonza* (The dream has proved itself, by B.B. Ndelu 1962) and *Izulu Eladuma eSandlwana* (The storm that thundered at Sandlwana, by C.T. Msimang 1976) are not considered here as they deserve a much deeper analysis. They should be the object of separate papers. The works to be considered here are: two of B.W. Vilakazi's poems: *Kalani maZulu* (Weep, you Zulu) in *Inkondlo kaZulu* (1935) and *NgoMbuyazi eNdondakususka* (Concerning Mbuyazi at Ndondakusuka) in *Amal'Ezulu* (1945); the work of the two Dhlomo brothers, i.e. H.I.E Dhlomo's English drama *Cetshwayo* (1937) and R.R.R. Dhlomo's historical novel *UCetshwayo* (1952); a novel by Hlela & Nkosi, *Imithi*

Ephundliwe (Stripped trees 1968), and a drama by M.A.J. Blose, *Uqomisa Mina Nje Uqomisa Iliba* (By wooing me you woo the grave 1968). Muntu Xulu's 1969 novel, *USimpofu*, deals only marginally with fictional events that took place during Cetshwayo's reign and the king's figure is not outlined at all; it is therefore excluded from this analysis.

Due to the proximity of the historical period, to the availability of western historical sources that had a vested interest in portraying the king as a monster, and to the high level of emotions evoked by the simple mention of Cetshwayo's name among the Zulu, it has to be expected that the vision expressed in fictional works will result ambiguous, and that the authors will represent our character either as the hero who fought to preserve the kingdom and its ways of life, or as the villain who, through blind obstinacy, caused the downfall of the nation and all it stood for.

Cetshwayo's figure in B.W. Vilakazi's poems

Vilakazi is considered the father of modern Zulu poetry. His poems were written during the 1930s, a critical phase for the black people of South Africa, characterised by racial atrocities and wide-spread misery. While a number of black leaders vigorously tried to oppose the oppressive segregational laws, the general populace seemed exhausted by constant in-fighting and by the seemingly hopeless situation in which they found themselves. Vilakazi, who felt elevated to the rank of national bard by his poetic inspiration, reflected at a distance on the reasons for his people's plight. He looked at historical events with the benefit of historical hindsight, and judged them globally as either beneficial or damaging to the process of national progress. Rather than in violent resistance to the oppressors, he saw national salvation in the preservation of traditional values and in modern education. Any loss of life is therefore condemned as pointless and cruel. The poet sees the great battles of Ndondakusuka and Sandlwana as unmitigated national tragedies, in spite of the fact that the Zulu showed great valour. In the two poems, *Khalani maZulu* and *NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka,* Vilakazi formulates strongly-felt judgements on the two battles and their protagonists. They destroyed the Zulu nation, which still mourns the brave young men who perished there. Vilakazi's poems may be considered as a romantic externalisation of the despondent popular feelings which possibly prevailed at the time of writing.

A call for national reconciliation

Vilakazi's poem *Khalani maZulu* can be considered a call for national reconciliation. It was composed on the death of Solomon kaDinuzulu (1933), the king who had tried to re-establish unity among the Zulu chiefdoms, had erected the Nongoma school to train chiefs' children in the ways of peace and progress through education, and had

founded the *Inkatha kaZulu* cultural movement. Vilakazi calls for a national awakening to pursue the aims of peace and reconciliation set out by the deceased monarch.

Vilakazi is, to some extent, a poet in the tradition of the *imbongi*. The subject of his poem is 'praised', or rather, 'appraised', in terms of his ancestry and of his actions. This gives the poem historical depth and relevance. The poet offers a multifaceted portrayal of the good and bad characteristics of the subject. In terms of his ancestors, Solomon is praised for continuing and developing the positive plan of peace and harmony set out by his father Dinuzulu when he signed a peace treaty with Pretoria. His grandfather Cetshwayo, however, is especially remembered for the fratricidal battle of Ndondakusuka and for the hurried venture of the Anglo-Zulu war.

Vilakazi has absorbed and developed the tenets of romantic poetry, whereby a person is considered a hero with a high degree of human qualities, who has, however, to constantly suffer a tragic fate. The character that fits this description is not Cetshwayo, but Mbuyazi, the young prince slain in the senseless Ndondakusuka battle. He thus becomes the incarnation of the tragic fate of the suffering black, which is further represented by the humiliation of the Zulu royal house. The tragic element is also reconstructed through the wailing of Zulu women, who lament their fallen husbands and sons, like the women's chorus of a Greek tragedy.

When also Cetshwayo is portrayed as the tragic hero, his tragic flaw is seen in not recognizing that fratricidal fights would lead to the weakening of the nation, at a time when only absolute unity would have afforded the strength necessary to withstand the threats of foreign interference. This tragic flaw becomes even more noticeable when he rushes into war against the British, although he knows that he can not win. Even though some battles were won, thus restoring Zulu national pride, the war was lost, and so was Zulu independence.

The oral bard had also expressed the popular fear of a war against the whites:

UMzingeli kaShaka benoDingane,
Uz' uzingel' ubuy'ubuye nganeno mntakaNdaba,
Ngaphesheya kukhon' abaMhlophe;
Uze wesab' imiland' emidala,
Eyayenziwa ng' oyihlo
(Cope 1968:219 lines 73-77).

Hunter descended from Shaka and Dingane,
Hunt and return, keep on this side [of the Thukela], son of Ndaba,
Across the river are the white people;
Be fearful of old wounds and grudges,
Caused by the actions of your forefathers.

The internecine destructive war among the Zulu factions culminated at Ndondakusuka where the flower of the nation perished, thus opening the way for the whites to steal the Zulu inheritance.

Nibon' ukuth' amankonyane
Osapho lukaMlungukazana
Asencel' izinkomazana
Ezazimiselw' abantwana
Benzalo kaSenzangakhona (Vilakazi 1935:25).

Can't you see that the calves
Of the despicable white man's race
Are sucking dry the milk-cows
Which were destined
For Senzangakhona's children?

Vilakazi scolds the opposing factions for causing irreparable harm to the nation. They should have united against the national enemies rather than destroying each other, thus top-slicing the flower of the Zulu youth, the hope for the future.

Seniyakhohlwa yin' ukuthi
Nathi nibhixana bukhomo,
Nichithan' eNdondakususka,
Nafa ningashiye miphako
(Vilakazi 1935:25).

Have you truly forgotten
How you destroyed one another,
Utterly wasting each other at
Ndondakusuka,
Letting death triumph on a barren future?

The poet mourns for Mbuyazi and the Zulu princes killed by Cetshwayo. Their bones cannot be distinguished from one another, and Mbuyazi, the prince who had taken into his hands the fortunes of the Zulu nation, cannot be given proper burial, as his bones cannot be found. The poet appeals to the Zulu to listen, at least, to the cries of the mothers who searched in vain for the remains of their loved ones on that harsh plain.

As if the blood poured at Ndondakusuka were not enough to bring the nation to its knees, Cetshwayo later hurried into a bloody war against the British. The futility of this all out war is demonstrated by Cetshwayo's Pyrrhic victory at Sandlwana, where thousands of Zulu perished.

Vilakazi blames Cetshwayo for thoughtlessly taking Sihayo's side and thus rushing into the Anglo-Zulu war, which proved the last straw that finally destroyed the Zulu nation.

He believes that only through peace and education can real progress be achieved. Cetshwayo is thus compared to Dinuzulu, who, rather than waging war, signed the peace treaty, and to Solomon, who worked within it to establish unity in a positive way.

In spite of his negative judgement on Cetshwayo, with a bold metaphor that speaks volumes, the poet stands in awe in front of the king's figure as he contemplates the irreparable loss of his departure from the historical scene:

> *Kwaf' inyon' enkulu,*
> *kwabola ngish' amaqand' ezikaQwabe*
> (Vilakazi 1935:25).
>
> When the great bird died, even the
> eggs of the Qwabe nation became rotten.

Inyon/ enkulu, the great mother bird, is Cetshwayo; *amaqanda* are the eggs, the seed of future generations; *Qwabe* refers to the Zulu nation, since Zulu and Qwabe were brothers. Once the great mother bird that brooded over and protected the Zulu nation has gone, it is the end of the future: the eggs remain unproductive, they rot out: all hope is destroyed.

Mourning for Mbuyazi's disappearance

In the poem *NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka* Vilakazi joins a number of Zulu writers in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s in presenting the evil effects of *ubuthakathi*, or witchcraft,

The poet highlights again the tragedy of Ndondakusuka, where so many young Zulu lost their lives together with Mbuyazi, a prince that constituted a link between the Zulu nation and its founder, King Shaka. Mbuyazi is presented, however, as the victim of Manembe's black magic rather than of Cetshwayo's heroism. The poet accuses Manembe, Cetshwayo's *inyanga,* for defeating Mbuyazi and his iziGqoza through his powers of *ubuthakathi* (witchcraft), when he was able to steal Mbuyazi's shield for Cetshwayo to kneel on and thus bring utter defeat on his iziGqoza.

The first stanzas are in quotation marks, as if they were Mbuyazi's words. The prince spurs on his iziGqoza in spite of the tremendous opposition they are facing, namely, Cetshwayo's uSuthu regiments, the rising Thukela river and Manembe's sin-

ister power. Thus it is both human and superhuman powers fighting on Cetshwayo's side.

Witches, such as Manembe, do not simply kill a person, but destroy also his life-chain, his essence, as corpses are used for evil medicines. Normal burial allows a person's life to continue in the world of the *amadlozi* (ancestor spirits), but witchcraft makes this impossible, and the deceased is condemned to wander about for ever. He cannot, therefore, become an *idlozi*, he has no life. Hence the poet's desperate search for Mbuyazi's bones and those of his companions. The Thukela river, whose waters are supposed to be life-givers, knows nothing about those bones, as witnessed by the river animals questioned by the poet. The prince has not been assumed into the world of the *amathongo*, or spirits, either, as the poet carries his search into the moon, the stars and the planets. Nothing and no-one can be found able to point to this valiant prince and his retinue. Their death was, therefore, a complete loss, a supreme waste of young lives. This image powerfully stresses the futility of Mbuyazi's life and that of his comrades in arms, and of the evil battle that put an end to it. The witchcraft of Manembe has obtained its purpose: to divide the nation and to destroy a sizeable section of it, by fomenting hatred among the brothers. Vilakazi regards the death of Mbuyazi as a historical catastrophe for which Cetshwayo and Manembe should be called to account.

H.I.E. Dhlomo's Drama *Cetshwayo*

Although this drama is written in English, it can be considered as Zulu literature in a wide sense. In fact, Dhlomo is a Zulu by birth, writing about Zulu historical events and projecting the Zulu point of view, in a language filled with Zulu idiomatic expressions and in a style that reflects the imagery found in traditional Zulu literature. The writer intends to reach a large audience, and to present the reasons for the present plight of the Zulu, and of all the Africans in this country. The drama was written in 1937 and circulated in manuscript form. It only appeared in print in the collected works of H.I.E. Dhlomo, edited by Nick Visser and Tim Couzens in 1985. *Cetshwayo* is regarded by some critics as the most important and the most interesting of Dhlomo's plays, as he demonstrates the ability to handle western dramatic techniques.

The drama is sealed between two tragic events: the report of the death of Mbuyazi at Ndondakusuka, and Cetshwayo's own death at the hand of John Dunn, the British patriot who comes to represent the strangling forces of the colonial system against which Cetshwayo was forced to fight in order to preserve his kingdom.

The initial setting is crucial: a messenger brings the news of Mbuyazi's defeat to some women working in the fields. The ensuing wailing for the slain prince is like the lyric chorus in a Greek tragedy, and shows the pain that war has caused, and all to

satisfy Cetshwayo's *hubris*, or wanton insolence, as he has fought to ensure the throne for himself. People are terrified by the war, by the fear that Cetshwayo's reign might be characterised by bloodshed, and by the fact that the two princes' fight demonstrates the deep divisions in the nation.

Cetshwayo's *hubris* does not stop there. He shows an obstinate enmity towards his father, whom he blames for selling the nation to the whites, both materially and spiritually. Materially, by satisfying their hunger for land; spiritually, by allowing white missionaries to work in the kingdom thus subverting the minds of young people with western ideas. He is ambitious to ascend the throne while Mpande is still alive and to redress his father's mistaken policies.

His greatest antipathy is naturally reserved for the whites: he expresses a fierce antagonism against the colonists, and especially against Shepstone, whom he would like to see dead. John Dunn had made it known that he wanted to become a Zulu. His conversion to Zuluness was however only superficial, to suit his own lust and interests. He is seen as a pawn in the machinery of British imperialism that is eventually to destroy Cetshwayo. He represents the false friendship of many whites who outwardly spoke kindly of the Zulu king, but inwardly were completely unsympathetic to his cause. They, in fact, cannot achieve their objectives as long as the great defender of the Zulu is alive. To this group belong Lord Chelmsford, the British general, and a number of white missionaries.

The great oppositions that delineate the terms of the conflict are thus identified: Cetshwayo is determined to fight for the independence of his territory and for the preservation of Zulu customs and traditions. The British (Shepstone and John Dunn) intend to subjugate the Zulu kingdom under the excuse of the civilising mission of the British Empire, but practically because they intend to extend the Empire. Cetshwayo's war victories become hollow, but he still resists, until he is killed, while uttering a final challenge to the whites, reflecting the powerful image in Cetshwayo's *izibongo* quoted above.

Cetshwayo has enemies also among his own people, in the persons of Hhamu and Zibhebhu, who plot his downfall for personal gain. They hate him for killing Mbuyazi, and claim that he has become very arrogant and insolent since his Ndondakusuka victory. They really want a form of independence with British support.

It is interesting to note Dhlomo's portrayal of Cetshwayo in relation to women, who play a major role in this play. His mother, for whom he shows great respect in *Mageba Lazihlonza* (1962), does not appear at all. The harsh attitude towards the girls of the iNgcugce regiment, later shown in the play *Uqomisa mina-nje uqomisa iliba* (1968), is hinted at here, when Cetshwayo forces a number of women to marry Dunn so as to strengthen the Briton's ties with the Zulu kingdom.

And yet it is the women that give the hero a human dimension: Cetshwayo

earnestly woos Bafikile, but she, like the women in the initial scene, is scared by the threat of bloodshed that hangs over the nation. Cetshwayo does not listen to her plea for moderation, and does not care about his own wife's jealousy. The king's obstinacy thus causes problems in the nation and in his own family.

When Cetshwayo's passionate anger gives way to a more realistic mood and he advances the idea of solving problems by negotiation, his councillors advise him that the Zulu army is itching to go to war. The king must not worry; he must simply declare war and the ancestral spirits will be pleased to fight on his side. Cetshwayo's anger is further aroused by the colonists' claim that he should obey the king of England. He decides to take the final plunge and declares war, to the great acclaim of his army.

In the European camp, in the meantime, Harriette Colenso tries in vain to persuade Shepstone to view Cetshwayo in a positive light. She and her father are great sympathisers of the Zulu nation. Shepstone, seeing that Bishop Colenso might constitute a threat to his ambitions over the Zulu, asks him to leave politics to the politicians. At the same time a message is received that a tragedy has befallen the British army at Sandlwana.

The moment of final recognition of the forces allied against him comes at the following battle of uLundi, where Cetshwayo is utterly defeated by the British. He feels betrayed by people very close to him. When Bafikile sees him in a desperate state, she cries endlessly, thus reinforcing the theme that it is the women who are left to mourn over the dead heroes. The white imperialist wrench tightens. During an audience with John Dunn, who is accompanied by Zibhebhu and other armed men, the king is fatally shot by the Briton. *Hubris* has been vindicated, the whites' plot to destroy him and his kingdom has been brought to completion. Although the Dunn's shooting incident is not traceable in history, it dramatically portrays the Zulu suspicion that Cetshwayo was murdered by the British, probably by poisoning, since they had plotted his downfall all along. With his last breath, Cetshwayo heroically and defiantly tells Dunn: *'Ugejile'*, 'You have missed!'. Cetshwayo's word means that, in spite of their apparent victory, the British have failed to crush the spirit of the Zulu kingdom.

In *Cetshwayo,* Dhlomo proves that great tragedies are the stuff of real life, and that a competent writer can create one in any setting, even in Africa. He applies Shakespeare's dramatic theories, at times twisting historical details, so that his play can be seen as a classic example of tragedy in an African milieu and with a very distinctive African flavour.

The work can be considered a political statement on the times of its writing. Blacks were severely oppressed and dehumanised by whites. Political freedoms were denied, the African voice was constantly ignored, no matter how reasonable or authoritative it was. Even the missionaries who stood up for the Africans were sidelined

and unceremoniously told to leave politics alone. All the whites wanted to hear was their *raison d'état*, all they cared for was their own commercial and financial interest. But the African spirit cannot be crushed. Cetshwayo's murder is the sign of the utter degradation of the white man's system of government. His blood is the seed of new life, and marks the dawn of a new era of freedom.

Cetshwayo (1985) is also a reflection of Dhlomo's life experience. His relationships with his white superiors on the mines were very strained. He felt that his intellectual abilities were not appreciated, but were rather abused and destroyed because he was a black person. Due to the stress he suffered, he became addicted to alcohol which would eventually lead him to the grave. He blamed the socio-political situation, and his white superiors, for his ills, thus identifying with Cetshwayo's plight.

R.R.R. Dhlomo's *UCetshwayo* (1952)

The two Dhlomo brothers wrote about Cetshwayo for different purposes. While Herbert set out to write a tragedy, Rolfus wanted to produce an account of the king's life that is only marginally fictionalised. He wanted to set the records straight about the events in Cetshwayo's life. He thus contests the accuracy of information given by white historians by interpreting them from the point of view of the victims, i.e., the King and the Zulu nation.

UCetshwayo (1952) follows Dhlomo's journalistic method of telling a separate story in each chapter, without following a strict chronological order. But, with regard to his sources, he clearly collected information from Zulu people who had known Cetshwayo in person. He is thus able to follow an independent approach to the events and to forcefully take issue with several misconceptions of Cetshwayo disseminated by colonial officials and other writers. The criticism levelled at his earlier historical novels on the Zulu kings made him distrust stereotyped sources about the history of black people. *UCetshwayo* (1952) is a strong vindication of a national figure, with powerful arguments against the slanderous interpretation of the king by the British, who had betrayed him in order to pursue their expansionist schemes.

From the very beginning, Dhlomo (1952:1) highlights the reasons of the conflictual views about Cetshwayo: we should not be surprised that he suffered the way he did because he was made regent in 1857 when Mpande was unable to move as he had grown too fat, and then ascended the throne after his father's death (1872) during a difficult historical time. The problems were the result of Mpande's policies, as he had given the whites large land tracts as a form of compensation for their support in gaining the kingdom. Cetshwayo not only disagrees with his father's policies, but he is also faced with the problem of unlawful occupation of land by whites. Dhlomo also believes that Mpande's curse might have contributed to Cetshwayo's flaws, al-

though he maintains that Mpande was completely irrational in this. The only fault that the author attributes to Cetshwayo is the appointment of John Dunn, a former fervent friend of Mbuyazi, as a chief, with dire consequences during the Anglo-Zulu war.

Dhlomo is however adamant that many of the criticisms thrown at Cetshwayo are completely unfair and irrational since they are just sweeping and unsubstantiated assumptions.

> *Kepha kukho konke lokhu kasilizwa nelilodwa izwi nesenzo esenziwa nguCetshwayo esikhomba ububi bakhe nokukhohlakala kwakhe* (Dhlomo 1952:13).
>
> But out of all this, we do not hear any word or action done by Cetshwayo which shows his perversity and corruption.

Dhlomo (1952:10) also points out that Cetshwayo ascended the throne while Mpande, who had bitterly opposed him, was still alive, and that his father's hostility was caused by the jealousy of a father who feared that his son would demonstrate greater leadership qualities than himself.

Dhlomo fights the perception that Cetshwayo is a cruel killer. Whites have maintained that no Zulu king ever killed on legal grounds, and they have used minor incidents to discredit Cetshwayo. On the sensitive point of the iNgcugce girls' rebellion, our author argues that Cetshwayo was simply pursuing a trend set by his father when he gave the iNdlondlo permission to marry the iNgcugce regiment. Before Mpande's death, many regiments had been given permission to marry, and Cetshwayo was simply continuing the tradition. Dhlomo denies the allegations that Cetshwayo killed a large number of iNgcugce girls for defying his directive. He states that, according to eye witnesses, not more that ten girls died during the operation. What shocked the nation was not the number of girls who died, but the young women's defiance of the king's order, because they thought he would not be able to take strong action against them as a result of the coronation laws laid down by Somtsewu.

Another incident blown out of all proportions is Cetshwayo's unsuccessful attempt to stop the fight between *amaMboza* and *iNgobamakhosi,* which resulted in the death of about seventy men from the two regiments. According to the British, these incidents proved Cetshwayo an incapable leader. They accused him of deliberately provoking the fight because he enjoyed seeing his people kill one another.

To the British Cetshwayo is a fearsome monster. They take control of the Transvaal in fear that Cetshwayo may have ambitions over it. Once they have ensured the Boers' loyalty to the British-led confederation, they fear that they could be in danger of being destroyed by Cetshwayo. Dhlomo however portrays Cetshwayo as a peaceful king who seeks to negotiate before venturing into a fight. For instance Cetshwayo

asks Somtsewu to place British settlers between the Zulu and the Boers especially in the Zungeni area, because he is afraid that conflict might arise between his people and the Boers. This sounds a rational plea, which Somtsewu deliberately ignored.

The whites further regarded Cetshwayo as a warmonger who encouraged other black populations to rebel against the British sovereignty. According to Dhlomo (1952:37) Somtsewu complains that Sikhukhuni has come to blows with the British because he has been befuddled by Cetshwayo. The king is also held responsible for the endless fights between the British and the Xhosa, which were, however, endemic.

Cetshwayo is compared neither with Mpande nor with Dingane but with the founder of the Zulu nation, king Shaka. He is a great experimenter who tries to restore and repair the damage to the Zulu culture that had occurred during the reign of Dingane and Mpande. As a prince living during a time which is completely different to that of Shaka, he does his best for the nation, at least if compared to Mpande and Dingane. Even Somtsewu in 1873, during the coronation ceremony, stated that Cetshwayo was the best among all African leaders with whom he had had dealings.

Dhlomo makes Cetshwayo appear as a peace lover who fights only if war is forced on him and in the aftermath seeks to establish peace with his opponents. Cetshwayo is no longer an evil planner: even Frere, the British commander in Natal, is surprised as to why Cetshwayo, after destroying the British army at Sandlwana, does not attack the defenceless Natalians while they are waiting for reinforcements from Britain.

According to Dhlomo, Cetshwayo believes in a fair fight, and that people should be killed only in battle. He refuses help from a Thonga doctor who offers to supply him with *umuthi* (destructive medicine) to poison the water and thus destroy all the British. Cetshwayo turns down the offer because his intention is to fight and defeat the British in battle not to annihilate them.

The Zulu army sustained a large number of deaths at Rorke's Drift and Hlobane. According to Mehlokazulu (Dhlomo 1952:71), Cetshwayo had warned his army not to cross the Thukela to Rorke's Drift. Again at Hlobane, he warned his general, Mnyamana, not to allow his army to attack the British in their camp, but the opposite happened.

From the battle of Sandlwana to the return of Cetshwayo from exile, about eleven thousand Zulu soldiers lost their lives. After the kingdom was dismembered, the Zulu suffered horribly under the authority of the thirteen appointed chiefs. Even the Boers demanded the return of Cetshwayo because there was more bloodshed than during the king's rule. This proved that the British were wrong in their assumption that people were unhappy under Cetshwayo's reign. As a matter of fact, Cetshwayo even established the Ekubazeni homestead to shelter people who had been smelt out by *izangoma* as dangerous witches. This means that Cetshwayo was not a blood-thirsty

tyrant who killed on barbaric grounds. The Zulu know that Cetshwayo had tried to re-establish the might of the kingdom, something they were longing for. He was thus able to fire the people's patriotic imagination, and he was loved and supported throughout his life. When the king went into hiding after the destruction of his uLundi homestead, many people were tortured and even killed, but no one revealed his whereabouts.

He held no grudge when he was in exile in the Cape. When he was visited by Sobantu (Colenso) and his daughter, he asked about many people in Zululand, both friends and enemies, such as Hhamu, Zibhebhu and John Dunn. In England, Cetshwayo explained that he would not be able to live with John Dunn as a neighbour since he had destroyed him in all respects. Cetshwayo sustained both physical and spiritual wounds after the destruction of the people of note by Zibhebhu in 1883.

Dhlomo tells the story of how Cetshwayo's *inyanga*, Manembe, through his powerful magic had contributed to Cetshwayo's victory at Ndondakusuka, by stealing Mbuyazi's shield for Cetshwayo to kneel on. Later, Cetshwayo and Manembe quarrelled because of Manembe's son's death while serving at the king's palace. Manembe accused Cetshwayo of acting abominably: the king should have informed him, and he would have tried all means to heal his son. He then boasted that while Cetshwayo had won the Ndondakusuka battle through his magic, he had let his son die. Seemingly the king's advisers called for Manembe's death, fearing that he would try to kill Cetshwayo through his magic. A group of people was sent to kill Manembe. Before he died, he cursed Cetshwayo that his rule would not last for killing the person who had put him on the throne. Dhlomo argues that although Manembe's accusations angered the king, it was the people around him who thought the king in danger and disposed of Manembe.

Dhlomo's portrait is therefore a positive reconstruction of this central figure in Zulu history.

Cetshwayo in two 1968 fictional works

The year 1968 sees the death of king Cyprian kaBhekuzulu, and the rise of chief Gatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi to the leadership of the KwaZulu homeland. One of his first actions is to try to revitalise the cultural movement *Inkatha kaZulu*, which will later be transformed into a liberation movement to oppose the ANC and eventually into a political party.

Two fictional works on Cetshwayo are published in 1968: the novel *Imithi Ephundliwe* (Stripped trees by Hlela and Nkosi) and the drama *Uqomisa mina-nje uqomisa iliba* (By courting me you may court the grave by M.A.J. Blose). Both works present a rather negative view of Cetshwayo's reign, in spite of the rehabilitating work of R.R.R. Dhlomo.

Both works intend to encourage a deep reflection on the historical events dur-

ing which they are written: Hlela and Nkosi's novel, by stressing and exaggerating the cruelty during Cetshwayo's life, seems to sound a warning: 'Don't push the Zulu glorious past too far: it was not all glorious and clean, and we might not be prepared to return to it wholeheartedly!' Blose's drama seems to emphasise another important point: Chief Buthelezi's policies are read, by commentators, as political expediency and a half-hearted way of co-operating with the apartheid government. Political expediency caused Ngqengelele, the heroine's father in *Uqomisa*, to betray his own daughter and to murder her lover. Is this then worthy, in spite of the consequences it may bring to one's family?

The stories are fiction, not history, and they portray negative aspects of human behaviour as symbols of what might happen in reality. History provides the actual facts, while fiction provides universal interpretations that make the facts relevant and meaningful for those who are able to read between the lines at the particular time the works are written.

Imithi Ephundliwe (1968)

Hlela & Nkosi's novel is a slightly fictionalised account of the Anglo-Zulu war. The reason they find for this national disaster is Cetshwayo's obstinacy and unmitigated cruelty. The novel portrays Cetshwayo and his cronies in a completely negative way, which inspires no sympathy for them. For instance, Cetshwayo's favourite scout, Mehlokazulu, is depicted as a murderer, a wicked and cruel person. He kills Sihayo's wife because she talks slanderously about him to the lady he woos. Cetshwayo and those around him are openly blamed for causing a war which took thousands of people's lives.

There are a number of hair-raising incidents that go against any historical record or widely held ulu customs, such as the one ragarding the Natal messengers sent to request that the murderers of Sihayo's wife be brought to the colonial government. They are brutally killed on Cetshwayo's own instruction:

> *Babambeni nibakhiphe amehlo. Bayonuka amakhala indlela ebheke konina abalungu, boncela bajuphulule imibele yendelelo. Izinja lezi! Babambeni! Ngithi babambeni! UJama yini' Babambeni!* (Hlela & Nkosi 1968:12)
>
> Catch them and gauge out their eyes. They will smell the way back to their mothers, the whites, they will suck dry the teats of insolence. These are dogs! Catch them! I say catch them! I swear by Jama! Catch them!

This episode would run contrary to the Zulu custom that *Isithunywa asoni* (A messenger is not responsible for his message), and is not based on any historical record.

Cetshwayo is portrayed as a raging and superstitious maniac who kills a lunatic for pointing at him with a bone. He is disrespectful, as he calls Somtsewu a mere person, disregarding his official position. He spits on the white man who comes to arrest him after the defeat of the Zulu army. And yet, the king's arrest leaves the nation leaderless and dismayed.

The king is deeply upset by the various defeats suffered by his army after the Sandlwana victory. He believes this is the result of the death of his doctor Manembe who has been swallowed by a python. He blames the defeat at Rorke's Drift on the insubordination of Zibhebhu, who ignored the king's warning not to cross the Thukela to pursue the whites. At Hlobane, another great battle not described in other Zulu works, the Zulu army valiantly engaged the British, putting up the last desperate fight to save king and country.

It is difficult to contextualise Hlela & Nkosi's darkly negative portrayal of Cetshwayo. In their preface the authors clearly state that what they write is not history but fiction. Perhaps they might have felt that, from such a negative picture, there could emerge the positive message that fighting against whites was useless and that only a maniac would engage in such an enterprise, when the law enforcement forces were so strong.

Cetshwayo in M.A.J. Blose's *Uqomisa Mina Nje Uqomisa Iliba* (1968)

The play, *Uqomisa Mina Nje Uqomisa Iliba* (By Courting Me You are Courting the Grave) (1968), considers a series of events that depict Cetshwayo as an unreasonable tyrant, ready to force his will on the innermost feelings of his people, namely feelings that concern the choice of a marriage partner. In fact, it deals with the king's order to the iNgcugce regiment to marry the men from the iNdlondlo regiment. Disobedience to the king's command may mean death, as the title clearly implies. The play poses the honerous question of how far can the state go in imposing its demands, when they infringe on individual freedom? Could the cruelty that surrounded black people in the late 1960s, the fights between ANC, PAC and Inkatha, which all claimed to be fighting for a better dispensation for the blacks, be justifiable? Are political interests above individual rights?

The iNgcugce's disobedience is construed as a precedent capable of disturbing the king's running of the country's economy, because it was through the regimental system that he was able to balance the country's population with the country's economy, by allowing only certain regiments to marry at any given time, and to impose fines on the transgressors in order to raise cattle for himself and the nation. As a token of appreciation, the king paid *lobolo* for the regiments who offered their services, which were greatly beneficial to the king and his family, because they did a number of jobs,

including: 'building military kraals, planting, reaping and making gardens for the king' (Webb & Wright 1978:80).

When Cetshwayo ordered the iNgcugce regiment to marry the iNdlondlo, he expected to be obeyed. Attitudes were however changing. The influence of the white colonists, and especially the coronation laws that restricted Cetshwayo's ability to enforce his will, echoed in people's minds to the extent that the iNgcugce girls felt able to challenge the established mores.

The play opens with the nation's astonishment at the iNgcugce's resistance to the king's order. The assembly is blazing with indignation and calls for the death of the iNgcugce, while the king complains that his power is being curtailed by the white authorities.

Most of the characters in the play are angry with the girls who seem to jeopardise the king's reputation. The problem with some of the girls is that they have already secretly chosen their lovers. This group is exemplified by the two main characters, Nontombi and Maqanda, who are deeply resentful of the king's command. They do not want to even consider breaking up their relationship. Nontombi's father, Ngqengelele, a royal councillor, knows that the young suitors' disobedience reflects negatively on his loyalty to the king, and therefore takes drastic action against Maqanda whom he regards as a rotten young man who undermines the king's word. Ngqengelele is prepared to show that his loyalty to the king overrides concerns for the harmony of his family. The two lovers try to escape to Natal. Unfortunately, they are caught by Ngqengelele and his men as they are about to cross the Thukela river. Maqanda is killed by Ngqengelele and Nontombi drowns herself after seeing her lover dead.

The question remains: who is to blame for the death of the two lovers? Ngqengelele kills Maqanda out of political expediency. Cetshwayo is angry that his word is defied by the iNgcugce. This incident takes place under the hostile watchful eyes of the British, who expect him to respect the coronation laws to put an end to wanton murders. The girls dare disobey the king's order on the grounds that the ways of the heart must be followed, and that the king has no right to enforce this traditional practice.

The girls know that the king's wings have been clipped by the Natal government, which also encourages his opponents to cross over to Natal. This freedom makes it difficult for Cetshwayo to enforce tradition in the ways his predecessors had done. The king complains that he is unable to punish wrongdoers in his own country, because, when he tries, they flee to Natal where they are welcomed as they reinforce the picture that the Zulu kingdom is brutal while the Natal government is benevolent.

Blose makes Cetshwayo responsible for the death of the iNgcugce girls. Dhlomo had explained how this incident had been blown out of all proportions by the Natalians in order to disgrace Cetshwayo in the eyes of overseas people, and to reinforce the

sentiments that the kingdom should be brought under the 'civilizing rule' of the British empire. In the play, Cetshwayo does not order the girls' massacre; he only expresses his anger at the iNgcugce's disobedience. His elders interpret this as a sign that he wants them to take revenge on the girls.

In this romantic drama, the reader's sympathies go to the two main characters, Nontombi and Maqanda, whose love relationship is forbidden by the nation and is consequently obstructed by their parents. They know that pursuing their love could mean death, and they accept the challenge, as it is stated in the title, 'By choosing me you [may] choose the grave'. Maqanda is prepared to die for Nontombi, and this promise is fulfilled at the end. Nontombi then chooses to follow her lover in death rather than betraying his memory by accepting to marry someone else.

Blose's drama regards the lovers' death as symptomatic of the national tragedy faced by the youth of that time. The iNgcugce regiment's rebellion casts a slur on Cetshwayo's reputation, portraying him as a hardened king who does not care for his people's lives. The death of these two characters makes the reader reflect on the validity of the whole body of tradition, when it seems intended to strengthen the hand of the privileged classes to enforce ways that disregard the rights of the lower classes. And one should perhaps further reflect whether the obstinate approach to tradition shown by Cetshwayo as a defence against innovation was really worth the costs that it requested from the people at large.

A Zulu proverb runs: *Kofa abantu kosal'izibongo* (People will die but their praises shall survive). The fact that Cetshwayo is remembered through his deeds is an honour, no matter how bad or good he was in life. After nearly a hundred years Cetshwayo was still alive in the people's memory to the point that his portrayal could fire their imagination.

Conclusion

The paper clearly shows that Cetshwayo's figure is very popular in Zulu literature, especially in that section of it that reflects on past history in order to shed light on the present situation. The last independent king's memory is enshrined in the *Izibongo*, published by James Stuart in the 1920s. Stuart's books served as school readers for various generations, and fired the imagination of many young scholars, among them, the writers presented in this chapter.

Since Cetshwayo's achievements are rather recent, it is probable that some of the early writers had heard about them from people who had served under the king. The feelings expressed by *Izibongo*, by the oral traditions and by the current writers could be roughly divided into two sets: those that idealised the king as the last bastion of defence against the invading whites, and those who imbibed the notion that

Cetshwayo was a fearful and angry monster who put everything at stake in order to preserve his authority.

Apart from Rolfus Dhlomo's anecdotal narrative, which should be considered more a popular history than a novel, the other works are all fiction, and they reflect on only a limited number of events. What they say about Cetshwayo must not be taken as history but as fictitious re-creations for artistic purposes. Thus Herbert Dhlomo's drama emphasises the conflict between Cetshwayo and the white colonists, to the point that John Dunn is made responsible for the king's death. Vilakazi reflects on the weakness of the Africans of his time and places the responsibility of it at Cetshwayo's door, especially due to Ndondakusuka. Blose considers the plight of rural women who are still subjected to parents' arranged marriages and makes the episode of the iNgcugce regiment an extreme example of the practice.

R.R.R Dhlomo felt there was a need to forcefully reconstruct the history of Cetshwayo as he believed that many people, including academic writers, were hopelessly misled. According to him, the two incidents in Cetshwayo's life (the Ndondakusuka and Sandlwana battles) reveal the king's commitment to a just society, as he was a hero who only fought to defend his people.

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Imagining Empire's Margins: Land in Rider Haggard's African Romances

Lindy Stiebel

> To a criticism concerned with mapping the exclusions and affirmations of an imperialist culture whose legacy has still not been spent, these same texts can be made to reveal both imperialism's grandiloquent self-presentation and those inadmissible desires, misgivings, and perceptions concealed in its disclosures (Parry 1993:238).
>
> Is it possible that landscape understood as the historical 'invention' of a new visual/pictorial medium, is integrally connected with imperialism? (Mitchell 1994:9).

To understand how a culture imagines its world both 'home' and 'away' one looks to its literature. In late nineteenth century England, at the height of Empire, with a third of the world's lands under its domination, literature was for most Europeans the only way to visualise the heat and dust of India, the snows and icebergs of Canada, the game-filled plains of Africa; in other words, Empire's margins. Together with other post-colonial theorists, Edward Said has commented on the interconnectedness of nineteenth century British culture and the policies of imperialism, and since the novel was the dominant literary form of the time, it became central to an understanding of both. Said writes:

> ... the novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other ... imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other (Said 1994:84).

What is interesting for the post-colonial critic in making a study of a writer of Empire and how s/he imagines his or her world, both familiar and foreign, is to study the subtext, the slippages and cracks that underlie the superficially seamless surface of imperialist discourse:

> What criticism can recover, through dismantling the plural discourses and reconstructing the displacements and erasures, is the effaced historical context and unrehearsed enunciations of the anxieties in the conquering imagination, both necessarily repressed by the exigencies of ideological representation (Parry 1993:224).

It is in the revealed anxieties that the dynamics of power can be traced: in the repeated need to reconfirm dominance over the Other in narratives of the time, to proclaim success over foreign peoples and lands, to achieve one's goals—material or psychological—and to return home.

The lands of Empire, the 'rival geographies' as Said (1994 xxii-xxiii) names them, act as screens on which to project these anxieties and desires that underlie the dominant discourse of Empire. If the novel is central to nineteenth century English culture, so is land—both physical and imaginary—to imperialism. At a fundamentally basic level, imperialism is about the invasion, conquering and securing of land belonging to or settled by others. Land, arguably even more than its indigenous inhabitants, acts as the imaginative arena within which the imperial drama is played out. For those at 'home' in England, novel writers had above all to represent a localised landscape which helped their readers move from a vague perception of space to a recognisable place on the map of their imagination.

The facilitators of such a process were the explorers and scientists who were the first Europeans to gaze upon these foreign lands in the years prior to their assimilation within Empire, but in the late nineteenth century it was popular novelists such as Henry Rider Haggard, the subject of this paper, who crystallised the representations or 'word pictures' of the imperial landscape for the domestic market. Their task was to bring the 'ideological geography' of these distant lands 'into the boundary of the known and the British' (Hofmeyr 1980:200). Rider Haggard, son of Empire and popularly known as the 'Kipling of Africa', captured in his romances more than any other writer of his time, the quintessential British image of Africa's lands.

All his life, Haggard, the son of a Norfolk farmer and subsequently a farmer himself, placed his faith in the land and it was the land in South Africa that left an indelible mark on the impressionable youth. Higgins (1981:19) writes on this point, 'The scenery so impressed him that he always believed Natal was the most beautiful country [sic] in the world', though in his autobiography Haggard (1926.I:59) described the allure for him of Africa's landscapes more accurately: 'There is little of what we admire in views in England, but Nature in her wild and rugged grandeur'. It was the wildness of African terrain as opposed to the domesticity of English farmland that captured him. He elaborated on this contrast through his alter ego, Allan Quatermain:

> ... I longed once more to throw myself into the arms of Nature. Not the Nature which you know, the Nature that waves in well-kept woods and smiles out in corn-fields, but

> Nature as she was in the age when creation was complete, undefiled as yet by any human sinks of sweltering humanity. I would go again where the wild game was, back to the land, whereof none know the history, back to the savages, whom I love ... (Haggard 1995:12f).

Haggard had first hand experience of South Africa on three occasions, most notably the first lengthiest stay as a youthful member of Sir Henry Bulwer's staff in Natal, and then as an ostrich farmer near Newcastle, from 1875—1881. His encounter with the African landscape was of the sort to encourage such exhilaration as expressed above: he went riding and hunting, and accompanied Sir Henry Bulwer on his official tours of Natal. He kept copious notes of all he saw including details of Zulu customs and language for he was deeply impressed by the Zulu people whom he found to be dignified and hospitable, 'the Romans of Africa', led by Cetshwayo whose 'manners, as is common among Zulus of high rank, are those of a gentleman' (Pocock 1993:21). Haggard's belief that all people are some part savage, with 'civilisation' acting as a more or less successful veneer, helped him escape the worst excesses of racism. Haggard's admiration for the Zulus and love of African land are all of a piece for he saw the former in terms of the latter. Thus, when the Transvaal was handed back to the Boers, after the shock British defeat by the Zulus at Isandlwana in 1879, Haggard wrote bitterly:

> The natives are the real heirs to the soil and surely should have protection and consideration ... we have handed them over without a word to the tender mercies of one, where natives are concerned, of the cruellest white races in the world (Pocock 1993:51f).

In 1879 Haggard left Shepstone's administration, having risen to the position of Master and Registrar of the High Court, to go ostrich farming with his wife of a few months and a friend, Arthur Cochrane. His farmhouse, Hilldrop, was Haggard's first domestic, familial place in the wider, untamed African space. It reappears as Mooifontein in *Jess*:

> It was a delightful spot. At the back of the stead was the steep boulder-strewn face of the flat-topped hill that curved around on each side, embosoming a great slope of green, in the lap of which the house was placed ... All along its front ran a wide verandah, up the trellis-work of which green vines and blooming creepers trailed pleasantly, and beyond was the broad carriage-drive of red soil, bordered with bushy orange-trees laden with odorous flowers and green and golden fruit (Haggard 1900:22).

It is the colonialist's dream: an oasis of 'civilisation' planted with flowers and fruit,

both familiar and unknown, set on a vantage point overlooking illimitable lands open to the gazer's eye. The 'lap' of the slope in which the farmhouse is based, and the 'embosoming' hill are also characteristic of Haggard's sexualising of African landscape which will be discussed more fully later in this paper.

Though the ostrich farming was not financially successful, Haggard and his partner Cochrane worked very hard at earning a modest living through brick making and selling hay. Haggard's beloved only son was born on the farm, but the family decided to leave South Africa after the British defeat by the Boers at Majuba in 1881 only a few miles away from their farm. Though this departure marked the end of Haggard's longest and most formative experience of Africa, the impressions gained were to last him a lifetime of romance writing:

> It is impossible to overestimate the effect of South Africa on Haggard and his writing. Witnessing the confrontation between British colonialism and the Zulu people caused him to reappraise and define his thinking about the fundamental issues of sex, politics, and religion with which he would struggle in his future novels. The physical environment supplied the raw material for a thousand varied landscapes of the imagination (Etherington 1984:2).

Lilias Haggard (1951:172) said of her father 'For Africa he was always homesick' which is a telling phrase for it implies that, in a psychological or spiritual sense, Haggard felt a desired rootedness in African soil where he lived for only 6 or so years out of a lifetime based in England, his physical, hereditary home.

A major consequence of his stay in South Africa were the romances set in Africa which he subsequently started to write. Published in 1885, his third novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, struck gold and was reprinted four times by December. In its first year it sold 31, 000 copies which made it one of the biggest sellers of that year, and it has never been out of print since (Ellis 1987:100f; Cohen 1960:95). Similar spectacular sales figures were run up by his next few novels: *Allan Quatermain* written in the summer of 1885, *Jess* written in the autumn of the same year, and *She* written between January and March 1886. Haggard's continuing fame as a writer rests on these African romances, together with those written up to *Nada the Lily* in 1892 (*Maiwa's Revenge* 1888; *Allan's Wife* 1889). Thereafter, it seems as if Haggard's spell of almost compulsive writing is broken. Although he wrote at least ten more African romances, besides his novels and romances set in other parts of the world, none has the power of the pre-1892 ones. The sales figures of the early African romances indicate that Haggard had struck a deep chord in the late-Victorian reading public. Late-Victorian fears and desires, both sexual and imperial, found expression in their pages, particularly projected onto the landscapes:

> Therein lay the secret of Haggard's enormous popular success and the reason for his African settings. In Africa ... the beasts which Victorians feared to encounter in themselves could be contemplated at a safe remove (Etherington 1977:196).

It is of importance that Haggard chose the romance as a vehicle to convey his vision as certainly , the romance with its grand dreams of wish fulfilment, its deeds of heroism and its binary opposite, the fear of failure, of dark menace from without suited the late nineteenth century British mood well. Africa, in particular, the last unknown space on the map to be colonised provided a suitable site for romantic dreaming for a home nation undergoing quite considerable domestic changes. Fredric Jameson (1975:158) links the romance to society in transition:

> Romance as a form thus expresses a transitional moment ... its contemporaries must feel their society torn between past and future in such a way that the alternatives are grasped as hostile and somehow unrelated worlds ... the archaic nature of the categories of romance (magic, good and evil, otherness) suggests that this genre expresses a nostalgia for a social order in the process of being undermined and destroyed by nascent capitalism, yet still for the moment coexisting side by side with the latter.

Frequently in his African romances, Haggard sounds this nostalgic yet contradictory note. There is nostalgia for an Africa untamed and unknown yet ripe with promise, and yet this nostalgia contradicts Haggard the imperialist who encouraged the settlement of the colonies by Englishmen, who stressed the mother country's 'civilising' role in the land. The following passage taken from *Allan's Wife*'s introductory dedication to Arthur Cochrane, Haggard's friend and farming partner in South Africa, strikes this note:

> Perhaps they [these pages] will bring back to you some of the long past romance of days that are lost to us. The country of which Allan Quatermain tells his tale is now, for the most part, as well known and explored as are the fields of Norfolk. Where we shot and trekked and galloped, scarcely seeing the face of civilised man there the gold-seeker builds his cities. The shadow of the flag of Britain has, for a while, ceased to fall upon the Transvaal plains; the game has gone; the misty charm of the morning has become the glare of day. All is changed (Haggard 1951:v).

Published in 1889, following the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and also after the relinquishing of the Transvaal, including the precious goldfields, back to the Boers, Haggard's tone is understandably sombre. What Haggard regrets is the loss of freedom to roam the land, a pre-industrial dream now curtailed by the onset of mining capitalism.

This contradiction lies at the heart of the imperialist's desire to imagine Empire's margins: on the one hand, Empire was about information gathering, laying secrets bare by mapping, naming, classifying and yet on the other the attraction of the colonies lay in their ultimate unknowability, their secrecy. The imperial romance set in Empire's far flung dominions depended on this duality of the knowable and therefore predictable and yet unknowable and uncertain. Haggard realised this in a rhetorical question he once posed: '... where will the romance writers of future generations find a safe and secret place ... in which to lay their plots?' (Etherington 1984:66). Haggard's coupling of 'safe' and 'secret' highlights the romance's survival only whilst spaces of secrecy persist. It is a short step from references to secrecy and secret selves to Frye's (1957:193) statement:

> [t]ranslated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality, but still will contain that reality.

This, in a nutshell, defines the desire of imperial romance: to show the hero triumphant over land and people but without eliminating the thrill of risk and danger, the great unknown. This is perhaps the reason for Frye's (1976:57,168) labelling Haggard's adventure tales 'kidnapped romances' for 'they represent the absorption and integration of the conventions of romance into the culture of imperialists abroad' (Low 1993:197). To destroy the source of anxiety is to remove the impetus for the romance in which the hero has to have an Other (land, people, animals) to prove himself against:

> A paradoxical tension between risk and control remains at the heart of adventure. Without risk, there can be no adventure, but since both gain and loss remain possible outcomes, excessive risk may cause the experience of excitement to give way to anxiety. Adventure in the modern sense is balanced between anxiety and desire (Dawson 1994:53).

Because desire and anxiety are so finely balanced in the quest romance, the happy ending often embraces a denial of fulfilment, a 'happy pessimism' whereby though 'Man seeks a distant, passionately desired ideal: often, he is happiest when he fails to find it' (Fisher 1986:63). Haggard frequently uses this ending as in, inter alia, *She* (1887) where a truly happy ending is impossible, in *Allan's Wife* (1889) which ends with a bitter-sweet vision of the dead Stella, and *The People of the Mist* which ends with what could be Haggard's (1973:363) motto: 'To few is it allowed to be completely miserable, to none to be completely happy'.

A 'happy pessimist' accurately describes Haggard's romantic hero, Allan

Quatermain. Structurally, the imperial romance required a masculine, virile hero to pit his strength against many odds. The masculinity of the romance is a result of the 'gendering of genres' (Low 1993:190) whereby the imperial romance became an almost exclusively male preserve: not only is Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) dedicated to 'all the big and small boys who read it' but Quatermain assures his male readers that there is 'not a *petticoat*' to be found between its covers (Haggard 1992:9). Despite his masculinity however, Quatermain is not a typical romantic hero in Frye's terms. Frye (1957:188) associated the romantic hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigour and youth whereas Quatermain is an odd mixture of these. His first appearance in *King Solomon's Mines* shows him as a hunter-trader of fifty-three but, if not youthful, he is vigorous as his actions prove, though modestly self deprecating. Quatermain represented for Haggard an unencumbered, free, adventurer spirit linking him to an African landscape in which he found his most compelling inspiration.

In Frye's seminal work on the romance, *The Secular Scripture: a study of the structure of Romance* (1976), he describes the romantic hero moving within a 'mental landscape' (1976:53)—the rest of this chapter will begin an exploration of what one can call Haggard's 'African topography' using this structure. Frye's mental landscape is arranged in a vertical perspective on four levels: at top is heaven, below that Eden or earthly paradise, then the world of earthly experience and at the lowest level hell or the demonic world, usually below ground. The two levels above that of earthly experience represent an 'idyllic world' which is associated with happiness, peace, sunshine; whereas the level below that of earthly experience is termed 'the demonic or night world' characterised by 'exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation and the threat of more pain' (Frye 1976:53). There are many features of this hierarchical landscape that seem to be illustrated in Haggard's African romances. The most useful for my purposes is the linking of mental states with physical spaces and features—the 'night world', for example, is

> often a dark and labyrinthine world of caves and shadows where the forest has turned subterranean, and where we are surrounded by the shapes of animals (Frye 1976:111).

At the opposite extreme to this night world is the elevation of the 'point of epiphany' of which the most common setting is the mountain top, 'the symbolic presentation of the point at which the undisplayed apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature came into alignment' (Frye 1957:203). This elevated position has close links with the preferred imperial explorer's position as 'monarch of all I survey', described by Pratt in her work *Imperial Eyes* (1992), which implies power and position over landscape and, by inference, its peoples. It is also a vantage position frequently used by Haggard to extol the beauties of the open panorama that lies before the viewer. The

following example from *King Solomon's Mines* is typical of this position :

> Behind and over us towered Sheba's snowy breasts, and below, some five thousand feet beneath where we stood, lay league on league of the most lovely champaign country. Here were dense patches of lofty forest, there a great river wound its silvery way. To the left stretched a vast expanse of rich undulating veldt or grass land, on which we could just make out countless herds of game or cattle, at that distance we could not tell which. This expanse appeared to be ringed in by a wall of distant mountains. To the right the country was more or less mountainous, that is, solitary hills stood up from its level, with stretches of cultivated lands between, amongst which we could distinctly see groups of dome-shaped huts. The landscape lay before us like a map, in which rivers flashed like silver snakes, and Alp-like peaks crowned with wildly twisting snow-wreaths rose in solemn grandeur, whilst over all was the glad sunlight and the wide breath of Nature's happy life (Haggard 1992:104f).

Such a vantage point implies that the viewer attempt 'the elevation of Icarus' (Noyes 1992:163) with all its danger—a telling comparison for the conflict within Icarus between desire and fear is the stuff of legend. Noyes (1992:167) elaborates on the tension implicit on this 'point of epiphany' contextualised within the imperial gaze:

> The conflict arising out of the initial apprehension of boundless space initiates a tension within the entire corpus of colonial discourse. In the colonial setting, desire is invariably articulated as torn between dissolution in this boundless space and confinement within boundaries—boundaries which allow it to be represented as desire.

Here is the conflict between what Said calls 'manifest' and 'latent' levels of discourse (outlined in *Orientalism* 1995:206) within the imperial framework: the desire to possess through information (the manifest level), as well as through the gaze (the latent level), and the anxiety that this may not be possible. It is a conflict evident in Haggard's romances.

Desire, too, in an erotic sense is also part of the 'mental landscape' of Frye's romance world, as evidenced in Haggard's reference to 'Sheba's snowy breasts' in the passage from *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) just quoted. Frye (1957:205) suggests that the point of epiphany

> may be presented in erotic terms as a place of sexual fulfilment, where there is no apocalyptic vision but simply a sense of arriving at the summit of experience in nature.

Haggard's frequent references to the 'laps' of mountains which offer the masculine ego a position of vantage coupled with intense satisfaction (and yet also feelings of

precariousness), seem to illustrate this idea. This is most evident in the descriptions of Ghost Mountain in *Nada the Lily* (1892) which offer extended examples of such satisfaction combined with fear. In the following passage, Umslopogaas and Galazi in turn describe the mountain:

> So Umslopogaas rose and crept through the narrow mouth of the cave. There, above him, a great grey peak towered high into the air, shaped like a seated woman, her chin resting upon her breast, the place where the cave was being, as it were, on the lap of the woman. Below this place the rock sloped sharply, and was clothed with little bushes. Lower down yet was a forest great and dense, that stretched to the top of a cliff, and at the foot of the cliff, beyond the waters of the river, lay the wide plains of Zululand ... from time to time between the tops of trees I saw the figure of the grey stone woman who sits on the top of Ghost Mountain, and shaped my course towards her knees. My heart beat as I travelled through the forest in dark and loneliness like that of the night, and ever I looked round searching for the eyes of the *Ama-tonga* ... great spotted snakes crept from before my feet ... and always high above my head the wind sighed in the great boughs with a sound like the sighing of women (1949:112-114).

Linked to this sexualising of the African landscape, in terms of Frye's (1976:153) 'idyllic world' is the 'identification of the mistress' body with the paradisal garden'. For Haggard writing within the masculine imperial romance form, the sexual quest is partially transferred onto the landscape, there being 'not a *petticoat*' (that is, no white woman) advisable in the genre of his time, as previously mentioned. He allows a far more powerful love affair between his protagonist and the land than with any woman, with whom love affairs are shown to be inevitably transitory, unlike that with the land which is constant. Desire is projected onto the landscape which frequently assumes a female form, alluring yet dangerous as in the paradisal myth. The intensely sexualised landscape of *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) offers us a view at one point of the mountains named Sheba's Breasts 'modestly veiled in diaphanous wreaths of mist'. After seeing this, Quatermain declares 'this new land was little less than an earthly paradise' (Haggard 1992:125f). Both *Jess* (1900) and *The Ghost Kings* (1908) also offer specific references to the Garden of Eden:

> It is like the Garden of Eden, isn't it, with the sea thrown in. There are all the animals, and that green tree with the fruit on it might be the Tree of Life, and oh, my goodness, there is Adam! (Haggard 1908:46)

Haggard's use of a treasure map in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) is worth mentioning briefly here as it encapsulates many of the ideas just mentioned. It is a map drawn by a dying Portuguese trader en route to the diamond mines of King Solomon in

Kukuanaland and has been read by some critics as a graphically sexualised map of a woman's body leading the male gazer/imperialist to a kind of Promised Land. The treasure seeker is led in the map between Sheba's Breasts towards the diamond mines located beneath a suggestive triangle of hills:

> Haggard's map assembles in miniature the three narrative themes which govern his novel: map-making as a form of military appropriation, the transmission of white male power through control of the black female, and the plundering of the land's riches. What sets Haggard's map apart from the scores of treasure maps that emblazon colonial adventure narratives is that his is explicitly sexualised (McClintock 1990:113f).

More than he knew, Haggard had invested his treasure map's literal informational function with subconscious desire. Furthermore in Haggard's treasure map, as in many maps of eighteenth and nineteenth century explorers, the myth of the 'empty' landscape is perpetuated. Though it could be argued that Haggard's map is a 'bodyscape' of Africa as woman, the map is in effect empty of people, the way to the treasure unimpeded by any other claimants to the Promised Land.

Perhaps as much as Haggard's African romances are known for their paradisal landscapes, so are they for the night world of caves (as previously mentioned), labyrinths and underground rivers that act as a counter balance to the sunlit world above. *She* is probably the best known example of this 'night world', but there are also night world caves in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992), *Maiwa's Revenge* (1888), *Allan's Wife* (1889), *Nada the Lily* (1892), *Heu-Heu or The Monster* (1923) and others. The characteristic state of the protagonist in this other world is the dream/nightmare as seen here in *She*: 'No nightmare dreamed by man, no wild invention of the romance, can ever equal the living horror of that place ...' (Haggard 1991:200).That powerful interpreter of dreams, Freud, recognised the importance of the dreamy underworld of *She* recommending it to a patient as 'A *strange* book, but full of hidden meaning' and finding its landscape even intruding into *his* dream wherein he had to cross a chasm on narrow planks, after which he woke in a 'mental fright' (Etherington 1978:71). Haggard (1887:176), prior to Freud, had recognised that:

> Sexual passion is the most powerful lever with which to stir the mind of man, for it lies at the root of all things human; and it is impossible to over-estimate the damage that could be worked by a single English or American writer of genius, if he grasped it with a will.

What Haggard did not realise was the extent to which his own works were driven by desire, and how this desire of an imperial age, with its tensions and ambiguities is

present in his African landscapes.

One obvious tension in Haggard's work is the recurrence of evidence of ancient white civilisations in Africa. For example, in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) by attributing the ruins and statues found to the work of an ancient white civilisation, probably of Phoenician origin, Haggard contributed to a powerful part of the myth about Africa in the nineteenth century. This myth was linked to race theories of the nineteenth century which held that African cultures were inevitably less sophisticated than European ones. The discovery of ancient stone-walled sites and gold mines in Africa posed a problem for these were unknown in comparable European Iron Age sites. Hence the theory that other [European] races must have built them in some far distant age. Popular theory also held that the southern African region was the site of the Biblical Ophir, a belief traceable back to sixteenth century Portuguese explorers. Thus when Mauch found Great Zimbabwe in 1870, its antiquity and singularity led him to claim it as the site of King Solomon's Ophir, built for the Queen of Sheba, with a Phoenician substratum. Though there was some scientific resistance to this idea by, for example, Hartmann who had seen Africans building in stone, such views did not prevail at the time.

Haggard specifically links Southern Africa with Ophir in *King Solomon's Mines* (1992), (the mines being reached by a route leading between Queen Sheba's Breasts) and its cultural artefacts with an ancient Phoenician civilisation—Allan Quatermain speculates looking at three stone colossi which guard the diamond mine entrance: 'Perhaps these colossi were designed by the same Phoenician official who managed the mines' (Haggard 1992:258). *She* (1991) also has frequent references to ancient white civilisations and their influence in Africa—Ayesha herself is a unique remnant of that ancient period. Horace Holly remarks on coming across an ancient wharf complete with mooring ring in the swamps:

> A country like Africa ... is sure to be full of the relics of long dead and forgotten civilisations. Nobody knows the age of the Egyptian civilisation, and very likely it had offshoots. Then there were the Babylonians and the Phoenicians, and the Persians, and all manner of people, all more or less civilised .... It is possible that they, or any one of them, may have had colonies or trading stations about here. Remember those buried Persian cities that the consul showed us at Kilwa (Haggard 1991:45).

Haggard, like some other writers on Africa of his day, through such means tried to construct an Africa which he could understand and interpret, and yet which defied his attempts. The popularity of Haggard's works, however, made his contribution to the myth of ancient white civilisations in Africa potentially far reaching. Tangri (1990:295) speculates:

> It might not be too cynical to perceive in the work of Haggard a profound influence on later white lay opinion in southern Africa, already receptive to ideas about Ophir and foreign colonists after centuries of speculation. Certainly ... the basic ideas he perpetuated can be found in all early reports on Great Zimbabwe which advocate an exotic origin for the site.

Nearly ninety years after the publication of *She* (1887), a 1973 South African film version of *She* was shot in the Great Zimbabwe ruins with Ayesha, the white queen, ruling over black subjects and guarding her virginity on which her immortality depends:

> With this story De Villiers [the film maker] was able to cash in on the sexual anxieties of white South Africans while reinforcing the hoary and politically convenient belief that a lost white civilization rather than black men raised the walls of the spectacular buildings at Zimbabwe (Etherington in Haggard 1991:xxxix).

All the foregoing points on the imperial romance, its form and Haggard's opinions on the matter, lead to the centrality of landscape to the romance form, and to Haggard with his powerful landscapes as one of the imperial romance's most influential and popular practitioners. African landscape in Haggard's romances, I have tried to show, can therefore act as a text to be read, not transparently however, as it is inevitably ideologically encoded, but with caution. Thus I return to the point with which I began—the centrality of fiction to the understanding of a culture and, more specifically, the centrality of landscape within fiction of Empire, especially the imperial romance set on Empire's margins, to an understanding of an historical period, as translated within Haggard's African romances. Haggard creates an idiosyncratic yet also symptomatic African space which through repeated patterns he turns into what De Certeau calls (1984:117) 'a practised place' a space-turned-place permeated with desire, nostalgia, yet deeply fissured by doubts and anxieties characteristic of his age.

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'She felt the future in her bones'— Gibbon's *Souls in Bondage*

Graham Stewart

Gibbon's preferred medium was the short story. As a close friend of Joseph Conrad, Gibbon is often referred to by Conrad's biographers as 'Perceval Gibbon, the short story writer', and until the re-publication of his 1911 novel *Margaret Harding* in 1983 it was only in anthologies of short stories that his prose remained in print.

His profession as journalist and war correspondent probably accounts for his attraction to the short story form: it provided a suitable vehicle for his distinctive combination of acute social observation and disciplined compositional style. In the stories, Gibbon juxtaposes black and white, Boer and Briton, rural and cosmopolitan. But his novels achieve, in a more sustained and successful way, a fictional account of a developing society heading not only for the 1910 Act of Union that would unite white colonial South Africa, but the 1913 Native Land Act that would effectively deny black people any possibility of sharing in the benefits of the economic and political life of the country. Gibbon's interest in conspicuous racial divisions, and his ability to explore the implications of these rifts through the interaction of his characters is an achievement that ranks at least with Pauline Smith's, and, in terms of the later development of the South African novel, has, I would argue, proved to be more influential.

Gibbon presents us with a debate on the future of South Africa which focuses on the interaction between different race groups; and by so doing becomes one of the first writers in South Africa to transcend the ideology of Social Darwinism implicit in most colonialist fiction. His rejection of Social Darwinist beliefs appears both in the opinions expressed by the characters in *Margaret Harding* and in the substance of the plot itself. Gibbon (1911:187) places the narrow Social-Darwinist view in the mouth of the reactionary Mr. Samson:

> 'The colour line will never go', replied Mr. Samson solemnly. 'You might as well talk of breakin' down the line between men and beasts'.

J.M. Coetzee (1988:144) describes the appeal Social Darwinism had for colonial expansionists:

> With hindsight it is easy to see to what ideological needs Social Darwinism answered in the advanced countries of the West. At home it explained how the rich got rich; abroad it explained why certain peoples were destined to be colonized.

Souls in Bondage (1904) can be seen as Gibbon's first flawed attempt to explore the complexities of South African society—a theme he was able to develop much more successfully in the later *Margaret Harding*.

Gibbon devotes the first few pages of *Souls in Bondage* to describing Dopfontein as a microcosm of South African society. The town can be seen almost as a representation of the Social Darwinist schema, its geography reflecting the social context in which the action is to take place. In choosing Dopfontein, the fictitious local country town of his earlier collection of short stories, *The Vrouw Grobelaar's Leading Cases* (1905) and of his later, most successful novel, *Margaret Harding*, Gibbon reflects contemporary demographic changes by directing the reader away from the Boer-dominated rural periphery of the *The Vrouw Grobelaar* stories, to an urban setting. Gibbon's *mise-en-scene* is a typically racially divided South African town made up of white Dopfontein on the higher ground above the Spruit (literally 'on top', and figuratively at the top of the Social Darwinist hierarchical structure), the black 'Kaffir' location half a mile away on the other side, and the 'off-colour' (mixed-race) town on the 'bare earth' in between. Thus Gibbon establishes at the outset the social order as perceived by the white colonial, and as manifested in the racial segregation of his towns: a pattern since etched into the South African landscape. Gibbon (1904:5) presents the white town as orderly and quiet, the African location similarly arranged in regular rows—but totally alien to white society—while the coloured town 'crawled with the fevered activity of hell, and all the fuss and business was to no end'.

The narrative centres on Martin Thwaites, an unsuccessful, white, middle-aged lawyer whose Dopfontein practice consists mainly of minor legal services to members of the black and 'coloured' community. Amongst his acquaintances is Cecilia du Plessis, a well-educated coloured girl who is suffering as a result of her squalid surroundings and the abuse of her drunken mother. Thwaites tries to dissuade her from accepting a marriage proposal from Bantam, a handsome but violently-disposed stable hand, and even proposes to her himself in an attempt to prevent the wedding, in spite of the social disgrace that this would bring him. Bantam eventually manages to undermine Thwaites's opposition to the marriage by insinuating that Cecilia is pregnant. In a parallel plot, George Joyce, a transport rider, encounters an attractive young woman on a farm he is passing, and is introduced to her father: a man with liberal beliefs in racial equality, and a drunkard. Mr. Graham's labourers exploit his weakness, threatening him and his daughter. Joyce is later promoted to manager of the transport company and soon thereafter rescues Peggy from the farm where her father has been mur-

dered by the African labourers. Joyce marries Peggy a fortnight later.

Meanwhile, Cecilia and Bantam have also married and moved to nearby Ferreirastad. Bantam drinks to excess, openly sleeps with other women and abuses Cecilia alternately with brutal beatings and with cruel indifference. Acting on a presentiment, Thwaites journeys to Ferreirastad where he finds Cecilia dying in a pool of blood after a vicious assault by Bantam. Thwaites, 'the foundation of his life fallen' ails and dies soon after.

In contrast to the positive vision of future racial integration presented in *Margaret Harding*, Gibbon's negative attitude towards miscegenation here leads us into a nightmare world of corruption and despair, where the descendants of cross racial unions are shown to be doomed to suffer as a result of the dissipation and misguided lust of their colonial forebears. A contemporaneous review in the British *African Monthly* applauds Gibbon's ability to bring life to this world in his fiction, but also raises for the modern reader the question of Gibbon's imperialist assumptions about race and society:

> [Gibbon's work shows a] keen insight into the half-caste world which exists near the centres of civilisation in South Africa (Anon. 1907:517).

The *African Monthly* reviewer clearly accepts as axiomatic that Gibbon and his readership share the view that white settlements represent the 'civilisation' from which other races ('half-caste world') are excluded.

Unlike the stories in the *The Vrouw Grobelaar's Leading Cases* collection, *Souls in Bondage* suggests that Gibbon can see beyond narrow imperialist assumptions, particularly in his depiction of Thwaites's inner turmoil, yet it also shows that he is still caught in the trap of a Social Darwinist determinism in his view of South African society. His unsympathetic portrayal of Mr. Graham, for instance, is an apparent rejection of the philosophy of racial equality: he is presented as the prototype of the 'degenerate' colonial who loses his grip on European standards and 'descends to the level' of the indigenous population. Popular myth would have it that the logical extreme of such a descent is miscegenation. It is typical of Gibbon's ambivalence toward the subject that at this point in his development, he chooses to subvert Graham's egalitarian beliefs by portraying racial tolerance as a weakness that brings personal ruin.

However, I would argue that Gibbon's reactionary point of view should not be taken at face value, given the accent on inter-racial encounters to be seen in the *The Vrouw Grobelaar's Leading Cases* stories, and the evidence provided by his reviewers that he may have been 'playing to the gallery'. Taken as a whole, Gibbon's work shows a development away from the widely-accepted colonial myth—in which the white man was expected to remain socially aloof from the exotic native population over which he held sway, and where the wages of disobedience were ruin and corruption—towards an acceptance of a future society which would depend on a resolution of racial conflict. Cecilia, shown to be a tragic victim of miscegenation in *Souls in Bondage* is yet another step in Gibbon's progress towards that memorable image in *Margaret Harding*: the statue to be built in the future to commemorate the first miscegenator, with the inscription: 'She felt the future in her bones' (Gibbon 1911:187).

The Social Darwinist backdrop to *Souls in Bondage* seems to be a necessary station in Gibbon's progress towards the acceptance of individual equality evident in *Margaret Harding*. By the time he writes the latter novel, he has reached a point where he is able to present a woman who has married a black parson, and Margaret Harding herself, as heroic figures or pioneers, rather than victims. I would suggest that Gibbon's vision elevates his writing above Cullen Gouldsbury's *Tree of Bitter Fruit* (1910) which takes for granted the disastrous results of integrating a black person educated in Europe back into his native society, and Sarah Gertrude Millin's *God's Stepchildren* (1924) which traces the inevitability of degeneration and ruin in the descendants of mixed unions.

Gareth Cornwell (1983:27) in a study of Fitzpatrick's 'The Outspan' offers an explanation of the apparent ambivalence towards the issue of race in some colonial fiction:

> Such paradoxes are symptomatic of the dissonance between the racist ideology of Empire and the liberal-humanist tradition of the discursive mode in which that ideology achieved literary expression.

The difficulty Gibbon experienced in reconciling his contradictory attitudes towards race, particularly conspicuous in the character of Thwaites, can be understood more fully in this context:

> ... the moral-psychological logic which propels the narrative is at odds with the plot of racial determinism which purports to provide coherence and significance ... writers of this period may attempt to place 'the source of understanding, of action and history' outside the individual (though universal) subject, [but] the nature of the discursive mode in which they are working simply does not permit it (Cornwell 1983:27)

In *Souls in Bondage* Martin Thwaites replaces Vrouw Grobelaar as narrative focus. However, his lack of liveliness and his studiously neutral attitude make him both less sympathetic and less successful than Vrouw Grobelaar. Gibbon deliberately places this slow, pedantic and painstakingly impartial lawyer at the centre of his novel as a pivot between the two main stories (the Peggy/Joyce romance and the Cecilia/Bantam anti-romance) and as a centre of Gibbon's own debate over racial attitudes. Gibbon's depiction of the characters of Thwaites and his egregious clerk, Charlie Bateman,

owes a great deal to Dickens. Thwaites is given idiosyncratic catch phrases (like Dickens's Barkis or Uriah Heep) in his characteristic comments on his profession: 'The practice promises well' (Gibbon 1904:9) which is the very phrase that is on his lips as he dies. Bateman operates as a thoroughly villainous foil to Thwaites's polite professionalism, and also as a purveyor of local gossip in, for instance, bringing Thwaites the news of Cecilia and Bantam's impending marriage. Bateman also embodies the final cynicism of the novel by taking immediate advantage of Thwaites's death when he drains Thwaites's brandy glass. There is also a Dickensian quality in the vitality of the dialogue and sharp delineation of eccentric characters in Gibbon's description of the circuit court dinner (Gibbon 1904:173-179), which anticipates the highly-charged gatherings in the Sanatorium drawing room in *Margaret Harding*.

In this novel, violence and brutality triumph over the kindness and mildness of Thwaites and Cecilia, and a form of institutionalised violence is entrenched as a result of the success of George Joyce, who employs his brutality in establishing his business. Thwaites, as attorney to all of Dopfontein' communities, is conveniently placed to link Gibbon's parallel plots, located in the white and the coloured sections of the town respectively. But more important to our examination of Gibbon's development as writer is his presentation of the racial debate centred in the person of Martin Thwaites. In order to save Cecilia from a disastrous marriage with the vicious Bantam, Thwaites offers to marry her himself, so accepting what Gibbon offers as the white South African's view of ultimate degradation: a union across the colour line.

Thwaites's gesture anticipates the positive image of miscegenation presented by Gibbon in *Margaret Harding,* and gives added significance to the elderly lawyer's inner debate as he considers the possible consequences of such a marriage:

> A part of that tragic [coloured] community that he was, an alien among them and an exile from his own people, so much of aggressive racialism survived in him as to make him unconsciously applaud anything in a yellow man or woman that strove to desert its breed and approximate to white standards. After all, tolerance is mainly a measure of self defence, and poor old Thwaites, walking circumspectly between the contempt of his own race and the familiarity of that which had granted him hospitality, was not the personality to evolve a tolerance that should demand no reciprocity. The broadest-minded people are those whom the fires of the stake have singed (Gibbon 1904:164).

Thwaites's 'aggressive racialism' is acknowledged, but Gibbon makes the point that 'tolerance' (i.e. acceptance of a mixed marriage) is a virtue, which as in Thwaites's case, is diminished by the individual's perceived need to protect himself ('self-defence') against a 'lowering' or change of living standards brought about by the partial adoption of the norms of another culture. People who have suffered greatly (unlike

Thwaites, who has lived a closeted, protected life) are most likely to display the (implied) nobility of tolerance. The distinction drawn here between Thwaites's 'racialism' (a sense of white superiority) and the morally laudable acceptance of equality by those 'whom the fires of the stake have singed' is a clearer indication of Gibbon's ideological position than can be detected at any point in *The Vrouw Grobelaar's Leading Cases*. The choice for Thwaites is presented as a tragic dilemma: on the one hand, marriage to Cecilia would destroy his status and the 'tepid ambition' that he has nurtured all his life; on the other, abandoning her to Bantam's murderous violence removes the 'foundation of [his] life' (Gibbon 1904:315) and eventually kills him. In making his choice, Thwaites is shown to balance his own humanity and moral rectitude against the typical racial attitudes of the day:

> Yes; but a half-caste, off-coloured, a yellow girl, with a touch of the tar-brush—a creature to whom the foul Kafir was kin and ancestor, co-parent with the crime of a white conqueror! (Gibbon 1904:165)

These comments are presented as part of Thwaites's internal debate, and clearly represent the clichéd prejudices of contemporary white colonial opinion; the type of opinion from which Gibbon distances himself in a comment such as the following:

> ... but there was the descent, the shame of the white man's fall to the companionship of the Kafirs—the ultimate disgrace a South African can sink to (Gibbon 1904:205).

Here the ironic emphasis is on the words 'South African'. In spite of Gibbon's continued adherence to the Social Darwinist view of society, occasional satirical insights like this reveal a growing consciousness of the artificiality of the colonial social fabric. Gibbon seems at these times to regard entrenched white South African race prejudice with an increasingly critical eye, and manages more frequently to avoid identifying with it.

Nonetheless, there is still ample evidence of confusion in Gibbon's grasp of his debate on race, especially when we consider his treatment of Mr. Graham, the dissolute colonist. Mr. Graham is shown to have a liberal attitude towards blacks, and in response to Joyce's suggestion that he sjambok his labourers into accepting his authority, he remarks:

> I don't believe in treating human beings like beasts. A Kafir isn't a brute, you know, Mr. Joyce (Gibbon 1904:156).

The context in which Graham's words are presented subvert the view that he expresses:

his degeneration into drunkenness and finally death as a direct result of fraternising with his black labourers. Indeed, the major failure of the novel is Gibbon's inability to endorse the positive features of Graham's (or Thwaites's) liberalism and explicitly to condemn Joyce's immorality.

Gibbon's ambivalence is most evident in his presentation of Joyce, who enjoys authorial approval yet, paradoxically, is shown to be unacceptably brutal in his treatment of black people. There is a major inconsistency in implying that Joyce's violence is immoral, while at the same time precluding the reader from an identification with Graham's tolerant views. This inner contradiction, central to Gibbon's failure in *Souls in Bondage*, is resolved successfully in the later *Margaret Harding*. A more accurate measure of Gibbon's progress in *Souls in Bondage* is the ideology discernible in Thwaites's inner debate and in Gibbon's apparently contradictory observation that Mr. Graham has 'a distinction that might have been greatness' (Gibbon 1904:273). However, Gibbon's (1904:273) depiction of Mr. Graham as a dissipated drunkard whose 'essential fluidity of character' is given to bouts of drinking in his labourers' kraals requires us to regard him as an example of 'white man's incontinence' (Gibbon 1904:71): the attribute that leads to sex across the colour line, and has created the 'damned' coloured community.

The ambivalence in Gibbon's attitude provides the grounds for Jenny de Reuck's (1988:14) accusation that he ...

> [involves] the reader in the tacit acceptance of the narrator's racist categories when evaluating character and interaction between characters.

My argument is that Gibbon's racial views, while confused, are anything but complacent and unquestioning, and reveal a developing maturity that will eventually permit Gibbon to present a meaningful debate on racial attitudes. The most convincing testimony to Gibbon's increasing sensitivity to racial issues is the extent to which he is able to show that Thwaites's tragedy is a function of the society in which he lives, and that his affection for Cecilia is not a weakness but a strength, tragically denied its fulfilment by the combination of societal forces and the shrewdness of Bantam's malicious insinuations about Cecilia's pre-marital pregnancy.

De Reuck goes on to accuse Gibbon of a failure in the rendering of character, especially in the case of George Joyce in whom there is an 'uneasy alliance of chivalry and violence' (Gibbon 1904:10). She finds a radical (and damning) inconsistency in Gibbon's harnessing together Joyce's 'wholesome hero' image with his brutality towards the black labourers on Graham's farm. However, there is some evidence that Gibbon intends the reader to see a direct parallel between the violence of Joyce and of Bantam. If we accept Thwaites as a central pivot, then Joyce and Bantam are clearly

intended as contrasting figures, linked ironically by their predilection for violence. On the one hand Bantam is shown to be 'cruel, false, and dissipated' (Gibbon 1904:119), cynically trapping Cecilia into a marriage which he uses for sadistic abuse, while on the other, Joyce creates an impression that is 'altogether good and pleasant' (Gibbon 1904:254), yet both display extreme ferocity. The linking of the two characters may be part of an attempt to provide the novel with a pessimistic conclusion with wider social implications: that neither race group is able to resolve conflict without recourse to violence.

The novel operates adequately at the level of melodrama and in this sense Bantam the villain and Joyce the conquering hero are consistently and clearly delineated. Gibbon (1904:255) catalogues Bantam's evil qualities and simplistically lists Joyce's good ones: 'an excellent fellow and a charming guest'. At this level, his denunciation of Bantam is too facile, while his ironic treatment of Joyce is too hesitant to be immediately and effectively discernible.

Cecilia's personality is presented via the different perspectives of several characters. Thwaites sees her as a fragile innocent, a view that is shared by Joyce who, we are told, has knocked a man down for insulting her by calling her 'pretty nigger'. The public view of Cecilia is stated by the magistrate who regards her as a 'good' one amongst a bad bunch, while the coloured community regards her as aloof and irritatingly self-righteous, producing either active hostility (as in Bantam and Mrs. du Plessis) or clumsy attempts at friendship, which Cecilia immediately rebuffs (as in Sannie's overtures to her in Ferreirastad). We are told that

> ... her mission-school education in the Transkei had sundered her hopelessly from her own colour and kind, while giving nothing in their place (Gibbon 1904:290).

In this respect, J.P.L. Snyman in a short magazine article, 'South African Authors—45. Perceval Gibbon', on Gibbon and his writing, has drawn a parallel between Cecilia, and Kamis in *Margaret Harding*, both of whom are estranged from their people by their education.

The irony in Gibbon's depiction of George Joyce is apparent in the contrast between his depiction as a romantic hero and as a brutal animal. On the one hand we are shown the Joyce who rescues Peggy Graham from the black labourers doing 'what they please with her' (Gibbon 1904:211), the 'good chum' so admired by the Van der Merwe family, while on the other we see the gratuitously vicious colonist who returns from the kraal after avenging Graham's death:

> 'There is blood on your hand', she said next. 'It is all wet'.
> He put his hand in his pocket, but could not speak.
> 'There is blood on your boots too', she went on. 'You are all blood' (Gibbon 1904:271).

Gibbon shows that the racial aggression in Joyce is intimately linked to his success in business: he emerges as a prototype of the pioneer colonist/capitalist. His easy assumption of a leadership role in the Van der Merwe transport firm is related to his authority over blacks (he quells one of Graham's rebellious black servants with a mere glance) and to his eventual prosperity:

> ... their teams made record journeys and their waggons carried bigger loads, to the quick profit of the firm (Gibbon 1904:251).

Gibbon's condemnation of Joyce is barely discernable when compared with his explicit criticism of Bantam, but at times there is a distinct element of parody in his presentation of the white hero, whose only outward gesture as he contemplates marriage to Peggy is to punch his fist into his hand, unconsciously expressing his own violent nature, and by implication the violent character of colonial exploitation in general:

> Joyce stood in the middle of the room, his right fist poised above the open palm of his left hand. 'Little—chum!' he said to himself slowly. 'Yes, by Jove!' and he dropped his fist with a smack of emphasis (Gibbon 1904:209).

Although *Souls in Bondage* shows Gibbon struggling unsuccessfully to bridge the 'ontological gap' between author and fictional character, Thwaites represents a significant step towards the narrative distancing required to achieve that goal. The extreme shifts in narrative technique that characterise *Salvator* (1908), his next novel, may be Gibbon's reaction to what he had perceived as his central problem in writing *Souls in Bondage*. However, the latter novel marks an advance on the bigotry displayed in some of the stories in *The Vrouw Grobelaar's Leading Cases* and a development towards a more dispassionate appreciation of prevailing racial assumptions. When he abandons the racial theme in *Salvator*, his writing seems to lose its essential impetus, and he is able to write his best novel only when he presents his most thoroughgoing examination of the subject in *Margaret Harding*.

Human Resources
M.L. Sultan Technikon

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Dutch South African Literature

Siegfried Huigen

The only statue for the Dutch language is situated approximately ten thousand kilometres from the Netherlands and Belgium in Burgersdorp, in the Eastern Cape Province. This is how it came about. The enfranchised voters of Albert, a border district of the Cape Colony with Burgersdorp as its administrative centre, were fervent zealots for the Dutch language. Due to their efforts, amongst other things, Dutch was permitted in the Parliament of the British Cape Colony in 1882, after it had lacked every form of official recognition since 1822. In celebration of this event, a statue for the Dutch language was erected in Burgersdorp in 1893: a marble woman on a granite pedestal. With her right hand's index finger she pointed to a tablet in her left arm on which was written: 'The Victory of the Dutch Language'. On the pedestal were some distichs, among which the following, which describes the extent of the recognition of Dutch:

> *Erkend is nu de moedertaal*
> *in raad, kantoor en schoollokaal.*
>
> The mother tongue is now recognised
> in council-, office- and classroom.

The inauguration of the statue took place in 1893 on a grand scale for this sparsely populated region. There was a cavalcade of five hundred mounted farmers under the leadership of Oom Daantjie van den Heever, one of the initiators. The two leaders of the Afrikaans Nationalist Movement, 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr and the reverend S.J. du Toit, came all the way from the Western Cape to give festival addresses. 'Onze Jan', leader of the Afrikaner Bond, toasted 'Onze Taal', under which he understood the language of 'Hooft and Vondel, Helmers and Tollens, Bilderdijk and Da Costa ... Van der Palm and Oosterzee' and 'Afrikaans-Dutch', the special variety spoken in South Africa. He concluded his speech with: 'Long live the Language!' (Hofmeyr 1913:492)[1].

[1] Hooft and Vondel are well-known Dutch poets from the seventeenth century, the others are popular Dutch writers of the nineteenth century.

The marble lady couldn't point to victory for very long. The Boer War broke out in 1899 and in the following year the statue was destroyed by British troops. The Dutch language thereby lost her head and arms, and naturally also the tablet bearing the triumphant text. Not long after the vandalisation, the rest of the statue was removed from Burgersdorp to an unknown destination. It was thought that the English had thrown it into the sea.

After the war, in 1907, the British government presented Burgersdorp with a replica of the statue as a gesture of reconciliation. Years later, in 1939, the remains of the original statue were accidentally unearthed in King William's Town, a few hundred kilometres from Burgersdorp. The headless and armless statue was subsequently returned to Burgersdorp and erected behind the replica[2]. It is still standing like that, together with the replica the most important sight in town.

The history of this statue occurred during what might be called the end of the reign of Dutch in South Africa. This reign commenced in 1652 and was soon confined to the church, education, correspondence, civil service, and polite conversation. On the farmyards and in the veld, an early version of Afrikaans was presumably already spoken at the end of the seventeenth century.

Although the importance of Dutch as a spoken language was soon limited, its meaning as a written language remained significant until the twentieth century. In the 270 years during which Dutch was used as a written language in South Africa, a vast collection of written material, mostly in forms not usually regarded as literature, came into being: diaries, travel journals, letters, articles in newspapers and magazines, historical treatises, as well as novels, drama and poetry.

In South African literary histories of the last few years, little attention has been paid to this Dutch South African literature. Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures*, published in 1996, is an example of this tendency. The history of the Dutch South African literature—a period of some 270 years—is reduced to two pages (Chapman 1996:77-78). This essay is aimed at focusing more attention on the vast corpus of texts—which include the oldest texts written in South Africa—at present neglected in the writing of South African literary history.

Dutch South African literature has not always evoked so little interest. Especially in the thirties, the situation was different. Then, the first Afrikaans literary historians were being confronted with the question of where, from a nationalist point of view, the boundaries between foreign and local should be drawn. Where did Afrikaans literature, and consequently the work of the Afrikaans literary historian, begin? At the start of the written Dutch literature, or in 1652? Or in 1795 ('Lied ter ere van de

[2] The information on the history of the language monument was taken from: De Wet s.d.; Cilliers (1982); Dreyer (1916).

Swellendamse en diverse ander helden', written in Dutch with an Afrikaans tone), or about 1830 when Afrikaans was being used for comic effect in some newspaper articles and plays, or, again, in 1875 when the Genootschap van Regte Afrikaners (Association of Real Afrikaners) was founded and the struggle for the recognition of Afrikaans began? The proper beginning of the historical narrative is subject to discussion for the Afrikaans literary historian; it is not a given, as it is for the Dutch literary historian who can start with the fragment of a poem from 1150, 'Hebban olla vogala ...', because nothing older has been handed down.

The main topic under discussion is in most cases the corpus of Dutch writings which originated in South Africa. Its status is, after all, dubious, to a nationalistically oriented Afrikaans literary historian. The texts were written by 'ancestors' sharing the same territory as the historians and in many cases already using Afrikaans as a spoken language. The historian is being directly confronted with the question whether this was indigenous, whether these Dutch writings belonged to the cultural heritage of the Afrikaners and thus to their history (Conradie 1934:87). The *communis opinio* was eventually that Dutch writings of South Africa could only be considered as belonging to Afrikaans literature if an Afrikaans national spirit could be discovered in them. The methods used to divine this national spirit were perfectly arbitrary. When the historian found something in the Dutch tradition that agreed with his own concepts of Afrikaans thinking or feeling, the text in question received a stamp of approval and was labelled 'Afrikaans'. In other cases, for example when the author revealed himself a 'negrophile', the texts were labelled as being 'Dutch'. In most cases it boiled down to the projection of ethnic conceptions of selfhood upon texts that originated within an entirely other historical context (Huigen 1996a:4-12).

The development of the Dutch South African literature cannot easily be contained in a brief review. The insufficient state of present research leaves us only a rough historical framework, which I would like to relate to the production and reception of texts. To that purpose I will pay special attention to factors influencing the written communication: by whom were the texts written, printed and read (the conditions of the written communication) and which factors determined this. The political developments, the nature of the written language (Dutch or Afrikaans), the presence or absence of a printing press and the relations between South Africa and the Netherlands are important, from this point of view. Due to the present inadequacy of supporting research, this method promises to be the safest approach. The resulting construct, however, can be no more than a superficial sketch[3].

[3] For this attempt at periodising, the information had to be compiled from studies of which some are already obsolete: Kannemeyer (1978); Conradie (1934); Antonissen s.d.; Besselaar (1914); Nienaber and Nienaber (1941); Malherbe (1925); Coetzee (1941); (1963); Mansvelt (1902); De Villiers 1936; Ploeger (1952); Scholtz n.d.; Steyn (1980); Muller (1990); Ponelis (1993); Zietsman (1992). Du Toit and Giliomee (1983); Du Toit (1985).

While bearing the above-mentioned limitations in mind, I wish to distinguish between three phases:

1. The period from approximately 1596 to 1652;
2. from 1652 to 1800; and
3. from 1800 to 1925.

The language—Afrikaans or Dutch—does play a role in this periodisation, but is not all-determining. Issues concerning the production and reception of texts, as well as political factors, are equally important.

1596-1652

The oldest Dutch publication in which attention is paid to Southern Africa—not specifically South Africa—is that of Jan Huygen van Linschoten (the *Itinerario*) which appeared in Amsterdam in 1596 (Kern 1955). Jan Huygen wanted specifically to inform the home front about the route to the treasures of the East. But on the occasion of a visit to the Portuguese colony on the island of Mozambique (near Maputo), he included some observations on the 'empire' of Monomotapa, rich in gold, in the interior of South Africa. This had consequences. Jan Huygen's mention saw to it that the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) investigated the interior of the Cape of Good Hope in the years following 1652[4].

The limited attention to South Africa in the '*Itinerario*' is typical of the majority of representations in this period. Any mention was merely incidental. People were underway to the East Indies or home, and went ashore in South Africa only for fresh water. In the travel literature, this led to some remarks on the country and its inhabitants. Whereas Jan Huygen established the image of the rich, urbanised interior of southern Africa, other short visits to the coastal regions of South Africa accounted for the stereotyped image of the dirty, stinking, ugly Hottentots on the coast, 'clockende ghelijck als Calkoensche-Hanen' (gobbling like turkeys), that remained current even after 1652[5].

1652-1800

The Dutch interest in South African affairs made a qualitative and quantitative leap

[4] The earliest visit to the Cape was the expedition under the leadership of Cornelis de Houtman from 5 to 10 August 1559, as described by William Lodewyckszin *D'Eerste Boeck* (Amsterdam 1598) (G.P. Rouffaer and IJzerman 1915; 1925).

[5] *De reis van Joris van Spilbergen naar Ceylon, Atjeh en Bantam 1601-1604*, 18.

after the establishment of a refreshment station in 1652. The consequences, however, extended further still. The beginning of the Dutch colonial government at the Cape was an event of great importance for modern South African history. In 1652 the (forced) integration of South Africa and its inhabitants into Western European culture—initially its Dutch colonial variant—began, and the country was received into the world economy.

This also had important consequences for the production of texts. The colonial settlement led to the opening up of the interior. In addition to the continuing casual references to South Africa in itineraries, locally produced descriptions of land and travel with more to offer than the obligatory stereotypical depictions of 'Hottentotten' began to emerge. The Dutch language and written Dutch culture were established at the Cape. The foundations were laid for a South African literary circuit[6].

Initially, the extent of the local South African circuit, founded in 1652, was limited and strongly oriented towards the Netherlands. By far the majority of texts created during this period in South Africa was produced by the VOC-bureaucracy for internal use. These texts were mainly intended to keep the overseas rulers informed. What was produced outside the sphere of the VOC pales into insignificance compared to these texts. Since there was no printing press at the Cape during the time of the VOC, and no literary societies, it was difficult for anything written at the Cape to be disseminated outside the circles of family and friends. A regional literary culture comparable to those which then existed in Europe was impossible. Poetry about South Africa published during this period, for example, was written exclusively by visitors, authors who had stopped at the Cape in the employ of the VOC, and were published in the Netherlands. All the printed matter in South Africa had to be imported.

The absence of a local printing press, coupled with subordination to the authority of the VOC, also meant that public political actions by inhabitants of the Cape had to take place via the Netherlands. The highest authority was there, as well as the means for the reproduction of texts. This happened twice in the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the century, with the petitions against the government of Willem Adriaan van der Stel (with the subsequent reaction of the governor) and, at the end of the century, the pamphlets of the Cape patriots (Dominicus 1928; Schutte 1974).

1800-1925

Roundabout 1800 two changes took place which deeply influenced the cultural situation at the Cape. In 1795 the English occupied the Cape. It was only ever to be gov-

[6] By literary circuit I mean a system within which texts are produced (written) and read. Before 1652, no literary circuit existed in South Africa. There were, however, oral circuits. These (the 'orature'), I disregard in the following.

erned by the Dutch again for a short period (1803-1806). Additionally, a printing press was installed in Cape Town sometime before 1796. With this, the conditions for the real unfolding of a local literary circuit were fulfilled.

The end of Dutch government led to the Cape colonists' gradual estrangement from Dutch culture. So it seems that during the nineteenth century, people at the Cape lost their loyalty towards the Netherlands. Although the slaves still called out 'there go *vaderlanders*' upon seeing a Dutchman, according to the Dutch East Indian official Teenstra in 1825, in South African glossaries toward the end of the nineteenth century the word 'vaderlanders' in the meaning of 'someone from Holland' was labelled obsolete (cf. Van der Merwe 1971).

In addition to cultural estrangement, the end of Dutch government also caused linguistic alienation. In the colony, English government provided mainly English public education, with Dutch given a subordinate status. The active command of Dutch accordingly diminished under pupils who had Afrikaans as their mother tongue. When the future superintendent of education of the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (the Transvaal), N. Mansvelt, taught Dutch in 1874 at the Stellenbosch *gymnasium*, he was even confronted with resistance from his pupils:

> So little value was generally attached to the study of Dutch that, during one of the first classes, while I was handing out the other pupils' essays, one of the eldest pupils, a son of a Dutch-Afrikaans minister no less, tore up, without even a glance, an essay which I had meticulously corrected (Mansvelt 1901:505)

Although the rising Afrikaner-nationalism and the Zuid-Afrikaansche Taalbond, founded in 1890 to further the Dutch language in South Africa, did succeed in proving the constitutional position of Dutch in the Cape Colony, it did not accomplish an effective equalisation with English. English remained dominant in education and in public discourse. The amount of Dutch published in South Africa did, however, increase, and with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism after 1880, the desire to have a proper command of Dutch also flared up. To have a good command of Dutch appears to have become a sign of Afrikaner ethnicity by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (the Transvaal), the more important of the two Boer Republics, the constitutional position of Dutch had always been better than in the Cape Colony. Dutch was the only official language, and due to Mansvelt, who filled the post of superintendent of education, a Dutch public education apparatus for white children was created in the 1890's (Mansvelt 1901). Developments in the Orange Free State were less favourable for the Dutch language. Although Dutch was the official language, English predominated in various official functions.

For this third phase, the installation of printing presses about 1800 was of special importance. The printing press made possible a regional circuit of discourse. Books,

newspapers and magazines produced by local authors and printers could now appear on the local market. Dutch texts coming from South African presses were generally not read abroad. The increasing linguistic and cultural differences with the Netherlands and the Dutch language further necessitated the publication of literature aimed at the local market. Dutch literature, as it appeared around 1900 in South Africa, therefore had to be written preferably in simplified Dutch and had to deal with South African issues. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Afrikaans gradually began to be used. The production of texts in Afrikaans did not, however, outstrip that of Dutch texts before the twentieth century.

The loss of the Cape did not mean that after 1806 publications concerning South Africa ceased in the Netherlands. Initially there weren't that many. This changed shortly after the successful Transvaal rebellion against the British government in 1881. Tales about the Boer successes became a way of redeeming the national self-respect damaged during the nineteenth century. Many of these publications must have reached South Africa via the book trade or by book shipments from the Netherlands. Of great importance for South Africa were Dutch books on South African history. The reception of these works of history also illustrates the difficulty in differentiating the Dutch from the Dutch-South African circuit in this period. The Dutch histories, published in the Netherlands, are even now considered by historians as specimens of Afrikaner historiography (Huigen 1996a:116-117). Something similar took place regarding Dutch literature. Thus 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr celebrated the great Dutch writers at the inauguration of the statue for 'onze taal' in Burgersdorp. The Dutch literary circuit overlapped the South African circuit. It is only for the South African Dutch texts that a separate circuit may be identified during this period. These texts were published and read only in South Africa. From this originally Dutch circuit, the Afrikaans one eventually evolved. Publishers, magazines, newspapers and authors who initially published Dutch literature, gradually changed over to the production of Afrikaans texts in the twentieth century. The circuit as such did not change, though.

I regard the increasing use of Afrikaans as written language—accelerated after 1905 with the emergence of the Second Afrikaans Language Movement—to be a decisive factor in the eventual demise of Dutch South African literature at the beginning of this century. As Dutch was increasingly pushed aside by Afrikaans (from the schools in 1914; from Parliament in 1925) it was used less and less as written language. After 1925 only immigrants still used Dutch in South Africa.

In the context of South African literature as a whole, Dutch South African literature in the time of the VOC (1652-1795) might be regarded as the most interesting. These texts are the oldest colonial South African writings. Contrary to other early colonial texts written in other languages, these were mostly written by people who had settled in South Africa.

To a great extent, the texts from this period are products of the VOC: outgoing letters, journals, reports and notices. They were written in the course of the author's official duties, mostly in the VOC's service. Among these texts are also found descriptions of South Africa and its original inhabitants. When these texts are read in their mutual relatedness, it is possible to trace the developments of discourses about the South African reality. As an example of such discourses, I would like to consider the Dutch discourse concerning the northern interior of South Africa in the seventeenth century.

Before the founding of a colony in 1652, there already existed an image of the South African interior, going back to Portuguese sources via Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Itinerario*. According to that image, Southern Africa was divided into a civilised interior with the 'empire' Monomotapa at its heart and an uncivilised coastal region inhabited by wild 'Hottentots'. The civilised interior was, moreover, economically important. There was a lot of gold in Monomotapa, wrote Jan Huygen van Linschoten. Therefore, quite soon after the founding of the refreshment station, expeditions were sent out to establish trade contacts with Monomotapa. Between 1660 and 1664, seven expeditions were sent out, but none of them succeeded in making any contact with Monomotapa. When news reached the Cape that copper was to be found in the North-West, four more expeditions were sent northwards between 1682 and 1686. Copper was in fact found in the vicinity of today's Springbok, but the means of exploring these reserves were lacking (Huigen 1996a:24).

The expeditions were always required to keep travel journals. To ensure that useful information was returned, the expeditions were issued with lists of questions about the economy, forms of government and the appearance of the alien peoples. This methodisation of travel in the seventeenth century was not unique to the Cape. From the sixteenth century onward, the educational travels in Europe were 'scientifically' founded on the *ars apodemica*, the 'art' of travel (Stagl 1979). The VOC also made use of these techniques to ensure that useful information was gathered in foreign regions (Huigen 1996).

An important place in the reports from the northern interior was occupied by the Namaquas. Comparing the varying reports about the Namaquas in Dutch writings yields important insights into the developments of the early modern European representation of South Africa.

The reports concerning the Namaquas were initially extremely favourable. It was supposed that they were in communication with the centre of African civilisation, namely Monomotapa. Indigenous informants such as the interpreter Eva (Krotoa) reinforced these suppositions. According to Eva, the Namaquas lived in stone houses, dressed neatly, went to church and prayed to God, and had black slaves to serve them, 'they themselves being whitish with long hair'. They were moreover eager to trade

their plentiful cattle and large stores of ivory for copper and beads (Boëseken 1957:182).

The third expedition of the VOC was the first to come into contact with the Namaquas. This expedition left the Cape in January 1661. The journal keeper on this journey was the later spouse of Eva, surgeon Pieter van Meerhoff. Unlike many other journal keepers, Van Meerhoff is personally present in his text. His journal contains a personal description, almost cinematographically observed, of the first encounter with the Namaquas:

> Toward the evening a fire was lit on the mountain W.S.W. of us. I, Pieter van Meerhoff, took with me two of our Hottentots and went toward it. Halfway there, Donckeman [one of the Khoi guides] started calling: 'Mr. Pieter, Namaqua'. I looked up and counted 23 of them, standing on the rocks and looking at us. I went somewhat further and the Hottentots became so distraught, ... they took their shoes from their feet and wanted to run back, saying: 'Namaqua boeba kros coqua'. I took my glass to see whether this was so; I saw that they were armed with dry skins and were carrying skins over their left arms, bows and arrows on their shoulders and in either hand an assegai. I reassured my Hottentots and said they should not be afraid, the Namaquas wouldn't do us harm (Bosman & Thom III 1952-1957:484).

Van Meerhoff climbed up to visit the Namaquas, coercing his Hottentots to accompany him. Upon reaching the top, they cried that there was tobacco, beads and copper for trade. However, because of the encroaching darkness, no meeting took place on the evening of the 18th February 1661.

The next day, the Namaquas appeared at the camp. The ritual of introduction, in which Van Meerhoff took the starring role, began:

> At last one of them came to about a musket shot from us; the others remained sitting in the bush. I let our Hottentots go and meet them; the Namaquas sat down on one side of the morass and our Hottentots on the other side. They called at one another for a long time before they dared to approach us. At last they came over. So I, Pieter van Meerhoff, took a pipe of tobacco in my mouth and likewise approached them, to see whether they too had knowledge of tobacco. Having reached them, one of them immediately came, who took the pipe from my mouth and started to smoke; they had been from time to time with the Cape Hottentots (Bosman & Thom III 1952-1957:485).

During this first encounter, Van Meerhoff was impressed by the imposing presence of the king of the Namaquas and his three sons. They were larger than Cattibou, the largest slave of the Company. In later reports about the Namaquas, this remark was extended to the Namaquas in general. This happens already in the Cape journal where they are described as 'very strong folk, half-giants' (Bosman & Thom III 1952-1957:341).

As an appendix to the journal text, Van Meerhoff gave a description of the Namaquas—the 'Memorandum of their occasions and manner of clothing etc.' In this, he says that the Namaquas resemble the Hottentots of the Cape in their forms of settlement and their hair styles (Bosman & Thom III 1952-1957:487). The first point was repeated in the Cape journal in an afterword to the expedition (Bosman & Thom III 1952-1957:341). All of this made it problematic to retain the association of the Namaquas with the civilised interior. As yet, however, the idea endured unchanged.

After Van Riebeeck's time, however, the Namaquas came to be shown in an ill light. Apparently because of a changed policy toward the Dutch, the sixth and seventh expeditions encountered resistance from the Namaquas. The sixth expedition was confronted with open hostility from the Namaquas: 'they said that unless we turned around, they would fight against us' (Godée Molsbergen 1916 I:91-93). Commander Wagenaar, in a letter to the Lords Seventeen, interpreted this as the Namaquas' distrust of the Dutch (Godée Molsbergen 1916 I:113).

During the next phase of expeditions northward (1682-1686) the hostile policy of the Namaquas against the Dutch was sustained. The expedition under Oloff Bergh (1682) felt that it was betrayed and mocked, and found itself forced to return. During Van der Stel's journey (1685-6) similar problems cropped up. The Dutch had to listen to a recalcitrant tribal leader telling them that although at the Cape they needed but to say the word, they were now in Namaqualand, and things were different here (Valentyn 1971:282). In the end, this certainly contributed to the disappearance from official papers of the initially favourable image of the Namaquas. Another factor was habits that differed from the Dutch. In the text accompanying a depiction of a Namaqua by Hendrik Claudius (1686), the negative prejudices are itemised:

> ... living rough without any laws or religion ... seem to fear nothing but the thunder and the lightning, are extremely untruthful and deceitful, eating everything they come across, even rats, dogs, cats, caterpillars, grasshoppers, &c., only for hares do they have aversion and repulsion ... their women they happily loan each other, so they become the more lecherous the less their men are jealous ... (Waterhouse 1979:412/414).

By now the Namaquas have become beings from an inverted world, preferring their own filthy grub to tasty hares. For them, a delicacy would be a green caterpillar to be either grilled over a wood fire after 'the green filth has been squeezed out' or cooked in 'its own green juice' (Waterhouse 1979:414). In short, the Namaquas were 'wild men', as is remarked in a description of the festivities surrounding the birthday of commander Van der Stel in Namaqualand. By now, even the fact that the Namaquas were capable of orderly dancing was considered astonishing (Valentyn 1971:292).

There were both empirical and ontological reasons for moving the Namaquas to the 'wild' category in the official documents of the VOC. Since antiquity, a taxonomic distinction between the self and the other has been operative in the European experience of the unknown. The stranger was a savage, a heathen, wild, the opposite of the self-image of the European (Koselleck 1979). Since the sixteenth century, this self-image has become insinuated in the entire Western European way of life (Van den Boogaart 1982:14). This development is visible also in southern Africa, in confrontations with indigenous populations. The Khoi were considered repulsive because they did not behave themselves according to Dutch and, in general, European standards of civilised behaviour: comprehensible language, acceptable eating habits, neat clothing—the products of the civilizing process that began in the Middle Ages (Elias 1978-1982). The Namaquas, on the other hand, behaved just like the Dutch; at least according to Eva. After all, they did wear neat clothes, live in fine houses, go to church, and so on. Consequently they were attractive representatives of the civilised interior. Experience, however, provided the insight that the Namaquas did not in fact behave like the Dutch. To this was added their apparent 'deceitfulness'. The result was that they were assigned a new place in the taxonomy: in the journal of the last expedition they become 'wild people' like the Cape Khoi were from the beginning.

The demotion of the Namaquas, their textual removal from the civilised interior to the wild peripheral regions, necessitated an adjustment in the Dutch discourse of southern Africa. Although the Namaquas were not yet quite as loathsome in the early sixties as they were later to become, they were also not the suitable trading partners with access to Monomotapa that they were initially presumed to be. In the imaginary discourse of the interior, this resulted in the removal of the border of civilisation further inland. The role of civilised intermediaries to Monomotapa was now ascribed to other peoples: the Brigodys ('Brickje'), the Chobonas or Choboquas, Bri and Gri ('Grienbri') (Mossop 1931:120) all began to take over the role of the Namaquas in representation. The border between wild and civilised was also increasingly identified with the imaginary river Vigiti Magna. It was revealed that the Namaquas were wild and that they lived a few days' journey from the Vigiti Magna. The Namaquas had assured the expeditions that the intervening region was dry. The civilised agriculturists were thus to be sought on the banks of the Vigiti Magna. This river, therefore, became a goal of later expeditions.

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B.W. Vilakazi: The Poet as Inspired Prophet

Thengani H. Ngwenya

> As symptomatic structures, works of art preserve certain homologies with the social and economic structures of their time, and are important sources of information about human history: every work of art is, *inter alia*, an important social document, and it is foolish to think that it can be somehow 'above' such things. On the other hand, art can be seen as something we understand better by its being approached through a prior consideration of facts surrounding its birth (Thurley 1983:5).

In the wake of revisionist approaches to South African literary history evident in the recently published books and journal articles on South African literary history[1], perhaps the time has come for a re-appraisal of the achievements and significance of those black writers who, for socio-political and ideological reasons, were relegated to a marginal position in relation to the English-dominated South African literary establishment. C.F. Swanepoel's (1996:20) comments on the peripheral status of African-language literature(s) alert us to the urgency of reviewing the underpinning assumptions of Southern African literary historiography:

> There seems to exist a South African literary history of which African-language literature is not part, and consequently finds itself in a position of marginality. Put differently, there seems to exist a South(ern) African literature in African languages which is either not (yet) regarded as part of South African literary history, or has not (yet) been described sufficiently to fit into the wider South African context.

In a similar vein, the literary historian Albert Gérard (1993:64), reminds us of the crucial role that literary scholars can play during this time of fundamental social transformation and reconstruction in South Africa:

> ... in this polyethnic, plurilingual country and at this decisive moment in history, they

[1] Recent books on South African literary history include Chapman (1996); Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993) and Smit et al. (1996).

> [literary scholars] are summoned to an even more crucial task: to help cure the traditional divisiveness by making each single human group aware of the scope and magnitude, and of the depth and subtlety in the literary achievements of the other groups. By thus fostering cultural understanding and mutual esteem, they will contribute their proper share to the necessary building up of a cohesive nation.

Whether we (as South African literary scholars) regard nations as 'imagined communities' with no empirical existence or as social groups with shared and definitive characteristics, we would be shirking our social responsibility if we ignored the challenge of fostering cultural understanding and tolerance among the various social groups that constitute the emerging South African 'nation'.

Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, the Zulu literary scholar, novelist and poet who is generally regarded as the founder of modern Zulu poetry[2] belongs to the group of mainly mission-educated writer-intellectuals most of whom wrote in both their native languages and English. This group includes such writers and critics as J.J.R. Jolobe, S.E.K. Mqhayi. H.I.E. Dhlomo and R.R.R. Dhlomo. Before his premature death at the age of 42 in 1947, Vilakazi had published two volumes of poetry: *Inkondlo KaZulu* (1935) and *Amal'ezulu* (1945). In 1973 Vilakazi's poems were rendered into English by Florence Louie Friedman from the literal translations of the Zulu poems by D. McK. Malcolm and J.M. Sikakana[3]. Apart from creative writing, Vilakazi also wrote a handful of scholarly critical essays the most frequently cited of which is the one entitled 'The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu' which was part of a thesis accepted by the University of the Witwatersrand for the M.A. degree in 1938. Vilakazi's doctoral thesis, accepted by the department of Bantu studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1945, was entitled *The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni*. As Gérard (1993:61) has pointed out, Vilakazi's thesis 'has the distinction of treating literature in two different, although related, languages, Xhosa and Zulu, simultaneously'. Thus in the work of Vilakazi we have a classic example of a scholar-poet who reflected in a sustained and systematic manner on the technical, aesthetic and mythological foundations of imaginative writing in Zulu. However, in spite of his obvious versatility as a writer and critic it is in the field of poetry that Vilakazi made his most distinctive contribution to Zulu literature.

My concern in this chapter is to offer a socio-critical evaluation of a selection

[2] See Nyembezi (1961:7); Ntuli (1984:1); Malcolm (1949:38); Bang (1951:524) and A.T. Cope (1984:14).

[3] All quotations in this chapter have been taken from Florence Louie Friedman's translations in *Zulu Horizons* (1973). Quotations of the original Zulu versions of the poems are from *Izinkondlo zika B.W. Vilakazi* (1993) edited by D.B.Z. Ntuli abbreviated as *Izinkondlo*.

of Vilakazi's poems in which he examines the sources of his poetic inspiration and foregrounds what he considers to be his social roles and obligations as a 'modern' Zulu poet. Thus the central focus of my discussion will be on those poems that Adrian Koopman has aptly described as 'inspirational poems'. Koopman (1980:3) further points out that in these poems Vilakazi 'seeks not only to discover himself as a Zulu, but to find out what it is that inspires him to write poetry'. In spite of his desire, expressed in some of his poems, to be seen as following the tradition of Zulu oral poets (*izimbongi*), Vilakazi seems to have been aware of his role as a poet of the written word as distinct from the oral poets such as Mshongweni, Magolwane KaMkhathini, Mxhamama KaNtendeka and other royal poets who sang the praises of Zulu kings[4]. As I hope to show, Vilakazi's poems and his critical writings reflect his awareness of the inherent contradictions underlying the challenging task of having to ensure the continuity and preservation of Zulu traditions while simultaneously devising new strategies and forms of poetic expression to suit the modern context.

Focusing on the role of the poet as a witness and participant in the process of cultural transformation, my analysis of the poems dealing with the subject of the poetic imagination and the poet's social roles will take into account Vilakazi's self-conception as the poet whose task is to preserve the cultural heritage of his people. As C.L.S. Nyembezi (1973:xix) rightly points out:

> He [Vilakazi] was gravely concerned lest the Zulu heritage be lost to the younger generations. In his poems he refers over and over again to the need for preserving those things which are sacred and precious to the Zulu nation.

This view is confirmed by Vilakazi himself in the poem entitled 'I Hear A Singing ...' (Ngizw' ingoma):

> *Ingoma yenu ngiqale ngayizwa,*
> *Ngayizwa ngayeya ngokungazi,*
> *Namuhla sengiyayiqonda ngiyayithobela.*

[4] For a discussion of Zulu national poets see Ngubane (1951); Gunner (1984); Cope (1968); and Rycroft & Ngcobo (1988). In *Zulu Horizons* Friedman (cf. Nyembezi 1973:77) comments as follows on the role of the traditional *imbongi*: 'The Zulu word *imbongi* has been translated as "poet"; but this is inadequate because the *imbongi*, in addition to being the tribal poet laureate, is the chief's official praise-singer. He must therefore be familiar with tribal history and background and know too the idiosyncrasies and personal habits of the chief or king or hero whom he praises. The *imbongi* is also expected to have memorized the praises of several generations of tribal chiefs whose songs would have been taught to him by word of mouth by his predecessor.

Laph' amazw' enu engqongq' esifubeni,
Eloloz' ezibilini zozwel' oludala
Enilutape KwaZulu neduka nomhlaba,
Ningikhumbuz' okungasekho
Nengingenamandl' okukubamba
Noma sengikhal' ezimaconsi (Ntuli 1993:74f).

When first I heard our tribal songs
They seemed to me of little worth;
But now their message echoes in my heart.
Secrets and timeless passions haunt a lilt
Inspired by Zululand's sons and their traditions.
These songs recall a past so swiftly fading
That now I fear its meaning may elude me
Although I weep with longing to preserve it (Vilakazi 1973:33).

In examining Vilakazi's chosen roles as the custodian of cultural values and an intermediary between the dominant Western culture and the 'swiftly fading' Zulu culture, I shall be guided by the central propositions of Lucien Goldmann's theory known as genetic structuralism the key principles of which are explained by Terry Eagleton (1976:33f) in the following terms:

> What Goldmann is seeking ... is a set of structural relations between literary text, world vision and history itself. He wants to show how the historical situation of a social group or class is transposed, by the mediation of its world vision, into the structure of a literary work. To do this it is not enough to begin with the text and work outwards to history, or vice versa; what is required is a dialectical method of criticism which moves constantly between text, world vision and history, adjusting each to the others.

It is my hope that this discussion will serve to illuminate interconnections between historical context and textual production as exemplified by Vilakazi's poetry. As the anthropologist and critic, Absalom Vilakazi (1975:134f) explains in a review of *Zulu Horizons*, Vilakazi (the poet) would, in all probability, have thought of his poetic talent as having been shaped in various ways by his social environment:

> While Vilakazi did not elaborate a social theory of literature, he would have agreed with the proposition that the poet springs from the bosom of his social group and therefore reflects the historical social experiences of that group. That this was indeed his perception of a poet as 'the voice of his people' is shown by the fact that he sought inspiration from 'waiting outside the palisades of Dukuza'. It was from here that he heard his people saying: 'Be our voice'.

What the literary sociologist Lucien Goldmann (1980:112) refers to as the 'world vision' or 'world view' evolves from any social group's attempts to create a meaningful and coherent value system out of its material and social circumstances:

> World views are historical and social facts. They are totalities of ways of thinking, feeling and acting which in given conditions are imposed on men (sic) finding themselves in a similar economic and social situation.

As I shall argue, Vilakazi's poetry presents a world vision characterised by both discrepancies and interpenetration between African 'traditionalism' and Western 'modernity'. The poet and the social group(s)—defined in terms of ethnicity, race, and class—whose outlook he attempts to articulate in his poetry, have to adapt to the demands of a modern existence while simultaneously endeavouring to retain what they see as the essential features of their indigenous cultural identity. Consequently, Vilakazi's poetry reflects the dilemmas and uncertainties of a poet caught between the hegemonic literary practices and ideologies of Western culture and the traditional myths, beliefs and cultural practices of his native culture. This tension is also evident in Vilakazi's attempts to combine traditional forms with Western ones, as well in his constant invocation of the protective and inspirational spirits of the ancestors while showing equal respect for the basic doctrines of the Christian religion. Thus social institutions such as religion, education and tribal traditions and belief systems provide a framework, or, as Goldmann would say, the 'englobing structure' within which Vilakazi's poetry may be interpreted. In line with his self-portrayal as a preserver of culture, the world view which is given prominence in Vilakazi's poetry is that of the traditional Zulu community, the essential features of which are outlined by Absalom Vilakazi (1965:136):

> There were certain presuppositions in the culture which were of fundamental importance for the general well-being of everybody, the unity of the lineage and its patterns of mutuality and reciprocity, the supremacy of ancestral spirits ... and the certainty that old traditional methods of rearing children or of enculturation would make for cultural stability. This ensured the acceptance of a common world view, a common tribal sentiment, common allegiances and common interests[5].

However, it is worth pointing out that the 'world views' of the social groups presented in Vilakazi's poetry are neither consistent nor homogenous, instead they are characterised by inherent contradictions and ambiguities. For instance, Vilakazi sees himself and would like to be seen by his readers as a spokesperson of a circumscribed ethnic

[5] On the various aspects of the Zulu world view, see also Krige's (1936) study of traditional Zulu culture.

group, yet the concept of the nation in his poetry does not consistently refer to the ethnic group of which he is a member. Whereas in some of his poems he deliberately constructs personae who assume the stance of mission-educated Africans who appreciate the utilitarian value of Western education and religion, in other poems he portrays the collective plight of the urbanised Africans caught in the intricate web of racial oppression and proletarianisation[6]. Evidently, Vilakazi's poetry raises complex questions regarding issues of nationalism, ethnicity, class and contending ideologies.

Furthermore, a careful reading of Vilakazi's poetry reveals the various ways in which he consciously resisted the attitudes and values that most commentators have attributed to the class of educated (Westernised and predominantly Christian) blacks during the first part of this century. Gail Gerhart's (1978:34) comment on the values of the emergent black bourgeoisie is typical[7]:

> Though not cut off from contact with traditional society, this African elite was in many ways alienated from traditional customs and norms. A belief in the superiority of Western culture was basic to its world view, and its goals were unabashedly assimilationist. Having come through the experience of missionary boarding schools, it was well steeped in the liberal and Christian presumptions which prevailed in these institutions, including the optimistic liberal faith in the inevitability of progress.

Vilakazi's poetry tells a slightly different story: that some 'educated' Africans attempted to counter the influence of liberal humanism with their own historicised version of 'African humanism'[8]. Thus instead of seeing Western culture as superior to his own native culture Vilakazi saw the two cultures as epistemologically different yet complimentary. Thus Vilakazi may be credited not only with having blazed the trail for Zulu

[6] Gunner (1988:224) comments as follows on the conception of the 'African' in Vilakazi's most anthologised poem, 'Ezinkomponi': 'It is clear that although Vilakazi refers specifically to past Zulu victories he uses the references as emblems of a wider, confident African past. In his thoughts for the future, his reference to "rightful Black hands" expresses a longing for a broader African repossession of the land and an inheritance that is far more than narrowly Zulu. His vision is both regional and national, and in an important way he is able to embrace both rural and urban sensibilities. This is rare among South African writers of any race'.

[7] See for instance, Couzens (1985); Magubane (1979); Marks (1986) and Bundy (1979) for a discussion of class divisions within the black communities during the first part of the twentieth century.

[8] Vilakazi's response to what was perceived to be an inherently superior culture and lifestyle, is to show, in his poetry, that Zulu cultural practices and institutions have an inherent value and social utility. This is a creative way of humanising and redeeming a discredited value system. Although Vilakazi may not have seen it in these terms, this is a political act with far-reaching ideological implications.

modern poets but also with having succeeded in the difficult task of combining two culturally and aesthetically different conceptions of poetry. Writing in the modern era of the 1930s and 1940s, Vilakazi attempted to re-define the role of the poet as an inspired interpreter of his people's collective experience as well as the chosen mouthpiece of the ancestors. As D.B.Z. Ntuli (1984:102) puts it:

> In most of the poems in which Vilakazi attributes inspiration to some spiritual source he elevates the spirit and humbles himself. He regards himself as a mere tool through which the spirit can work.

Perhaps the most glaring gap in the criticism of Vilakazi's poetry is in the area of Zulu mythology and belief system and how these inform and underpin his poetry. A cursory reading of Vilakazi's poems reveals that he had a profound grasp of and appreciation for the beliefs and myths of the Zulu nation and that he tried to examine his own role as a poet within the context of these cultural elements. However, any assessment of Vilakazi's poetry also has to take into account the very powerful influence of Christian values and Western education on Vilakazi as a young man and later as a scholar and writer. Most critics who have written on Vilakazi's development as a writer and critic stress the crucial role missionary education played in shaping his poetic vision and stimulating his love for education. A typical comment in this regard is that made by C.L.S. Nyembezi (1973:xvii):

> As a student at Marianhill, Vilakazi acted as secretary to Father Bernard Huss. It was probably this association more than any other factor that influenced Vilakazi ever more strongly to seek distant educational horizons.

While the influence of Catholic priests had its own discernible effect in shaping Vilakazi's artistic consciousness and moral vision, he seems to have deliberately chosen to recognise both Christian values and traditional African values as equally valid sources of inspiration.

In her incisive study of class and nationalism in twentieth-century Natal, Shula Marks has shown that there were distinct material and ideological differences between the non-converted traditionalists and the Westernised *kholwa* community or the so-called '*ama*respectables'. However instead of emphasising the ideological consistency of the newly acquired world view, Marks highlights what she rightly describes as the 'ambiguities' characteristic of the behaviour patterns and cultural outlook of the *kholwa* community. For instance, it may seem anomalous, if not plainly self-contradictory, that the educated and Christianised Vilakazi would think of himself as an inspired messenger of the national ancestors. However, the phenomenon of

'deculturation'[9] which Daniel Kunene regards as a feature of the outlook displayed by mission-educated African writers who assume, often unconsciously, the perspective of the colonialist, hardly applies to Vilakazi, nor does the following rather reductive comment made by David Westlely (1979:9):

> ... for the literate Zulu of the first half of the twentieth century, Christianity becomes, paradoxically, the foundation of Zulu morality, of *ubuntu*, 'Zulu-hood' or simply, human dignity.

Instead of seeing Vilakazi as one of the 'decultured' Africans, he should be credited for his successful attempts to utilise the liberal-Christian ideology in his endeavour to promote his own culture. Apparently, Vilakazi was aware of the extent of the cultural and moral discord between what may be broadly described as African traditionalism on the one hand, and Western modernity on the other hand, and seems to have understood the challenges this posed for the writer whose aim is to explore the underlying myths, beliefs and symbols of his culture while relying on the standard conventions of Western poetry to perform this task. As he put it in an article published three years after the appearance of his first volume of poems:

> There is no doubt that the poetry of the West will influence all Bantu poetry because all the new ideas of our age have reached us through European standards. But there is something we must not lose sight of. If we imitate the form, the outward decoration which decks the charming poetry of our Western masters, that does not mean to say that we have incorporated into our poetry even their spirit. If we use Western stanza-forms and metrical system we employ them only as vehicles or receptacles for our poetic images, depicted as we see and conceive (Vilakazi 1938:127).

That Vilakazi attempted to imitate the 'form' of Western poetry in his first collection was noticed by the Xhosa poet and critic D.D.T. Jabavu (1943:11) who commented as follows in his review of *Inkondlo KaZulu*:

> When we come to the poetry book *Inkondlo KaZulu* by B. W. Vilakazi we come to the one great book of poetry in Zulu that attains to the rank of a classic. It is English influence *in excelsis*, by reason of its outright imitation of English modes (metres long, short and common; all varieties of stanzas, elegaics, sonnets, rhymes, and even

[9] Daniel Kunene (1989:19) defines deculturation as follows: 'By deculturation is meant the process whereby a people is pressured into developing a negative self-image and consequently rejecting its own cultural identity. This opens the way for an aggressive acculturation that assumes the inferiority of the decultured group and the superiority of the acculturating group'.

> the heroic couplet reminiscent of Pope and Dryden) all punctiliously observed. Even the titles remind one of Keats in disguising their subject, ensuring that *ars artem celare est.*

Both in his choice of topics and in his deployment of poetic techniques, Vilakazi's first volume of poetry reflects the influence of the British Romantic poets[10]. As suggested above, Vilakazi would argue that the poems in *Inkondlo KaZulu* reflect the influence of European 'form' in the poetic presentation of a recognisably African 'content'.

In *Amal'ezulu* Vilakazi dispenses with European poetic techniques such as rhyme and metre and begins to imitate the style of the Zulu *izibongo*. As Cope (1984:17) observes:

> In *Amal'ezulu* Vilakazi leaves behind his duty to tradition [British Romantic tradition] and advances to the fulfilment of his romantic temperament under the guidance of his personal muse, which he slowly realises to be a Zulu muse. He becomes what he had wanted to be and what he had tried to be in his historical poems, the voice of the Zulu people; but now he speaks not from the relatively recent and specific standpoint of Shaka, but from the depths of the Zulu experience.

It is in this collection that the reader finds most of the poems in which Vilakazi reflects on his own role as a poet. In 'Power of Inspiration' the speaker describes an episode in which the aspirant poet, probably Vilakazi himself, seeks admission to king Shaka's court in Dukuza. After what seems to be an interminable waiting period he is finally invited to enter. While inside the palace, he falls asleep and has a dream in which he is entrusted with the task of being a national poet by a woman who is arguably the most powerful female figure in Zulu history, Shaka's aunt, Mnkabayi. After this encounter with Mnkabayi, the poet, like a trainee diviner (*ithwasa*), has no option but to carry out the sacred tasks assigned to him by the ancestors. The poet's words suggest that he is *destined* to bear the heavy yet spiritually rewarding burden of being the voice of his people:

> *Namhla kangikwaz' ukuthula noma*
> *Lapho ngilele ngikwesikaBhadakazi,*
> *Ngivuswa NguMnkabayi ethi kimi:*
> *'Vuka wena kaMancinza!*

[10] It has become a critical commonplace to regard Vilakazi as a Zulu Romantic Poet. Cope's (1984:14) comment is typical of this view: 'Vilakazi was a romantic by temperament and his first poems were odes to the wind, birds and flowers, even to a Zulu clay pot (Grecian Urn), very much in the style of, in fact in imitation of, the English Romantic poets'.

Kawuzalelwanga ukulal' ubuthongo.
Vuk' ubong' indaba yemikhonto!
Nank' umthwal' engakwethwesa wona' (Ntuli 1993:142).

Thus now I can never be silent
Because in the depths of the night
Mnkabayi arouses me saying:
'Arise, O you son of Mancinza!
Your destiny bids you waken
And sing to us legends of battle:
This charge, I command you, fulfil!' (Vilakazi 1973:77).

Combining partly realistic and partly visionary modes, this poem describes the complex process of initiation which the poet had undergone before assuming his place among the national poets. Moreover, it is most significant that the poet does not seek legitimation from any nameless muse but from king Shaka's court as this implies that his status and authority as a poet have been conferred by the leader and founder of the Zulu nation. Thus instead of presenting himself in the typical Romantic tradition as the individualised voice for whom poetry is a creative response to the feelings of solitude and alienation, Vilakazi portrays the task of writing poetry as a sacred duty which has a national significance. Significantly, the poet's visionary encounter with the representative of the national ancestors (Mnkabayi) takes the form of a dream. As Krige (1936:299-310), Msimang (1975:304) and Berglund (1989:136) have shown, dreams are a very important means by which ancestors communicate with the living, especially with those they have selected for the sacred task of divination (*ubungoma*). It is also worth noting that Mnkabayi instructs the newly initiated poet to write poems about the heroic achievements of the Zulu nation: 'Sing to us legends of battle'. Therefore, poems such as 'UShaka KaSenzangakhona', 'Khalani maZulu', 'NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka' and other historical poems may be seen as the poet's response to this ancestral injunction.

The role of the spirits in Vilakazi's inspirational poems is not confined to the recovery of the heroic past; Vilakazi envisions his own role as an ancestor who will return in the form of dreams to inspire the younger generation of the artistically inclined. As he puts it in 'In Celebration of Fifty Years' (*Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumi mahlanu*):

Siyobuya njengomoya
Wamathongo namadlozi,
Sifukamel' isikole.
Lapho wena mfana uzwa

Umoy' uwahlaz' ihlamvu,
Ophahleni ebusuku-
Yebo kobe kuyithina,
Sikuphuphis' amaphupho
Amamathekis' ingane

...
Bosukuma mfan' uvuke
Uthath' usib' oluloba
Umcabango nezindaba
Esiyokunika zona,
Sizithol' emathongweni
AwoFulansi noNgcayi
Eminyakeni ezayo
Engamashum' ayisihlanu (Ntuli 1993:128f).

Then shall we all in truth return
And, like our own ancestral spirits,
Become the guardian angels of the college.
Therefore, young reader, hear my voice
In echoing winds that stir the leaves
And whisper in the night around the house!—
For thus do we come back again
And bring to you the blessed dreams
That cause an infant's smile;

...
Therefore, young reader, wake and rise!—
Take up your pen that you may write
The thoughts with which we now infuse you,
Inspired in us by noble spirits
Of men like Francis and Ngcayi,
That children yet unborn may read them
Fifty years from now (Vilakazi 1973:73f).

The deliberate juxtaposition of traditional symbols and images with those associated with modernity in this poem is indicative of the commingling of two formerly disparate world views. Significantly, the ancestors guarding the Catholic school where Vilakazi studied include both the white missionaries and Christian Zulus. Thus the idea of ancestral inspiration is shrewdly re-interpreted to include recognisably Christian beliefs.

In 'Higher Education', a poem with an overtly autobiographical orientation, Vilakazi expresses the view that his acquisition of Western education has reinforced

his status as the pioneer of Zulu creative writing. In an unusually prescient and prophetic manner, he anticipates his own immortality as a literary figure and gives credit for all his achievements to the national ancestors who offered him the necessary guidance and inspiration and gave him access to knowledge which will be useful to future generations:

Ngibon' amagama esizwe sonke.
Amehl' amadloz' angibhekile;
Amathong' abeke nezihlangu,
Alalele ngaphansi komhlaba,
Athi mangingene ngikhothiswe
Ukhamba ngoba ngingakhohlwanga.

Ngikhothe ngadla ngabek' ethala,
Ngibekel' usapho lwakwaZulu,
Lusale lukhoth' ezincwadini,
Luxabane lodwa luchazana
Nezint' engazibhala ebesuku,
Ngingazange ngizisukele ngibhale,
Ngibeleselwe yinina mathong' ohlanga,
Ningixabanis' ingqond' ebusuku.
Kuleyo nkathi ngiyobe sengafa (Ntuli 1993:148).

I think of heroes of my nation,
I see ancestral eyes regard me
And spirits put aside their shields
As, from beds of earth, they speak
To tell me I shall share their beer-
For never shall I be forgotten.

I gained degrees, I wrote my books,
That other children of Zululand
Might taste one day my fruits of knowledge,
Study, debate and help each other
While learning from my nightly writings.
These, never inspired by mere ambition,
Were prompted by you, ancestral spirits
Who stirred my thoughts in hours of darkness:
But I shall be here no longer (Vilakazi 1973:83).

The themes of creativity and ancestral inspiration are further explored in 'The Poet' (*Imbongi*). In this poem the speaker has been appropriately initiated into the community of praise-poets and assigned the role of an intermediary between the living and the departed. As he says:

Konje ngabe yim' engikhulumayo,
Noma ngabe nguwe Thongo likaMbongi?
Ngabe ngizwe kahle noma ngiyahlongozelwa?
Ngingakazalwa umhlaba wawungenandlela;
Ungaziwa, ungaqondakali, ngawubamba.
Ngizwe umemeza, Mbongi, phambi kwami,
Wangihola ngodondolo ngingaboni, ngabona.
Ngidedele ngibonge, ngivul' indlela nami
KwaMhlaba (Ntuli 1993:143).

O how can I capture thoughts which haunt me now?
Are these my words or yours, O deathless Muse?
And do I voice the truth or fatuous nonsense?
Before you claimed my soul, the earth was dark,
Pathless, mysterious: then I, inspired by you,
Could open my ears to singers of the past,
And grasping the poet's staff, pursue his path.
O let my songs as well, blaze trails on earth! (Vilakazi 1973:78).

Significantly, the 'muse' alluded to in this poem is not a particular spiritual being but a universal figure who inspires and sustains all poets. Yet even this universal muse is described within the context of Zulu cosmology. In line with the idea of the poet as an inspired prophet, the message of the speaking voice in the poem is indistinguishable from utterances of the immortal ancestors. Thus the bewildered speaker in the poem quizzically asks: 'Are these my words or yours , O deathless Muse?'. It is evident in this and other poems dealing with the theme of inspiration that Vilakazi's conception of the 'muse' combines both Western and African constitutive features. However in 'The Muse of Learning' '*Ithongo Lokwazi*' there is no doubt that Vilakazi is addressing a Zulu leader (Muse of Ndaba) who is presented as the custodian of the Zulu national heritage. It may seem paradoxical that Vilakazi seeks to preserve oral folklore and history kept in 'vessels' and 'calabashes' in the modern mode of writing. In the poem he makes an earnest appeal to the 'glorious Muse' who is knowledgeable in 'primal laws and ancient customs' to help him preserve this valuable knowledge in his creative writing:

Ngiphe, ungicaphunele namuhla
Kuleyo ndebe oyigcin' ethala lobuzwe,
Ikhono lokugcoba phansi lokhw' engikuzwayo,

Ngibekel' izimfaba nezinkedama zikaNdaba.
Udum' akulwami, kodwa ngolwakho wedwa-
Laph' umuntw' ebeyini, angazith' udumo
Engaluphakelwa nguwe, kulawo magobongo
Nezimbiz' ezithule, zingakathintwa muntu?
Ngiyacela Thongo likaNdaba! (Ntuli 1993:75f).

Dear Muse! Impart to me today
Your knowledge of my people's heritage,
That I, endowed with power to record it,
May pass it on to Zulus yet unborn!
No fame I covet!—Glory is yours alone,
For what is Man that he should merit honour!
So let me drink this nectar from your vessels
And calabashes never impaired or tarnished!
O, hear me, I implore you, Muse of Ndaba! (Vilakazi 1973:34).

The Zulu writer and critic, D.B.Z.Ntuli (1984:99) argues that Vilakazi's conception of the muse is foreign to Zulu culture:

> Apart from acknowledging the help of the spirits of the known ancestors, Vilakazi believes that there is a special spirit responsible for giving inspiration to the artists. This concept is foreign to the Zulus. Vilakazi got it from Western poetry where we often find reference being made to the muses, the goddesses to which inspiration in various arts is attributed.

While I agree with Ntuli that the idea of the poetic muse is foreign to Zulu culture, I would argue that Vilakazi's presentation and interpretation of this concept in poems such as 'Power of Inspiration', 'Higher Education', '*UMamina*', 'The Poet', 'The Poet's Prayer' and 'The Muse of Learning', is largely underpinned by Zulu beliefs and traditions. For example, in 'The Poet' the speaker makes it abundantly clear that 'the muse' is one of the ancestral spirits. The Zulu phrase, '*Thongo likaMbongi*' is perhaps more emphatic in this regard as it is a direct reference to the poet as an ancestor *(ithongo)* than the rather vague English translation 'deathless muse'. Evidently Vilakazi is offering a culturally contextualised interpretation of the 'foreign' conception of the muse.

As noted earlier, the conception of the inspiring muse in Vilakazi's poetry assumes both African and Western features. For instance, in 'The Poet's Prayer' (*Umthandazo Wembongi*) Vilakazi the admirer of classical music, appeals to the 'hallowed Muse of Melody' which he believes inspired classical composers such as Schubert, Beethoven and Chopin to enkindle a similar creative fervour among his own people:

Zingifak' umona,
Ngishishimezwe ubunjonjo.
We, maNyanda kaZulu!
Vusa nakithina,
Sizwe sikaSobantu,
Esiyimisebenzi yezandla zakho,
Izingcwet' eziphilel' inhlokomo
Yomphefumulo neminjunju yenyama:
Zibamb' iminyibe yezulu namafu,
NjengoShubeti noBithovini noPinsuti (Ntuli 1993:144).

O children of Zulus!
Those harmonies arouse my drowsing spirit
And stir my aspiration.
I pray you Lord, awake my own black people!-
Your children too, created in your image-
That they as well may voice the spirit's longings
And torments of the flesh;
That they as well may reach towards the heavens
No less than Schubert, Beethoven and Chopin (Vilakazi 1973:79).

In 'Umamina—an Ode to the Muse' a poem which shares some features in both its title and some aspects of content with Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself', the inspired and almost hallucinatory poet celebrates the mysterious power of the inspiring spirit who assumes various forms in the poem including that of an enchantingly beautiful yet elusive maiden. This poem which has been variously interpreted as a love poem, a nature poem, and as an elegy (Ntuli 1984:103), is essentially an ode in which the poet uses a love relationship as a metaphor to describe the creative process. The poem describes, in intensely metaphorical language, the operation of the poet's creative imagination. In analyzing this thematically complex poem we should be guided by its particularly suggestive title which implies that the poet is talking about his own inner sustaining spirit. Wainwright (1977:50) has referred to '*Mamina*' as 'the culmination of Vilakazi's search for inspiration'. In one important sense, therefore, '*Mamina*' represents Vilakazi's creative talent. As Cope (1984:17) has remarked:

> In '*UMamina*' ('the personification of the essence of myself') he finds his muse in the same way that a diviner finds inspiration and fulfilment through his (sic) ancestral spirit, after painful and perilous experiences.

The analogy implicit in Cope's comparison between the diviner and the poet seems to be a more accurate interpretation of Vilakazi's conception of inspiration and the role

of the 'muse' than Ntuli's comment quoted above. It should be noted, however, that Cope is merely making a comparison and not offering any conclusive views about Vilakazi's self-conception as the mouthpiece of the ancestors. With unusual frankness, Cope (1984:17) admits that he cannot make any firm judgement on this issue because, as a critic, he finds it 'difficult to say how close Vilakazi could have been to traditional Zulu beliefs and responses, bearing in mind his Christian and academic background ...'. In other words what Cope is uncertain about here is the extent to which Vilakazi had been 'decultured' by the liberal-Christian ideology of the white missionaries and educators. The contention that Vilakazi's self-portrayal as the inspired interpreter of his people's collective experience suggests similarities with the functions of the *sangoma* has some validity. In '*UMamina*' Vilakazi consciously uses terminology and imagery associated with the art of divination to describe his own role as a 'poet-diviner'. Words such as 'bewildered', 'madness', 'rapture', 'obsession', 'spell' and 'possession' all suggest the intensity of the inspired poet's feelings. Like a diviner, the poet has been 'called' to perform a sacred duty. As Koopman (1980:17) elaborates:

> The *isangoma* is a social interpreter; he sees beneath the surface and reveals what is hidden. He is the interpreter of dreams, and therefore the link between the *abaphilayo* and the *abaphansi*, i.e. the living and those below. Vilakazi sees that the poet does something similar in that he puts the inchoate into words; that he puts into tangible form that which his audience only vaguely thinks or feels[11].

In terms of Goldmann's theory (1970:109f), Vilakazi as the poet-sangoma has access to the 'possible consciousness' of his social group which represents the most coherent formulation of the group's world-view:

> Great literary works ... originate from a certain social situation but, far from being the simple reflection of a collective consciousness, they are a particularly unified and coherent expression of the tendencies and aspirations of a given group. They express what the individual members of the group felt and thought without being conscious of it or without being able to formulate it so coherently. They are a meeting of the personal and the collective on the highest level of significant structuring.

Of all Vilakazi's poems '*UMamina*' is the poem which is closest both stylistically and thematically to the poetry of the British Romantic poets. In its use of natural imagery, its idealism, its focus on evanescent beauty and on the reciprocal relationship between

[11] For a discussion of the portrayal of diviners in Vilakazi's novels, see also Nyembezi's (1971) article 'The Use of Magic in Vilakazi's Novels'.

the poet's creative imagination and external objects, it shares some features with Keats' odes and Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. Invoking the revolutionary creative force symbolised by the West wind, the speaker in Shelley's poem says:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
> What if my leaves are falling like its own!
> The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
>
> Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
> Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Like Shelley who willingly surrenders to the controlling force of the wind, Vilakazi speaks of the over-powering yet sustaining effect of his mysterious muse. As suggested in the stanzas quoted below Mamina is in control of the poet's total being. Like a possessed person, the poet has no option but to comply with Mamina's wishes:

> Yebo Mamina, sengiyavuma.
> Amathong' angethwes' umthwalo,
> Ngiwuzwa ngiphapheme nakwaButhongo.
> Ngithi ngizumekile ngixoxiswe ngawe,
> Ngivuke ngokhel' ubhaqa ngiqoshame,
> Ngiphenduke ngelul' isandla,
> Ngikulolong' emagxalabeni.
> Ngizw' ikhambi lingen'ekhanda,
> Lingiphethul' ingqondo ngibamb' usiba,
> Kanti sekuyilapho ngihay' inkondlo,
> Ngiyizw' idilik' emafini nasemhlabathini,
> Iqubuk' emzimbeni nasemkhathini womoya (Ntuli 1993:188f).
>
> Yes, Mamina, I accept
> The spirit's decree that I should bear this burden:
> This knowledge haunts me—wakeful or asleep.
> How often in my dreams I hear your voice,
> Then waking, light a torch, sit up in bed,
> And stretch my arms in longing to caress
> Your shoulders gleaming near me.
> Thus inspiration comes to me
> And fills my heart and mind:
> I seize my pen; a song is drifting earthwards—
> I hear it falling downward from the skies
> To take possession of my soul and voice (Vilakazi 1973:114-116).

Perhaps the most remarkable similarity between the themes of '*UMamina*' and the concerns of the British Romantic poets is the speaker's preoccupation with the functioning of the creative imagination in Vilakazi's poem. As Frank Kermode et al. (1973:4) suggest, this was one of the defining features of romanticism:

> The major Romantic questers, whether we see these as the poets themselves or as the quasi-autobiographical heroes of their poems, are all engaged in the extraordinary enterprise of seeking to re-beget their own selves, as though through the imagination a man might hope to become his own father, or at least his own heroic precursor.

In '*UMamina*' the poet's desire to become part of the community of national poets is even more emphatically expressed than in 'Power of Inspiration'. As a result of the tireless efforts of the elusive and enchanting spiritual being known to Vilakazi as Mamina, the poet who apprehensively approached Shaka's palace at Dukuza now 'proudly sit[s] in council':

> Unginik' umgqik' ebandla,
> Ngazibuka ngiphakathi kwezimbongi,
> Izinxeleha zingengelez' ekhanda,
> Naphakathi kwamasok' angenakufa
> Ezizukulwaneni zezizukulwane.
> Ungenza ngilunywe ngamatekenya.
> Ngibhedle njalo ngingahlali ngithule (Ntuli 1993:186).

> Because of you, I proudly sit in council,
> Deeming myself as one among the poets
> Whose heads are crowned with laurel,
> Whose names will live forever on the lips
> Of each successive generation.
> Because of you my soul is in a ferment!
> Because of you I cannot be at peace! (Vilakazi 1973:113).

A careful reading of Vilakazi's poems dealing with theme of inspiration reveals that his understanding of the relationship between African/ Zulu and Western culture was far from simplistic but was largely characterised by a conscious desire to integrate the two world views into one coherent perspective. In his portrayal of the pre-colonial culture of his people Vilakazi does not adopt a dismissive stance often exhibited by the *kholwa* community of his time. The poems discussed above all suggest that Vilakazi saw his role as that of a 'cultural worker' or 'cultural activist' whose creative output had an important socio-historical dimension. In keeping with the view expressed in the poems discussed above, Vilakazi regards the ancestors of his nation as the

mainspring of his creative talent. While his poetic vision could be said to be backward-looking to the often idealised traditional past, it is also forward-looking to the concessions, adaptations and accommodations that must occur on both sides in the encounter between Africa and the West. As Raymond Kunene (1962:213) puts it:

> Much as he mourns for the past he has realised that the past is not very important unless it has principles or ideas of present application.

It is also remarkable that Vilakazi as a 'modern' poet chooses to utilise the cultural heritage of his people to conceptualise and define his role. Like the poets associated with Black Consciousness philosophy in the 1970s, Vilakazi seems to have been aware of the crucial role played by the myths, rituals and symbols of the past in the creation of a new self-assertive political consciousness.

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'Road to Consciousness': *And A Threefold Cord* and *The Stone Country*

Jabulani Mkhize

As in Alex la Guma's *A Walk in the Night* (1967b), the subject and style of his *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) have their roots in his early journalism. A documentary vignette, which appeared in La Guma's 'Up My Alley' (*New Age* 27 June 1957), and in which he focuses on how adverse winter weather conditions affect slum dwellers, is the likely source of La Guma's subjects in this novel. For La Guma's concern with the plight of the poor slum dwellers of the Cape Flats is also at the core of the plot of *And A Threefold Cord* (1988). As the novel begins, the Pauls family, which lives in a dilapidated pondokkie in Windermere, is not only threatened by the incessant rain which highlights the need for attention to a leaking roof, but is also concerned with the deteriorating health of Dad Pauls. Charlie, Dad Pauls's eldest son, who consistently demonstrates his concern for his father's fragile health, attempts to repair the leaking roof. The ultimate death of Dad Pauls, however, seems to spell disaster for his family—translating into a reality the idiom 'it never rains but it pours'. Firstly, Ronald, Charlie's younger brother, is arrested for stabbing his girlfriend, Susie Meyer, whom he is convinced has betrayed him by having a sexual encounter with the lonely garage owner, George Mostert. Secondly, a pondokkie which belongs to Freda, Charlie's girlfriend, is razed to the ground and her children are incinerated as a result of a faulty primus stove which is left burning in the shack to keep the children warm. Nevertheless, the novel ends on a positive note when Charlie accepts responsibility for Freda's welfare and invites her to join the Pauls family.

La Guma's writing of *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) was prompted by a request from Seven Seas Publishers in Berlin, East Germany, who approached him while he was detained in Roeland Street jail in Cape Town, inviting him to write a novel for publication (Abrahams 1985:69). Hitherto, La Guma had written a short story, 'The Wedding' (Abrahams 1991), which, although its plot revolves around the Pauls family, is not overtly political, its central thrust being the arrangements being made for the marriage of the daughter of the Pauls[1]. However, the knowledge that the novel, *And A Threefold Cord* (1988), was to be published in East Germany must have had an impact

[1] The characters in the short story are, with some slight changes, the same as those in the novel.

not only on La Guma's conception or composition of this work but also on its intended ideological effect on a wider international audience. It is perhaps for this reason that the novel is more overtly political. Chandramohan correctly identifies two 'concessions' made by La Guma in the novel to accommodate the expectations of an 'overseas readership': firstly, Brian Bunting's foreword which not only introduces La Guma, the political activist and creative writer, to a wider audience, but also attempts to provide what is called in Marxist terms 'the conditions of the novel's production' (La Guma 1988). Secondly, the novel provides a glossary of Afrikaans words which is clearly meant for a non-South African readership (Chandramohan 1992:94).

On one level, La Guma provides a somewhat 'innocent' reason as a motivation for his writing of the novel:

> ... it was a matter of recording history or recording situation. The book is about suburban slums which is a character of the South African scene .... This is just another scene in the life of the community, another facet of the picture. I decided again that the picture of the suburban slums did not appear anywhere in South African writing, so I said well why shouldn't I do it, because it is part of our life, our scene, so it should appear in the picture (Abrahams 1985:70).

In these words, La Guma alludes to his novels as providing individual 'pictures' of South African 'totality'—a comment obviously strengthened by the fact that the interview took place when most of his novels had already been published—and reaffirms his role as a social historian.

La Guma's use of subjects drawn from his journalism is but one indication that it might well have been his intention to 'record history'. It would seem, however, that on another level, an arguably more immediate motivation for the writing of this novel is the one spelt out by La Guma in his response to Abrahams's question about the weather as a dominant feature of the novel. He points out:

> Well, part of the fact is that the weather plays a part in creating the atmosphere and it helps to describe the scenes and so on. There is also the fact that overseas people believe the South African regime's tourist propaganda that it is a country with a perfect weather. I had an idea that rather we could use the weather as a feature of South Africa, but also in terms of its symbolic potential, and thus at the same time to make it genuinely South African. In other words I am contesting official propaganda of South Africa's natural beauty and trying to show the world that the tourist poster world of wonderful beaches and beautiful golf links is not the total picture (Abrahams 1985:71f).

Authorial intention, then, reveals La Guma's recognition of the political ideological

effect that his work might have on a wider international audience as having served as an impetus for his writing of the novel.

In line with La Guma's avowed intention referred to above *And A Threefold Cord* (1988:1) begins with exhaustive descriptions of weather:

> In the north-west the rainheads piled up, first in cottony tufts blown away by the high wind, then in skeins of dull cloud, and finally in high climbing battlements: like a rough wall of mortar built across the horizon, so that the sun had no gleam, but a pale of phosphorescence behind the veil of grey. The sea was grey too, and metallic, moving in sluggish swells, like a blanket blown in a tired wind. The autumn had come early that year, and then the winter, and now the sky was heavy with the promise of rain.

This detailed description of the weather conditions does not just serve the purpose of 'creating atmosphere' as La Guma (1988:2) modestly suggests, but it is significant to the world of the novel in so far as the weather directly affects the lives of the characters:

> The people of the shanties and the *pondokkie* cabins along the national road and beside the railway tracks and in the suburban sand-lots watched the sky and looked towards the north-west where the clouds pregnant with moisture, hung beyond the mountain. When the burst of rain came, knocking on the roofs, working men carried home loads of pilfered corrugation cardboard cartons, salvaged rusted sheets of iron and tin to reinforce the roofs. Heavy stones were heaved onto the lean-tos and patched roofs, to keep them down when the wind rose.

This juxtaposition could create the impression that the novel's focus is the struggle of humanity against natural forces (rain)—a preoccupation that would easily encourage a naturalist interpretation of the novel[2]. Nevertheless, La Guma's (1988:81) interest

[2] La Guma's treatment of weather is at times reminiscent of Gorky's handling of weather in the short story, 'One Autumn', or lengthy descriptions of nature in the same author's story 'Malva'. Here is one example from 'One Autumn': 'The rain drummed relentlessly on the wooden boat, the muffled noise suggesting sad thoughts, and the wind whistled .... The waves of the river slapped against the bank, they sounded monotonous and hopeless, as though they were telling of something inexpressively boring and unpleasant .... The sound of the rain became one with their slapping .... The wind rushed blindly ... on and on, singing cheerless songs ...' (n.d.:181). La Guma employs personification in a similar way in his description of weather in *And A Threefold Cord*: 'The rain leaned against the house, under the pressure of the wind, hissing and rattling on the corrugated iron sides, scouring the roof. The wind flung the rain against the house in a roar, as if in anger, and turned away, leaving only a steady hissing along the poorly painted blistered metal' (1988:3). Such descriptions abound in La Guma's novel.

lies in a realistic rendering of how adverse weather conditions accentuate the 'abject poverty' of the residents of the shanties, as particularly represented in the Pauls family. The poverty of the Pauls family is clearly demonstrated in the description of the effort that was put into the building of the 'house' itself. As the narrator tells us:

> Dad Pauls and Charlie had scavenged, begged and, on dark nights, stolen material for the house. They had dragged for miles sheets of rusty corrugated iron, planks, pieces of cardboard, and all the astonishing miscellany that had gone into the building of the house (La Guma 1988:17).

Eventually, the narrator goes on, 'the whole place had a precarious, delicately-balanced appearance of a house of cards' (La Guma 1988:18). This makeshift structure is but one of 'the collection of dilapidated shanties that was springing up like sores on the leg of land off the highway' (La Guma 1988:17).

The housing problem, is, however, only emblematic of a broader problem of the lack of a proper infrastructure in this settlement. In the descriptive prose that is the cornerstone of La Guma's 'naturalist' style in his early novels the narrator makes this point quite explicitly:

> It could hardly be called a street, not even a lane; just a hollowed track that stumbled and sprawled between and around and through the patchwork of shacks, cabins, huts and wickiups: a maze of cracks between the jigsaw pieces of settlement, a writhing battlefield of mud and strangling entanglements of wet and rusty barbed wire, sagging sheets of tin, toppling pickets, twigs and peeled branches and collapsing odds and ends with edges and points as dangerous as sharks' teeth, which made up the framework around the quagmire of lots (La Guma 1988:21).

As in District Six in his *A Walk in the Night* (1967), there are signs of decay in the shanties. This is also described in a catalogue form that had by now become typical of La Guma's documentary style:

> Over everything hung the massed smell of pulpy mould, rotten sacking, rain, cookery, chickens and the rickety latrines that leaned crazily in the pools of horrid liquid, like drunken men in their own regurgitation (La Guma 1988:21).

As Chandramohan (1992:97) correctly observes:

> In his descriptions of the locale and the people La Guma shows a concern for naturalistic detail, as he had done earlier in *A Walk in the Night*.

To suggest that such 'descriptive passages are clearly more important than the narrative' (JanMohamed 1983:239), however, seems to tilt the argument towards a naturalistic interpretation of the novel. The reality is that in spite of such descriptions the significance of the narrative is not undermined because these descriptions are organically linked to the plot. Larisa Saratovskya (1988:162) puts it more succinctly:

> The attention to the dank and at times loathsome details are justified since they are not a goal unto themselves, but a means towards a realistic portrayal of [social] reality of the 'bottom depths' seen a la Gorky[3].

The Myth of the Frontier and Alternative Strategies of Survival

La Guma dismisses any naturalistic reading of the novel by being quite emphatic about the fact that the pondokkie dwellers survive against all odds. He makes this point quite explicitly in his comparison of the solitary life of the garage owner, George Mostert, with that of the pondokkie dwellers. From his garage Mostert observes

> the jumble pattern of shacks and shanties sprawled like an unplanned design worked with dull rags on a dirty piece of crumbled sackcloth

and he thinks, 'a strange country, a foreign people' (La Guma 1988:38). Nevertheless, the narrative continues:

> Life was there, no matter how shabby, a few yards from George Mostert's Service Station and Garage, but he was trapped in his glass office by his own loneliness and a wretched pride in a false racial superiority, the cracked embattlements of his world, and he peered out sadly past the petrol pumps which gazed like petrified sentries across the concrete no-man's-land of the road (La Guma 1988:38).

Mostert's garage stands like 'a lone blockhouse on a frontier' and, although he has money—for which pondokkie dwellers such as Susie Meyer (La Guma 1988:83) and Ronald (La Guma 1988:93) envy him—his

> loneliness [hangs] about him in the form of a spirit of enforced friendliness, a desire for conversation, a willingness to do a small favour (La Guma 1988:36).

La Guma's rendering of this contrast is curious in so far as it seems to draw on and evoke the myth of the frontier in the depiction of the relationship between blacks and

[3] For this quotation I am indebted to Michael Denner, a graduate student at Northwestern's Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, who translated this article for me from Russian into English.

whites in 17th and 18th century South African historiography. The terminology is telling since it bears the stamp of what Dorian Haarhof (1991:5) in his study *The Wild South-West* calls 'the use of a language construct that constitutes [a] "Frontierese"'—words such as 'frontier' and phrases such as 'lone guard action' immediately come to mind. Although Mostert's loneliness tempts him to 'open' the frontier by socially interacting with the shanty dwellers, as seen, for example, in his 'desire for a conversation, a willingness to do a favour' (La Guma 1988:37), the frontier remains 'closed' because of his 'wretched pride in a sense of false superiority' (La Guma 1988:37)[4]. Later Mostert wonders whether he should 'take the plunge and accept Charlie's invitation' (La Guma 1988:80) to visit the settlement but 'hesitation had attacked him again' (La Guma 1988:81) and he took refuge in his fate which is summed up in one word 'solitude' (La Guma 1988:37).

In contrast to Mostert's 'solitude', the life of the slum dwellers is pervaded by a communal sense of solidarity. For example, when Charlie and his Dad build their shack they get the help of other 'Coloured and African shack dwellers' (La Guma 1988:18). During the period of preparation for Dad Pauls's the prevalence of a sense of 'communal self-consciousness' (Carpenter 1991:87) is clearly manifest in Missus Nzuba's generosity and willingness to help. When Ma Pauls shows her appreciation for Nzuba's offer of water to the family Nzuba responds: 'There is no need to be thankful. We all got to stand by each other' (La Guma 1988:90). There is also a manifestation of solidarity during the funeral proceedings as people converge on the Paulses: 'Relations and neighbours were assembled there, swarthy mulatto faces and very dark African, all looking solemn, for there is unity even in death' (La Guma 1988:73). In the next chapter La Guma again reiterates the vibrancy of life in the pondokkies despite all odds: 'But there is time for laughter and for merriment' (La Guma 1988:78), reads the first sentence of this chapter.

Such juxtaposition of Mostert's life of 'solitude' with the vibrancy of the shack dwellers could easily be misconstrued, leading to the conclusion that La Guma invokes an Afrocentric-informed notion of African communalism that is pitted against white individualism. This impression could be intensified when one considers the 'message' of solidarity that dominates the political logic of the novel as articulated in the epigraph which is taken from the Bible in Ecclesiastes iv: 9-12.

[4] The term 'frontier' here is used not only as a marker of a physical boundary (like the road that serves as a line of demarcation between Mostert's garage and the shanties) but also in a psychological sense in cases where racial prejudice hampers normal social interaction. The frontier is 'open' when there is social interaction, and it is 'closed' when the prejudices are allowed to define the relationship between 'races'.

> Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour
> For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow;
> but woe to him that is alone when he falleth;
> for he hath not another to help him up.
> Again, if two lie together, then they have heat, but how can one be warm alone?
> And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord
> is not quickly broken.

However, La Guma eschews this notion of monolithic African communalism in his allusion to the class distinctions that exist amongst Africans themselves. In a dramatic re-enactment of how people of the shanties have to beg for water from those who have access to water, the narrative tells us: 'Those who owned the plumbing and taps sold water to those who lacked such amenities' (La Guma 1988:71). The conceptualisation of differences in racial terms is thus subverted by a paradigm of class analysis. Against this background, then, Mostert's alienation should not only be seen in terms of race but also in terms of his class position—it is important in this regard to note that Ronald is of the opinion that Mostert gains Susie Meyer's sexual favour because 'the burg's *mos* got a car and a business and cash' and not just because he is white.

Critical or Socialist Realism?

Lewis Nkosi (1975:44) has expressed some reservations about what he calls 'the limitation of canvas' in La Guma's work which, he argues, prevents him from 'exploring further and deepening the relationship between the characters'. He then goes on to argue that 'except for Charlie Pauls none of the characters in *And A Threefold Cord* are given enough time and space to develop their individuality' (Nkosi 1975:114). The significance of Nkosi's comments for our purposes is that (without making any direct reference to Lukács) they seem to capture very poignantly the notion of typicality as embodied in the portrayal of Charlie in the novel and thereby confirm the novel's satisfaction of one of the tenets of Lukács's criteria for realism. Typicality, Lukács (1978:154) maintains, is achieved 'not with the loss of individuality in character portrayal but with the intensification of individuality' and this can only be determined when a character is compared to other characters within a particular fictional world. Finally, according to Lukács (1978:154)

> [an] artist achieves significance and typicality in characterization only when he successfully exposes the multifarious interrelationships between the character traits of his heroes and the objective general problems of the age and when he shows his characters directly grappling with the most abstract issues of the time as their own vital and personal problems.

There is no doubt that La Guma's portrayal of Charlie Pauls meets these criteria—La Guma goes to great lengths in an attempt to demonstrate Charlie's endeavour to grapple with the problems of the people of the pondokkie. He not only tries to identify their problems but he also tries to come to terms with what could be done to alleviate the situation. There is, however, a danger of conflating 'typicality' with 'topicality' here (Lukács 1967:123) especially in readings of the novel that, however indirectly, unproblematically regard Charlie as a mouthpiece of the author's ideology and, by implication, interpret the novel as 'illustrating literature' (Lukács 1969:12). I have in mind here readings such as that of Lindfors (1966:51) who argues that '... La Guma's message seems to be thrust upon his novel instead of springing from it' and Gerald Moore (1980:112) who contends that the introduction of the 'recollections' of Charlie in which he reiterates the utterances of the 'rooker' is 'forced and self-conscious'. I shall return to these arguments later.

Vladimir Klima (1976:147) correctly observes that the optimism of *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) is 'remarkable since the author wrote it under difficult conditions' of repression and police surveillance. Indeed *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) rejects the 'fatalism' that is associated with naturalism not only in its characterization but also in its symbolism. This is embodied in both the birth of Caroline's child indicating a continuation of life (La Guma 1988:98) and in the symbolism of 'one carnation' (La Guma 1988:100) which grows on the dump in which young children such as Charlie's youngest brother Jorny play. As the narrator tells us: 'The flower stands alone, gleaming, wonderfully bright, red as blood and life, like hope blooming in an anguished breast' (La Guma 1988:100). This blooming hope is finally captured in the sudden 'darting [of] a bird from among the patchwork roof of the shanties [heading] straight, straight into the sky' (La Guma 1988:112). In this way birds are 'associated with freedom' in the same way as they are in Gorky's allegorical tales, 'Song of Stormy Petrel' and 'Song of the Falcon' (Scherr 1988:28). This leads to the next issue, the categorisation of La Guma's realism in this novel.

Lindfors's assertions on the tendentiousness of the novel have justifiably been challenged by both Balutansky and Cornwell who provide ample examples to demonstrate how La Guma's 'message' emerges organically from the political logic of the novel[5]. Cornwell's (1995:12,6) argument is much more relevant for our purposes because although he identifies in the novel 'an analysis of South African society in terms of the fundamentalist Marxist ideology which La Guma brings to the work' (La Guma 1988:6) and, with some reservations, also reads the novel as 'socialist realist', he acknowledges that the novel is not 'simply a vehicle for propaganda'. Yet Cornwell's reliance on the prescriptive Stalinist-Zhdanovite version of socialist realism in his analysis threatens to call into question, if not undermine, his contention that the novel

[5] See Balutansky (1990:43-50) and Cornwell (1990:11-18).

is not simply a vehicle for propaganda. While I endorse the latter argument my categorisation of La Guma's realism in this novel is slightly different from Cornwell's. Since it is inevitable that any categorisation of La Guma's realism in *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) will primarily revolve around the consciousness of the protagonist Charlie Pauls and the impact that the 'rooker' has on him, it is to this that I will now turn.

In Charlie's conversation (over a bottle of wine) with Uncle Ben, which shifts from concerns with the uncle's excessive drinking habits to the fragile health of Dad Pauls and the poverty of the pondokkie dwellers, the narrative provides a clear picture of Charlie's attempt to grapple with the issues that affect his community. Uncle Ben, obviously in reference to Dad Pauls, simply attributes to evil 'what make[s] a poor old man shiver and shake himself to death in a leaking *pondok* without no warm soup and medicine' (La Guma 1988:49), but Charlie questions his moral explanation. He argues: 'Ma read the Bible every night. It don't make the poor old toppy any better' (La Guma 1988:49). Using the sayings of 'a burg' who used to work with him 'laying pipe' in Calvinia, Charlie attempts to provide what seems to him to be a more convincing explanation of the social realities:

> There was a burg working with us on the pipe .... Know what he say? Always reading newspapers and things. He said to us, the poor don't have to be poor .... This burg say, if the poor people all got together and took everything in the world, there wouldn't be poor no more. Funny kind of talk, but it sounded alright .... Further, this rooker say if all the stuff in the world was shared out among everybody, all would have enough to live nice. He reckoned people got to stick together to get this stuff (La Guma 1988:50).

Initially, Uncle Ben's response is couched in religious terms: 'Sound almost like a sin, that ... Bible say you mustn't covet other people's things' (La Guma 1988:50). When Charlie insists that, in his opinion, this 'rooker did know what he was talking [about]' (La Guma 1988:50), this elicits a response that is reminiscent of Mr. Greene's to the taximan's assertion that the 'colour bar is because of the capitalis' system' (La Guma 1967b:17) in *A Walk in the Night*: 'I heard people talking like that .... That's communis' things. Talking against the government' (La Guma 1988:50). This does not deter Charlie from justifying his argument:

> 'Listen', Charlie said ...'. Listen, Uncle Ben one time I went up to see Freda up by that people she work for, cleaning and washing. Hell, that people got a house *mos*, big as the effing city hall, almost, and there is an old bitch with purple hair and fat backsides and her husband eating off a table a mile long, with fancy candles and *dingus* on it. And a *juba* like me can't even touch the handle of the front door. You got to go round the back. Eating off nice shiny tables, plenty of roast meat and stuff ...' (La Guma 1988:50).

This analogy is further developed as Charlie ponders over Alf and Caroline's failure to secure a house from council:

> Is funny there got to be a lot of people like us, worrying about the roof every time it rain, and there's other people don't have to worry a damn. Living in wake-up houses like the house Freda work by, like I was telling Uncle Ben, or even just up the road here .... Some people got no money, some people got a little money, some people got a helluva lot. Rooker I was working with laying that pipe, he reckon poor people ought to form a union, likely (La Guma 1988:54f).

Charlie's awareness of inequality is crude. What is one to make of Charlie's assertions in the novel?

Charlie's argument has elicited divergent responses from critics. According to Maughan-Brown (1991:21), Charlie's 'political insights are always second-hand, and generally consist of little more than disjointed reflections of the "rooker"'. Gerald Moore (1980:112) also shares this view, adding that '[Charlie's] rather adventitious appeals to the rooker and his opinions' weaken La Guma's attempt 'to show in [him] the dawnings of an ideological consciousness'. For Cornwell (1995:15), however,

> conceptions of class are not second hand; although influenced by the politically informed labourer, they do not solely derive from him. On the contrary, they arise spontaneously and logically from Charlie's personal observation of enormous discrepancies in standards of living, an observation which has raised certain political questions to which Charlie demands political answers.

While I share the view that Charlie's pronouncements are second-hand, showing a heavy reliance on the 'rooker's sayings', I doubt that they are 'always' so (as Maughan-Brown suggests), nor do I share Moore's (1980:112) claim that this weakens La Guma's rendering of 'the dawnings of political consciousness in Charlie'. It could well be that La Guma felt that 'these adventitious appeals to the rooker' (Moore 1980:112) would minimise the danger of the inflation of the hero's consciousness and strengthen the status of his work as an artistic production rather than propaganda. It is thus in keeping with La Guma's aesthetic considerations that the 'political attitudes' should be 'implied' and views expressed 'unobtrusively' (La Guma 1984:72). Charlie's utterances are, to a certain extent, second-hand—not only does Charlie acknowledge the influence of the 'rooker's' views on him and consistently appeal to his authority but he also uses phrases that are clearly meant to privilege the discourse of the rooker. The rooker's authority derives from his 'reading of newspapers' hence 'he did know what he was talking' because he is 'a *slim* burg', a clever fellow with a 'lot of things in his head' (La Guma 1988:49f,111). Despite his heavy reliance on the authority of the rooker Charlie's

political insights are not solely second-hand—from what the rooker told him, he is able to make appropriate extrapolations, for example, his apposite analogy about Freda's employers (La Guma 1988:50). But, does the fact that Charlie 'speculates briefly about communism', a 'poor people's union' and the 'redistribution of wealth' (JanMohamed 1983:242) warrant the categorisation of the novel as socialist realist? A Gorkian model of realism would commend La Guma for having moved beyond the confines of critical realism which, according to Gorky (1982:343), 'criticizes everything' without affirming anything. For one thing, by advocating a 'socialist humanism', via the sayings of the rooker, La Guma's protagonist establishes a status for himself as a 'positive hero' (especially when compared to Michael Adonis in *A Walk in the Night* 1967b). In a word, through the sayings of the rooker, as articulated by Charlie, La Guma invests his protagonist with an

> active romanticism which strives to strengthen man's will to live and raise him up against the life around him, against the yoke it would impose on him (Gorky 1982:35).

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that Charlie's 'consciousness' is not profound enough to provide the novel with a socialist perspective. It would seem, then, that a Lukácsian model offers a more useful explanation to deal with this problem in the realism of the novel. In so far as *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) 'emphasizes the contradictions of capitalism' rather than 'the forces working towards reconciliation' (Lukács 1963:114), it may be seen as employing the 'indirect method' (Lukács 1963:99) of analysis that Lukács identifies in the realism of Thomas Mann. La Guma's realism differs from that of Mann, however, in that the class struggle in this novel is not seen 'from a bourgeois point of view' (Lukács 1963:99). Nonetheless, the novel's satisfaction of one of the most crucial of Lukács's criteria for critical realism, namely, 'a negative attitude' towards capitalism and 'a readiness to respect the perspective of socialism' (Lukács 1963:93), puts this work firmly within this tradition.

'Spontaneity/Consciousness Dialectic'

A number of critics interested in tracing the progressive development in La Guma's oeuvre have noted a remarkable feature in La Guma's characterization of his heroes. This is best summed up by Coetzee (1992:356) in the passage below:

> The theme of La Guma's oeuvre clarifies itself ... the growth of resistance from the aimless revolt of individuals without allies or ideology (anarchy, crime) [in *A Walk in the Night*] to the fraternal revolt of men who understand and combat oppression, psychological and physical. *And A Threefold Cord* reflected the dawn of man's conception of himself as a political creature; in *The Stone Country* the first cracks in the

> chaotic, defensive individualism of the oppressed appeared and alliances began to sprout; *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* presents both the political conception of man's fate and the fraternal alliance as accomplished facts.

In a similar vein, Piniel Shava (1989:37), whose discussion of La Guma's work (curiously) omits *And A Threefold Cord* (1988), confirms this development:

> La Guma would like to demonstrate that the acquisition of class consciousness is also a slow and difficult process. From *A Walk in the Night* through *The Stone Country* to *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* ... he shows how the political consciousness of his heroes develops in stages.

Taking the cue from both Coetzee and Shava I want to take this point further and argue that at the heart of the shift in each of La Guma's novels is Lenin's thesis on the

> changeover from 'spontaneity' (*stikhiynost*) in the worker's protest movement to political awareness and from such an awareness (*sozaniye*) to revolutionary demonstration of their dissatisfaction (Freeborn 1982:43).

Katherina Clarke (1981:15) explains how the 'spontaneity/consciousness dialectic' as a 'ritualized account of the Marxist-Leninist idea of historical progress' which constituted the 'master plot of the Soviet novel' became integral in socialist realist texts. Clarke (1981:15f) also provides an illuminating explanation of the theoretical framework of the application of 'spontaneity/consciousness dialectic' in fiction:

> In terms of this dialectical model consciousness is taken to mean actions or political activities that are controlled, disciplined and guided by politically aware bodies. Spontaneity means actions that are not guided by complete political awareness and are either sporadic, uncoordinated, even anarchic (such as wildcat strikes, mass uprisings), or can be attributed to the workings of vast impersonal historical forces rather than to deliberate actions .... In the narrow context of the individual human being, as distinct from society at large, 'consciousness' means political awareness and complete self-control that enables the individual to be guided in all his actions by his awareness, whereas 'spontaneity' refers to purely visceral, wilful, anarchic, or self-centred actions.

This framework is useful in contextualising Charlie's political development in the novel. After a humiliating experience, in which a policeman calls Freda a '[b]lerry black whore' and questions the respectability of Charlie and Freda (La Guma 1988:87f) during the course of the raid in the shacks, Charlie decides to go out in order 'to see

what is happening to [his] people' (La Guma 1988:89). His concern with the treatment meted out to his people by the police prompts him not only to defy a policeman who is annoyed by the presence of the slum dwellers to watch the spectacle but also to give this policeman a forceful blow on his 'exposed jawbone' and take to his heels (La Guma 1988:91). Although Charlie's action is not self-centred nor anarchic, resulting as it does from his concern with his people, to call it 'revolutionary' as Cornwell (1995:6) does is perhaps to read too much into this undeniably politically positive gesture of defiance. Charlie is certainly 'losing faith in the permanence of the system that oppresses [his class]' and beginning 'to sense the need for collective resistance' (La Guma 1988:91), but his physical response to the policeman in this episode seems to be 'more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than that of struggle' (Lenin 1961:114). In a word, his consciousness is again, in Lenin's terms, in its 'embryonic form' (Lenin 1961:113). Nothing provides more evidence of the 'embryonic form' of Charlie's consciousness than his uncertain and somewhat vague articulation of the 'rooker's' utterances in his attempt to console Freda for losing her children.

> He said something one time, about people most of the time takes trouble hardest when they alone. I don't know how it fit in here, hey. I don't understand it real right, you see. But this burg had a lot of good things in his head (La Guma 1988:111).

Unlike Charlie Pauls in *And A Threefold Cord* (1988), George Adams, La Guma's protagonist in *The Stone Country* (1967a), is a fully-fledged political activist who is arrested and sent to prison for distributing leaflets of an illegal organisation. In prison, which is seen as a microcosm of South African society, Adams discovers that social interaction, not only between the prisoners and the guards but also amongst prisoners themselves, works according to the law of the jungle. Adams refuses to be reduced to that level of animal existence—he not only insists on his rights but also attempts to instil a sense of solidarity amongst the prisoners as a way of restoring their human dignity. In the meanwhile other fellow inmates are busy working on a daring bid to escape from prison which is thwarted when two of the prisoners are caught by the warders. The novel ends when a young prisoner, Albert March (alias the Casbah Kid), is being taken downstairs by the guards after being sentenced to death on a murder charge.

The shift from *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) to *The Stone Country* (1967a) is suggestive of what Clarke has identified as the 'road to consciousness'. Like Charlie Pauls, George Adams rejects a naturalist, fatalistic and idealistic explanation of human fate, as the following interaction between him and the Casbah Kid clearly demonstrates:

> 'We all got to die. Hear me, mister, I put a knife in a *juba*. He went dead. Is put out, like. Everybody got his life and death put out, reckon and think ...'. 'Put out?' George Adams asked. 'You reckon so? Man, if our life was laid out for us beforehand, what use would it be for us to work to change things, hey?' 'Right, mister. You can't change things, *mos*'. He chewed the cuticle of a thumb. 'But hear me, chommy. People's trying to change the things all the time' (La Guma 1967a:14).

Unlike Charlie, whose political insights are essentially second-hand, Adams's materialist explanation and his unwavering belief in the possibility of change stem from his practice—as an activist he is part of the movement that seeks to effect change. La Guma provides a brief account of the growth of Adams's political commitment:

> He had gone to meetings and had listened to speeches, had read a little, and had come to the conclusion that what had been said was right .... There's limit to being kicked in the backside ....

Adams's view of his arrest also reflects his conviction regarding the justness of the cause. As the narrator puts it:

> George Adams had no regrets about his arrest. You did what you decided was the right thing, and then accepted the consequences (La Guma 1967a:74).

Whereas Charlie's actions against the police were indicative of 'outbursts of desperation and vengeance' (Lenin 1961:114), as pointed out earlier, Adams's actions are always suggestive of being acts of 'struggle' (Lenin 1961:114). Adams stands out amongst his inmates in prison not only because he is aware of his rights but also because he is prepared to insist on them even if this includes defiance of the guards. While the other prisoners have been conditioned to cower in submission and accept the authority of the guards without question, Adams challenges them. Yusef, the Turk, one of Adams's fellow inmates, sums up the attitude of the prisoners in his response to Adams's reference to his rights:

> Rights, you reckon you got rights, man? Listen mate, only the ... warders got rights. *They* tell you what is rights? (1967a:51).

Although Adams acknowledges that Yusuf is correct in his suggestion: 'You can do as you blerry well please, only don't get in their way' (La Guma 1967a:52), this does not deter him from fighting for his rights and earning the wrath of the guards (La Guma 1967a:61f). As Saratovskya (1988:165) correctly observes:

> The political consciousness, internal organization, and the sense of comradeship help Adams to preserve his human dignity, not only in his relations with the prisoners, but also with the warders.

Adams's attitude and his treatment of his fellow inmates are indeed suggestive of his political consciousness. The prison, we are informed in a distinctly La Gumaesque style, is populated by 'a human salad' (La Guma 1967a:80) of

> Ragged street-corner hoodlums, shivering drunks, thugs in cheap flamboyant clothes and knowledgeable looks, murderers, robbers, housebreakers, petty criminals, rapists, loiterers and simple permit-offenders ... (La Guma 1967a:19).

We look at this world through the eyes of Adams whose point of view serves an important structural function of 'linking the various parts of a rather disjointed story' (Rabkin 1973:59):

> In the half-world, hemmed in by stone and iron, there was an atmosphere of every-man-for-himself which George Adams did not like. He had grown up in the slums and he knew that here were the treacherous and the wily, the cringers and the bootlickers, the violent and the domineering, the smooth-talkers and the savage, the bewildered and the helpless; the strong preyed on the weak, and the strong and brutal acknowledged a sort of nebulous alliance among themselves for the terrorization of the underlings (La Guma 1967a:37)

But Adams tries to understand and identify with their plight and thereby affirm the words of the novel's epigraph quoted from Eugene Debs: 'While there is a lower class, I am in it/While there is a criminal element, I am of it/While there is a soul in jail, I am not free'. This is best exemplified in his guiding philosophy: 'We all in this .... together' (La Guma 1967a:38) which recurs in the novel. Accordingly, Adams's political mission is to demonstrate his rejection of this atmosphere of every-man-for-himself by preaching the need for collective resistance: 'Prisoners ought to object .... Strike for better diet, *mos*' (La Guma 1967a:74). He even goes further in his demonstration of what Asein (1987:102) calls his

> communalistic outlook ... [which is suggestive of] the Marxist affirmation on which La Guma bases the thesis in this novel

by sharing what he has with his inmates. In this way he may be seen as having embraced the ideal of a 'socialist humanism' which Charlie Pauls nascently espouses in *And A Threefold Cord* (1988).

Maughan-Brown (1991:21) has correctly identified Adams's political activism as 'notably low-key'. He goes on in a tone of implicit criticism:

> he wins respect by the dignity of example, sharing food and cigarettes and insisting on his rights, rather than by political argument, and the rationale for becoming politically involved presented by the novel is fairly rudimentary: There's limit to being kicked in the backside ... (Maughan-Brown 1991:21).

Although La Guma does not explicitly elaborate on the rationale for Adams's political involvement he does indicate that Adams decides to be politically involved after listening to the speeches in political meetings and feeling convinced that 'what had been said was right' (La Guma 1967a:74), but Maughan-Brown does not make reference to this statement which precedes the one he cites because it would undermine his argument referred to above. Yet, as Mzamane and Tadi (1986:7) point out:

> ... George Adams stands out as the revolutionary flame that kindles the hearts of the oppressed, as a morale booster and a conscientizer.

Perhaps more than in the case of Charlie Pauls in the previous novel one is tempted to argue that Adams is a 'positive hero' in the same way as in the Soviet socialist realist novel, for there is no doubt that he not only 'exemplif[ies] moral and political virtue' (Clarke 1981:46) but he also serves a 'didactic function' (Clarke 1981:47) through his 'extraordinary dedication and self-deprivation' (Clarke 1981:49) as seen in his willingness to share everything he has with his inmates. This may not have been a conscious intention on the author's part but Adams's relationship with both Yusef the Turk and the Casbah Kid would seem to reinforce this interpretation. In this regard Adams could be seen as a political 'mentor' who, albeit to a limited extent, conscientises these characters who eventually turn out to be his 'disciples'. 'People like you, we got to look after, *mos*' (La Guma 1967a:70), says Yusef in an attempt to provide a rationale for his protection of George Adams from Butcherboy. In addition, Adams's political principles gradually earn him the respect of the Casbah Kid whose initial reluctance to interact with him is likened to 'prying open the jammed door of a vault' (La Guma 1967a:12). In spite of these hints though it would be exaggerated to claim that La Guma was making a serious gesture towards socialist realism.

The subjects of *The Stone Country* (1967a), like those of the works discussed earlier, are also drawn from La Guma's journalism[6]. There is in this work still evi-

[6] See for example 'Ten Days in Roeland Street Jail' (1993) and 'Law of the Jungle' (1993). Later, La Guma wrote the short story, 'Tattoo Marks and Nails' (1967), which is set in prison and whose protagonist, Ahmed the Turk, seems to be an earlier version of the creation of Yusef

dence of La Guma's descriptive prose, but he has now become more economical in his selection of details that count—devoting most of his descriptions to the creation of portraits of prison character types which depict their reduction to animal existence. In effect, La Guma's naturalist style is here modified by symbolism which is in line with the allegorical nature that he accords this prison. Or is it that as La Guma firmly establishes himself as a fiction writer traces of the documentary style which is drawn from his journalism begin to disappear? Whatever the reason, this transition does not diminish La Guma's aesthetic achievements in this novel.

Carpenter (1991:88) argues that in this novel La Guma 'reaches for a nineteenth-century in which biological and cultural evolution are indistinguishable'. Indeed La Guma's extensive focus on 'the brute in man' (Horton 1992:267), especially in his portrayal of Butcherboy, would link him with the naturalism of Jack London. But La Guma's resort to animal imagery in this case is understandable since it is consistent with his intention of showing the prevalence of the 'law of the jungle' in this prison. Moreover, George Adams's 'control over his destiny' (JanMahomed 1983:249) and his optimism, which provide the essential ingredients for the novel's critical realist perspective (as embodied in La Guma's allegorical reference to South Africa as a prison), subvert this naturalism and foreground the shift in La Guma's next work, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972), as a pointer to revolutionary political action.

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the Turk in the novel. For another journalistic account of the prison conditions in South African jails see Sonia Bunting's 'The Prisons of Apartheid' (1960) which provides factual accounts of what went on in these prisons. *The Stone Country* (1967) also draws on La Guma's experiences and that of his inmates in prisons where he served numerous short spells, as La Guma himself points out in his interview with Cecil Abrahams.

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Arthur Nortje and the Unhomely[1]

Dirk Klopper

I

Nortje has occupied literary consciousness in South Africa as an absent presence. His force and significance is recognised in the handful of poems that have circulated among poetry anthologies, but they present a tantalisingly incomplete portrait of the poet. This article aims at re-examining Nortje's significance in terms of a wider selection of poems than is currently available in print. It takes as point of departure Nortje's problematisation of the relationship between self and community. Such problematisation takes the form of an articulation of what Homi Bhabha (1994a:37) calls the 'third space' of difference, a space which, according to Bhabha

> constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity.

In Nortje's poems identity refuses containment and is in a constant state of change. Although no single attempt at capturing identity suffices, the reiteration itself, the repeated return to the site of his positing as subject, is what is finally compelling. A characteristic pose is struck when Nortje avers, 'I am alone here now, here living / with shoals of fragments, a voice hoarse like rubble / shifted by currents' ('Hangover'). The image of a voice, an identity, which is like rubble shifted by currents is noteworthy. It aptly describes the tension that inheres in Nortje's poetry between an apprehension of self as a partial and ephemeral configuration and the psychic forces that threaten it.

The dominant motif in Nortje's poetry is that of lack or absence. This motif is frequently translated into images of the divided and fragmented body or images of exile. Often the personal and the political perspectives are linked. Berthoud (1984:5) draws attention to Nortje's use of figures that are 'simultaneously images of environment and notations of inner state', saying that the effect of such interpenetration of the private and the public is to indicate that 'the community and the self are involved in each other at the deepest level'. He relates Nortje's apprehension of loss to his alienation from his natural community, which has been destroyed by the racial typographies

[1] I am grateful to UNISA for permission to use their archival material on Nortje. All the poems quoted here have been sourced back to this material. Many exist in unfinished form in various notebooks Nortje kept.

of apartheid and by the exile of its militants and intellectuals. According to Berthoud (1984:83), the main thrust of Nortje's poetry is 'to make possible a community where a community was not'. But loss in Nortje's poetry goes deeper than this. Although Berthoud draws attention to disappointment in love as an important concern in Nortje's poetry, he does not follow the psychoanalytic path of inquiry into the loss of the primordial object of love. Separation from the object of love, and the sense of incompletion, of division and isolation, to which such separation gives rise, is in fact a dominant theme in Nortje's poetry. Sense of personal loss predates Nortje's actual physical exile. One might say that loss of community and of self are not causally but dialectically related. Nortje's elegies of alienation articulate what Bhabha (1994b:11) describes as the experience of the unhomely, which cannot be traced back to any single determinant but instead 'relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence'.

An early poem to explore the dialectic between the personal and the political in respect of the constitution of the subject as the site of division and loss is the poem 'My Vacant Self':

> My vacant self confronts the window.
> Day's rain slants its wires
> of sad pathetic silence.
> Above the bowed and huddled houses
> manoeuvre the endless veils of cloud:
> tissues that drift and fade but never surrender.
>
> Gutter trickles gain attention
> and fresh probes of the glass distort my view
> of money traffic, Friday police, black people.
> The raindrops grope and cling but cannot enter,
> and where my breath is eager scenes are blurred.
>
> My deepest life when rising to the throat
> blows hard against dividing surfaces,
> marring my love of gentle vibrant strings
> because the cold makes vapour of what's vital.
>
> Drizzle ceases and the evening wind
> walks along windows clearing the drops,
> the last few ones a streetlight diamonds.
>
> For dusk has intervened: I draw the curtain
> and shift my numb lumped loins across the parquet.
>
> Who hears the dark drunk heart affirm the rhythm?

Nortje's meditative poems characteristically begin with a description of an everyday event (a train journey, watching rain through a window, hitchhiking, sitting in a park); often it is a depiction of the season or the weather. The event or memory of an event is then invested with strong emotion deriving from what turns out to be some sense of dissatisfaction, some apprehension of lack. Nortje reveals his method in the poem 'Teacher's Final' when he says:

> What started as
> the wide bay's boomerang curve,
> a patch of sunlight on the velvet sea,
> leapt alive in the blood's lyric:
> some hunger flamed to tell
> my meaning here, my going hence
> to earn more purpose than this narrow world
> affords its children.

The speaker's need 'to tell' derives from a primordial 'hunger'. Whatever he says derives from this position of lack, is overdetermined by this constant presence of an absence, this permanent loss of that which would satisfy his hunger, the primordial object, the object of love, which because it is lost is relentlessly pursued. This is his 'blood's lyric', which through 'telling' of this loss, through symbolisation of that which is absent, invokes the lost object, albeit as an effect of difference rather than as a positive presence. Although the speaker has 'more purpose' than the quotidian 'narrow world/affords its children', the purpose is situated in the realm of the symbolic, the realm of language. Thus there is always a gap between expectation and fulfilment. As Nortje says in the poem 'Planning a Modus Vivendi in February': 'It is to you I come .../knowing one cannot ask love for love:/demands exceeds supply'.

'My Vacant Self' begins with a pervasive sense of loss, which has no apparent cause other than the dreariness of the mizzling weather. In the first stanza this vacancy of the self is associated with the 'sad pathetic silence' of the rain and the 'endless veils of cloud' above the 'bowed and huddled houses'. The rain and the cloud are seen respectively to impose silence and to conceal something, but it is not clear what. In the second and third stanzas attention is drawn to the dividing surface of the glass, which allows perception of what lies beyond, but in distorted form and without any actual physical contact. The speaker's gaze is blurred by the vapourising effect of his 'deepest life ... rising to the throat', which 'blows hard against dividing surfaces' but in so doing mars his 'love of gentle vibrant strings'. The 'deepest life' seeks contact but is denied it. The eager breath blurs the scenes. In some way, then, the self resists the very intimacy it desires.

What is blurred, distorted, is the speaker's 'view/of money traffic, Friday police, black people'. These are the sights outside, in the social world, which are visible through the window. The three scenes mentioned correspond with the three aspects of social existence that Nortje frequently targets for attack in his poetry. The first aspect comprises the fetishism of commodities and resultant reification and alienation that characterise bourgeois capitalism. It was in Canada, in particular, that Nortje expressed his greatest horror at the 'money traffic' that impoverishes life. The second aspect comprises the militarisation of everyday life, the use of armed force to impose laws and to control social behaviour. Nortje regarded such use of force as a strategy employed by the wealthy to maintain their privilege. The third aspect comprises the stigma of racial classification, the blood-curse that inflicts inferiority, discrimination and domination on certain race groups. In South Africa during the mid-1960s, these three aspects of social power had combined in such a way as to constitute a formidable system for the interpolation of subjects in the social formation. The speaker seeks to create communication and community with the world outside his window, and by a process of metonymic association, outside himself. Yet there is an ambivalence, a vapourising of this same world, in as much as what he perceives is essentially hostile to his desire for contact. He perceives out there a world of division ruled by force.

In the closing stanzas the speaker's response to his having failed to make contact with the social world is to 'draw the curtain' on the outside and to shift his 'numb lumped loins across the parquet', thus moving deeper into the house and into himself. This inward movement is accompanied by a question with which the poem concludes: 'Who hears the dark drunk heart affirm the rhythm?' What is discovered within may 'affirm' some kind of rhythm, but it also disturbs. The 'dark drunk heart' is an inscrutable god indeed, a Dionysus for whom destruction and creation are ambivalently related. Does the 'dark drunk heart' not, paradoxically, beat to the rhythm of death? This would account for the generalised tone of melancholic despair evident in the poem as a whole. Perhaps what the rain silences and the cloud veils is precisely this apprehension of death, absence, division, loss as the true ground of being, the negativity in terms of which identity is able to be posited at all.

In the poem, the place of the other, which ensures the very possibility of identity through separation and division, is occupied by the figures of capitalism, the police-state, and the system of apartheid. These are the figures perceived by the self on the far side of the dividing window. Significantly, they are figures of society, indicating that it is within the sphere of the social that identity is determined. That the relation between self and societal others is in crisis is clear from the fact that the figures are invoked only to be vapourised. Identification is sought and then denied. What remains is the sterility of the 'numb lumped loins' and an uncertain apprehension of the 'dark drunk heart'. Death is immanent and there is no vital link, no affinity, with which it

may be resisted. Society has failed the self. Those who might have constituted a community of resistance are in prison or in exile. In the poem 'The Long Silence', the speaker mourns their absence, linking it with loss of communication, which is precisely a deprivation of that which defines the human community: 'The long silence speaks/of deaths and removals. /Restrictions, losses/have strangled utterance'.

Nortje frequently uses the image of the window as metaphor of the division between self and society. His use of this image is closely associated with his use of the image of the mirror as metaphor of the entrapment of self. The poem 'Discovery', written at more or less the same time as 'My Vacant Self', similarly uses the rainy weather as point of departure to muse over the self's alienation:

> Misted and arid atmosphere parallels
> intricate self-searching cerebral processes:
> the dry mind with these wet thoughts driving
> vapours over the walls of mirror.

The speaker goes on to say that however oppressive it may be, the mirror prison offers security against the 'freedom' of the 'insubstantial/mirrorless world':

> Passing from this the secure
> world to the insubstantial
> mirrorless world my life moves
> restless as waves in their surge for freedom.

The speaker seems to be suggesting that the self might not want freedom, however urgently freedom might press upon it, that it might prefer the security of enslavement, the blank nullity of death.

In the absence of community, personal love gains in importance as a form of resistance to death. But as in the case of society, community, or any other exclusive identification, love is alarmingly intimate with death. The relation between love and death is the focus of a later poem entitled 'Distinction':

> What troubles the flesh leaves the bone
> sorry. Is it heart's desire, or what? It is
> loneliness, believe me, despite the attachment
> of muscles, cling of tautened sinews.
>
> Experience-greedy, I search continually
> (say it is absurd if you have found it so)
> for the bones of silence, the slenderly white
> wing-fingers bleached in the rock-hollow

> visited sometimes by the sea. To die in the air
> is the noble thing, floating weakly to familiar
> earth, and when the fire's put out
> salt water can flame the veins no longer.
> The eagle's wishbone on the mantelpiece
> stirs in the fraternal wind and parodies
> my oblique postures, my fleshly illusions
> on the testing sites of the carnal jungle.
>
> Medulla mushrooms on the nerve-stalk that bends
> up from the dung-root. The spacecraft of the pelvis
> has no nylon rope for your spacewalk,
> you are spilled umbilically, cut off from the uterus.
>
> The flesh wails, the numbness at the navel
> will never console; the knot or the tumour
> never exhibited in the museum of the soul
> whose natural history poises the bare brontosaurus.
>
> Let it be thus. The quality of ivory
> along the gentle dent of face
> this hand must be but poor remembrance to
>
> when love shall dazzle these nerves again.
> But violent are the harsh times
> upon the headlands of waiting. The interval islands:
> in the interior world of self no flowers
> grow in the black earth that fills the inkwell.
>
> Retinas, taste buds, nostrils are alcoholic
> with hunger for your symmetries, with what has been
> the savour and scent of your absence.
> What troubles the flesh leaves the bone sorry.

The first stanza states the paradox that the 'heart's desire' might be for the 'loneliness' of bone rather than for the 'attachment' of flesh. The imagery of bone is developed further in subsequent stanzas through references to the bones of an eagle displayed on the mantelpiece. The eagle bones prompt the speaker to declare that his 'experience-greedy' search has been a search, again somewhat paradoxically, for 'silence'. He imagines the death of the eagle, its floating to 'familiar earth', as a 'noble thing', and asserts that the 'wishbone' of the eagle 'parodies' his own 'fleshly illusions'. The

poem then shifts focus, and invokes the experience of extreme physical deprivation occasioned by birth. The speaker uses the image of the astronaut who is attached to his spacecraft with a nylon rope when spacewalking to make the point that the reader, who has been 'spilled umbilically, cut off from the uterus', has no such security at birth. For the reader, the flesh 'wails'. Thoughts of separation at birth lead in the final stanzas to thoughts of separation from a loved one, a paramour, whose absence, like that of the experience of birth, is intensely felt at the level of physical deprivation. The poem concludes with a reiteration of the line, 'What troubles the flesh leaves the bone sorry'. This line is now informed by the musings on birth, love and death that have formed the body of the poem. These musings suggest that the images of flesh and bone represent opposing forces of the subject, a life force and a death force, eros and thanatos, and that these forces are dialectically interrelated rather than antithetical.

There are two moments in the poem that are worth exploring in more detail for the way in which they extend the thematic range of the issues under consideration. The first moment occurs as an interlude between recollection of the absent beloved, the 'quality of ivory/along the gentle dent of face/this hand must be but poor remembrance to', and anticipation of a future reunion. In the penultimate stanza it is stated that 'violence' characterises the 'headlands of waiting' on the 'interval islands' of absence. During this period of limbo, says the speaker, 'in the interior world of self no flowers/grow in the black earth that fills the inkwell'. The image of the inkwell filled with black earth in which flowers fail to grow suggests that a natural fecundity of words is wanting. The pen that is dipped into the inkwell does not propagate poesy. A correspondence is suggested, therefore, between writing and generation.

Absence of the beloved is depicted as a condition of general sterility. Yet this sterility is belied by the existence of the poem. It is in fact absence, which fills the inkwell with remembrance, that is the impetus for writing. If remembrance is the very substance of the poem, why does the 'black earth' specifically fail to produce flowers? Perhaps 'black' has racial overtones. A direct racial reference is made when the speaker invokes the 'quality of ivory/along the gentle dent of face' of the absent beloved. Assuming 'black' also has a racial reference, does the fact that the beloved is white induce a sense of guilt, a sense of betrayal of the speaker's blackness, his race, his mother (country)? Nortje at times feels disgust at what he refers to in the poem 'Questions and Answers' as 'White trash/coursing through my blood'. Many poems return to the issue of Nortje's loyalty to his black countrymen and to the cause of African liberation. Increasingly, the poems project a strong sense of guilt and betrayal. The poem 'From the Way I Live Now', written shortly before his death, concludes with the words, 'O under the broiling sun/convict me for my once burning ideals/my brothers'.

Nortje uses the colour black, and the notion of blackness, in interesting ways. The poem 'Sunset Period' states that 'Black residue remains when the mind clangs

shut / against these autumn visions which disturb'. 'Black residue' may be interpreted as the remainder, in the psychoanalytical sense, between the demand for love and its partial obtainment, the dream of freedom and the actuality of repression, the yearning for wholeness and the discovery of lack. The remainder is the memory trace of that which would satisfy the need. As testified by 'Poem: South African', the remainder as mark of difference is the black word on the white page:

> the wind guillotines
> your correspondences
> but these broken sentences
> stumble to heaven on the hill despite
> the man with the whip who beats my
> emaciated words back
>
> They die but
> at last
> get us all together as a vision
> incontrovertible, take me as evidence.

The only way in which the speaker is able to unite with the absent beloved or with the lost community is on the page. The only evidence there is of 'us all together as a vision' is the evidence of the word, the semantic and syntactical coherence of the assertion itself, a coherence that is attenuated by the way in which the sentences are disseminated across the page ('but these broken sentences'). What holds it together—the vision, the word—is the work of resistance performed by the poem, and the work performed by the poem in overcoming resistance. The poem 'Asseverations' describes the labour of writing poetry as a nocturnal search for 'truths in rhythms' through struggle with 'the hardship of rhyme'. It describes the death of the liberators 'whose recipes are now illegible' and concludes:

> Out of such haze, such loss, the luck of birth
> must be fashioned never questionably,
> strength of seed and courage of decision.
> There is never work without resistance.

Resistance in the psychoanalytical sense is a refusal of castration and a concomitant attachment to imaginary plenitude and disavowal of difference. It is the fetishisation of the phallic. This notion brings us to the other moment of interest in the poem 'Distinction': the allusion to the penis in the middle stanza. The positioning of this allusion suggests that this is the fulcrum around which the poem revolves, the hinge upon

which it is articulated. In as much as allusion is a rhetorical figure of erasure, in that what is alluded to is concealed at the very moment of disclosure, the allusion to the phallus may be said to constitute the poem's absent centre. The speaker has just referred to the way in which the eagle bones on the mantelpiece parody his 'fleshly illusions/on the testing sites of the carnal jungle', when he observes: 'Medulla mushrooms on the nerve-stalk that bends / up from the dung-root'. What he seems to describe is an erection, seen from the top as a mushrooming of the body's inner vitality, its pitch, on a bent nerve-stalk. The speaker thus directs his gaze at his penis, fetishisation of which occurs in 'the carnal jungle'. Subsequently he will turn his gaze to his navel and see himself as 'spilled umbilically', disseminated.

Captivation by the penis and/or the navel can be likened to captivation by the mirror image of the self. This is the perfect symmetry, the exact correspondence, for which the speaker yearns. He seeks himself in the other, or that which would call back his self, recall his soul, re-member him, heal the wound of memory. Such mirror imaging may constitute a necessary initial identification, but the narcissistic circle must be broken, the umbilical cord must be cut, there must be a forgetfulness, for love to emerge. As Lacan (1968:26) puts it, 'the realization of perfect love ... [is] an inter-subjective accord imposing its harmony on the torn and riven nature which supports it'. It can only be intersubjective if it follows the logic of the symbolic, of desire, which acknowledges, and operates within, difference. The same applies to the social. The imaginary community, the narcissistic community based on self-identifications, must be placed under erasure for the new community to emerge. Bhabha (1994c:163) talks of the 'homogenization of experience' which he sees as a major strategy of 'containment and closure in modern bourgeois ideology'. He says that:

> Being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification (Bhabha 1994c:161).

The imaginary self/community must die if the new self/community is to emerge. One of the last poems that Nortje wrote, 'All Hungers Pass Away', uses many familiar images. Like other poems, it contains strong intimations of death. In this poem, however, there is little hope of renewal. Sexual hunger leaves the speaker wasted, in no better condition than the starving farm workers of the Transvaal, whom he has betrayed with his acquired bourgeois tastes:

> All hungers pass away,
> we lose track of their dates:
> desires arise like births,
> reign for a time like potentates.

> I lie and listen to the rain
> hours before full dawn brings
> forward a further day and winter sun
> here in a land where rhythm fails.
>
> Warily I shake off sleep,
> stare in the mirror with dream-puffed eyes:
> drag my shrunken corpulence
> among the tables of rich libraries.
>
> Fat hardened in the mouth,
> famous viands tasted like ash:
> the mornings after a sweet escape
> ended over bangers and mash.
>
> I gave those pleasures up,
> the sherry circuit, arms of some bland girl.
> Drakensberg lies swathed in gloom.
> Starvation stalks the farms of the Transvaal.
>
> What consolation comes
> drips away as bitterness.
> Blithe footfalls pass my door
> as I recover from the wasted years.
>
> The rain abates. Face-down
> I lie, thin arms folded, half-aware
> of skin that tightens over pelvis.
> Pathetic, this, the dark posture.

Despite the fact that the inquest into Nortje's death returned an open verdict, Nortje is widely, and according to Hedy Davis (1983) erroneously, believed to have committed suicide. The fiction of suicide fits the image of the despairing poet and is likely to persist until further research can bring to light, if at all, the precise events of the last few days of Nortje's life. It would suit my argument to conclude by saying that if Nortje did indeed commit suicide, it may have been a last desperate attempt to free himself from his posturing self, and that his refusal of the social roles and rules defined by the European usurper left him unhomely, vulnerable to the unconscious drives whose allegiance is to death as much as it is to life. But such closure is denied us.

However one may wish to construe Nortje's death, there is a life that emerges from it, the living testimony of the poems themselves, which renew the resources of

language in an endeavour to find love, to establish community, where there is only the condition of homelessness. As Nortje says in the poem 'White Xmas', we have to 'choose which/transportation it is to be'.

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The Real Substance of Nightmare: The Struggle of Poetry with History[1]

Michael Gardiner

> History has the cruel reality of a nightmare, and the grandeur of man consists in his making beautiful and lasting works out of the real substance of that nightmare. Or, to put it another way, it consists in transforming that nightmare into vision; in freeing ourselves from the shapeless horror of reality—if only for an instant—by means of creation (Paz 1985:95).

I

As an illustrative example of a poet's encounter with history, Wopko Jensma's writing offers opportunity for reflection upon concerns and tensions which characterised the 1960s and which emerged in his poetry in the 1970s. During these two decades Jensma was in his twenties and thirties, the time when he produced the graphic and poetic work which gives him his presence as artist and poet in our cultural midst.

Acknowledged by all who have read his work as remarkable for his capacity to demonstrate South African experience from multiple perspectives, Jensma offers an insight into his broad inclusiveness when he suggests in his autobiographical poem, 'Spanner in the What? Works' (of which only the opening lines are quoted), that to be a person in anything like a full sense of that term in South Africa requires multiple births and multiple deaths:

> i was born 26 july 1939 in ventersdorp
> i found myself in a situation
>
> i was born 26 july 1939 in sophiatown
> i found myself in a situation
>
> i was born 26 july 1939 in district six
> i found myself in a situation
>
> i was born 26 july 1939 in welkom
> i found myself in a situation (Jensma 1977:6f).

[1] This chapter is an amended version of an article published in *New Contrast* 72,18,Summer,4 (1990).

If one looks at the three collections of Jensma's poetry—which is not easy to do as all are now out of print—one finds a diversity of languages, forms, identities and histories unequalled in South African literature. Reading through the collection of poetry, with woodcuts and collages placed among the poems, one is compelled to jump from language to language and from dialect to dialect, often within a single poem. A further notable feature is that the poems are dramatic presentations of voices which articulate their sense of reality. By this means, the speaker's history is reflected in the speaker's condition, for the people of the poetry are what experience and circumstance have made them. The most common condition is that which has been generated in diverse forms by relationships between those who are oppressed and those who oppress them.

That in itself says both little and much, but the hideous permutations of such relationships are key experiences of the 1960s for a sensibility such as Jensma's. Whether the voices in the poetry emerge from poverty, complacency, confusion or guilt (for example), those voices reflect the obsessions, preoccupations and nightmares generated by an excess of power over the lives of others by some, and by the absence of power in others to determine their own lives. Thus the forces which impinge upon the lives of those who speak in the poems are often brutal, crude, inflexible and resonate with felt immutability.

The diversity of the poetry is more than one of content, such as the race or class position of the speaker, or the physical context in which the speaker is located. Jensma's poetry draws on European techniques such as surrealism, dadaism and other twentieth-century resources to dramatise South African experiences. In addition to the attempt at reconciling African experience with European avant-garde, Jensma's poetry reflects pervasive presences of European, American and South African musical forms, especially jazz.

From an historical point of view, Jensma's poetry, in its movements across divisions of race, class, language and culture, is a significant counter-attack upon the barriers and distinctions which were built into South African society with savage persistence by political, economic and cultural interests during the 1960s. At a time when repression by systems of grand apartheid were least coherently opposed within the country since the resistance of the 1950s, Jensma began writing in ways that caused uncertainty about his identity and which transcended those categories peculiar to dominant South African practice. But perhaps the most distinctive achievement of the poetry is that it goes beyond identification, in its focus of sympathy, with the oppressed. The speakers in the poems are often both the oppressors and the oppressed, and are victims who share an essentially common situation. Were Jensma's analysis to stop there, he would have gone only as far as a broad humanitarianism, no matter how finely his poems appear to catch such obvious concern. What he traces is the damage done to those who participate willingly and helplessly in brutal manifestations of racial capital. Nowhere does he hint at structures which might provide the succour that people so desperately need when assailed by that system and, in particular, he posits no hidden utopia (such as refuge in the countryside) by which that damage could be judged and which thereby might offer some silent alternative. Jensma is only too familiar with what rural life, especially that upon white-owned farms and in rural towns, has become. Jensma makes it clear that the pastoral dream no longer exists and will never exist for those who grub in the detritus of the city or whose lives disintegrate in rural slums. Perhaps most important of all, neither the sensitivity to the other nor to self, nor the sharp wince of being alive are dependent upon a sense of hope or the promise of a future. The pressing presence of need and circumstance give the immediate a pungency and a poignancy in which the stink of life is asserted.

The temptation to applaud such an achievement must be checked by the price which has been paid for it. In the process of registering with uncanny accuracy a multitude of South African experiences, Wopko Jensma has lost the ability to write poetry. By extending himself across the barriers which criss-crossed South African society, he forfeited his coherence as a writer and, in effect, exploded his poetic centre.

II

The degree to which racial consciousness was forced upon South Africans is evident everywhere in Jensma's poetry. The claims for the benefits of racial identity under apartheid are shown to have no existential validity whatever and instead, the disintegration caused by such a system is profound. In the poem 'I Come', the presence of black and white voices in each others' dreams is dramatised. The dominant voice is white, whispering down the labyrinths of their joint history, tightening the nightmare of their racial juxtaposition with unnerving inexorability. The result, as Peter Horn has pointed out, is that 'the double-bind which ensnares us all' is a dream-world in which 'everything is just lies' (Horn 1977:118).

I Come

1	2
i am white and brutal	you lie hidden
i come to you after death	in the corridors of my fear and leave you completely
deserted	smelling of blood
a little tenderness	i've plucked out your eyes
a little care	i've smashed in your teeth
only hardens my heart	i've peeled off your skin

a gentle bayonet — but they don't believe
a breeze of bullets — - everything is just lies
is the voice of my existence — but they don't believe

i did not hear you — that i call you brother
i wont listen
i did not hear a thing — you lie hidden
in the corridors of my fear
i am white and brutal — smelling of blood
i come to you after death
and leave you completely deserted (Jensma 1973a:63f).

In this poem, Jensma brings to the surface one perspective upon age-old interdependencies within relations of power. The silent black voice is both confirmatory and revealing. While the white voice prowls, infests and asserts, the black figure has to endure invasion, exhortation and, most acutely of all, to being used as justification for the white nightmare. The white unconscious now needs the monster it has made of itself and of the other so as to provide itself with identity, validity and reason for existence.

Reduced to abstraction, the poem confirms what is rather obvious. Yet the palpability of the poetry presupposes an attentiveness to voices in society by the poet which goes beyond analysis of the relations between those voices. Both figures suffer and that suffering, though different, is recognised and understood. The erotic suggestions in the poem confirm the centrality of the acknowledgements made by the white voice and imply (in a necessarily perverse form) a shared predicament. And a historical dilemma is here painfully evident: to what extent are individuals, as inheritors and bearers of history, responsible for the degree to which their present is so dauntingly determined? The reduction of people to 'i am white and brutal' and to 'you lie hidden/ in the corridors of my fear/smelling of blood' does not happen within a single lifetime.

To the solitary but joint dreaming of 'I Come' must be added the effects of 'resettlement' upon the vast numbers of people who had been relocated in the creation of 'homelands' (disintegrating themselves as apartheid's structures decayed) as reflected in the minimalist poem 'Limehill Aftermath':

cos's bloat belly
'f only mealie meal

cos's dark stare
'n a comers

cos 'e only fears
'n pines away

cos 'e can't shout
we toss side to side

cos 'e lift 's fists
we wan' 'e'v'n here 'n now (Jensma 1973b:18).

Like their language, the human figures blur into clots, fragments and semi-random clusters, and they mouth contortedly their anguish, which eventually collapses into a demand for a hopeless ideal. Here Jensma presents an instance of what occurs to people when the intermediate is removed. These people had been uprooted from places of generational continuity and were dumped in a location in which the old and the very young died off almost immediately (thus destroying the past and the future) and are in this way. These people were translated from a community into a decaying collective of spasmodic gestures.

In poems such as 'I Come' (Jensma 1973a:63f) and 'Limehill Aftermath' (Jensma 1973b:18), it is possible to experience the linked effects of enforced division and collectivity. The deepest and most sustaining elements of community (read in all possible senses) have been destroyed. History has triumphed utterly.

The issue raised earlier about the historical dilemma created by inherited situations is given special point when dependency upon the reality of others becomes a political, personal and psychological absolute, and when escape from such dependency is prevented by the manifold agencies of state repression, as we find in 'Ja Baas':

1
'n renoster is 'n nors vent. meneer hier—
rye skedels, gekatalogiseer, op rakke (spykers in
my keel)
laat ons jou geheue, in alle redelikheid
oophark
nou, luister mooi hoe ek die bordjie sop opslurp
luister na die sirene
probeer nou deur jou gewete loop
probeer voel hoe die visse jou vleis vreet
van renosters gepraat: is jy 'n suid-AFRIKANER?

2
16 desember en 'n skottel bloed op tafel
die karkas van afrika hang in-tempel
hallelujas onder koepelblou
'n skermutseling iewers
ek trommel my vingers op my propvol maag

3
ek is vredevors hier
ek wik en beskik
ek besluit wie vrek

julle koppe rol rose van ranke

julle eet klippe vir brood

ek is vredevors hier
ek ken harde kontant
lek my gat (Jensma 1973a:9).

This poem is a guided tour by and of a perfect specimen of an oppressor, South African variety. With language as delicate as a meat-cleaver, he displays his knowledge, his trophies, his obsessions and his power. Notice the silence and the passivity of the listener, for even 'spykers in my keel' is an internal observation. Lumbering as he does through his exhibits, the 'baas' draws in the listener with the eager deftness of an interrogator ('laat ons jou geheue, in alle redelikheid/oophark'), guiding his prisoner ('luister ... luister ... probeer ... probeer') along the path of disintegration. Mixed with this is the tone of the passionate analyst who, in opening up a specimen, demands conformity to type: 'van renosters gepraat: is jy 'n suid-AFRIKANER?' (Jensma 1973a:9)

The world of the 'baas' is a closed one, as section 2 of the poem suggests. Ritual, icon, thanksgiving, justificatory violence (trivial to this consciousness) and a full stomach complete this complacent pantheon. As overlord ('vredevors', with its ironic reference to peacekeeping) this figure has powers of life and death over others. Notice too the modulation from the inclusive 'ons' when he begins the process of dissection, to 'julle' when he dismisses the mass of the powerless, and the final domination of the absolute pronoun 'ek' in the final section.

What else can be said in response to this tirade but 'Ja Baas' (Jensma 1973a:9)? But the contempt which this self-exposure reveals is not confined to the speaker. It smears off onto the listener and reaches beyond the brutality which drenches every thought and act. This is not the only view of Afrikaners which Jensma reflects in his poetry, but this is clearly the kind of universe from which he recoiled into an alternative reality based upon a much greater identification with those who have had to endure such savage tyranny.

That recoil has been finely observed by Mafika Gwala (1988:80f):

> Wopko Jensma. For a long time I thought he was a black .... So when I met Wopko one evening, edged against his self-withdrawal, I could only think of one thing: his white world was killing him, as if out to destroy him. Perhaps he had refused for too long to be the white he was expected to be. Another hurting thought flushed my mind. It was the gnawing feeling that with such cruel reality as we have in this country—with worse to come—it was futile to engage in existentialist resistance against a culture of oppression.

A culture of oppression is never without its countervailing culture of freedom, but for many that culture can be inaccessible, especially under conditions of fierce racial and class division. Both cultures have their triumphal and their neurotic elements. The tension between these aspects has been explored with amazing sensitivity by Mongane Serote, particularly in his poetry but also in his novel. Jensma, too, is alive to such swirling ambivalences which roil between apparent extremes and he catches aspects of such ambiguities in the poem 'Fear Freedom':

after freedom struck my country
after the thousands dead
i am the only one left
the only one to know
the only one guilty
the only one to resist death
before my people's bones
before flowers of freedom country

before my people knew no nothing
before flowers were fresh
i am the only one
the only one with no gun
the only one no one suspected
the only one
after my eyes were burnt out
after remains of whitewashed bones (Jensma 1974:8).

Jensma is obviously writing here about that deeply anticipated need which has occupied the minds and dreams of South Africans for so long now. The 1960s was the decade when black African countries achieved freedom from political colonialism. Written out of the obverse experience of oppression in South Africa, this poem translates the desired and longed-for into the nightmare of one who anticipates the horrors of not so much a violent as an unrecognisable world with which there seems to be no connection. Anticipating a cataclysmic confrontation between the opposing forces at the extremes of the great South African divide, the speaker suffers acutely in the mind. Incapable of imagining a process of change, the speaker has to live in a new world

which consists of a projection of old and familiar horrors. There is no irony in the term 'freedom' as it is used here: it is an event, a thing which has 'struck'. The irony exists in a situation in which the notion of 'freedom' is in fact unimaginable.

Movement from the past to the future in this poem is a wild lurch from one extreme position to another, as suggested by the swings from 'after' to 'before' and to 'after'. The lines of the poem are linked to each other by spasmodic association and every line is a tentative and an incomplete probe into what is for the speaker a hostile and searing environment. Since the moral is a condition of Jensma's poetry rather than its purpose, we need to notice the gentleness with which this condition of the speaker is understood. By establishing a connection between the past and the future, the poem accords to the speaker the worst of all worlds in which guilt, doubt, irrational and rational fears, suspicion and, most corrosive of all, acute self-consciousness now have inexhaustible space in which to ebb and flow. Against the resulting and inevitable catatonia, the self attempts mutilated gestures in the direction of coherence.

III

Against the disintegrative forces of oppression, Jensma, as poet, has one major counterforce, and that is form. Without form, all art is impossible. In the case of Jensma, the meaningful line, poetic and graphic, stands between him and utter helplessness. In his poetry, variety of form is closely allied to the necessity to speak with a wide range of voices. In a context which turns essentially upon racial identity and upon restriction, the assertion of a counter kind of coherence, in this instance poetic form, is necessary to keep at bay the essential chaos of rigid, mechanical, dichotomous and two-dimensional forms of reality which characterised the apartheid state.

The struggle of form against that chaos is evident in the six-part poem, 'Lopsided Cycle':

1
we're all underground now, bud
conspiracy against the state, you say?
one by one
e x p l o s ions
go off nea whe e sits one by one
e hammer'm
bulgin pop 'n declare misjin co' plete, race
r e l a t i o n 's
betta than eva. o numb son, what up now? t'many
e x p l o s ions

now. 'n den
't blew ma arshole to
s m i t h e reen
i juss crack some joke, you say
let's go paint heavensgate: whites only
i juss crack some joke, you say
let's go paint heavensgate: whites only

2
today we will be singing a sad song, son:
a song of our hunger
we will defy you, yessa boss
we will crucify the nearest christ
we will all be living aloud
you know why son, eh?
we carry the carcass of hunger gravewards

3
for billy the kid zambi
you breeze from far, spokes
still
your kwela
rocks in me
your wail's
a eh pá
our joke
the ol PIDE
hidin in ma
cona till a
end a fight
then
brandishing
the cosh, eh
pá, whea's a
hooligans now
ep
drink up ol
son an feel
the jazz brecze blowin fez

-eh pá: I say (coll. Portuguese);
PIDE : police (in Mozambique)

4
our cutlassregime hollers praise for the whip
our cutlassregime hollers praise for the whip
dumbfounde d prisoners a scratchin a prison walls
drips outa'
their nails
a log chain
a ma leg, oh ne v e rending pit a agony
set me free
Lod, i hea't
yours iGoli
leaves the gap for poor souls to die forever

-iGoli: Golden City (Johannesburg)

5
minha m~o está suja [my hand is dirty]
-carlos drummond de andrade

i got a gash in my head
blood spurts from it
i must cut my head off
i must hide myself
no one must see me do it
cause the blood is my guilt
i can't stop the blood
a force behind the blood
tears all bandages off
i tried it many times
in the dark of my room
i am very weak now
due to loss of blood
i only have my agony now
i must cut my head off
and replace it with
a shining conscience

6
we drum our fingers on our potbelly
and feel at ease with the world
we brood around
innumerable slotmachines
the prize will be

a body plus its labour
what a comfort!
a petty pass law gets us slaves:
right to use a gun (Jensma 1973a:10-15).

The most obvious lopsidedness evident here is the manner in which Part 6 distorts the cyclical movement of the poem and, in its extrusive smallness, decentres the circular movement as an eccentric gear does. The bloated complacency of the speaker in Part 6 (with echoes of 'Ja Baas') both contrasts with and is the source of the agitated condition of those in the other five parts. Significantly enough, Part 2 is the most lucid of the other parts of the poem as it shows an awareness of time, of action and offers explanation. As such, it is the opposing centre of force to the lopsided influence of Part 6. The cycle then turns around two pivots, poverty and excess, in tension with each other, producing the eccentric motion of South African life.

The typographical forms of Jensma's poetry would say much to careful attention. It is perhaps sufficient to note here that the differences and relations apparent to the eye establish a community of linked and diverse concerns. The part which speaks most desperately in the struggle against disintegration is Part 5 in which the repeated line 'i must cut my head off', with its ambiguous imperative, reflects acutely the predicament of the poet/speaker/thinker. When awareness and the need to articulate it have become a wound ('gash'), then the damage is heavy indeed. To the drumming of fingers in Part 6 we listen, as in a song cycle, to the explosions at the beginning, to the singing, the music, the breathing (read the 'a' in Part 4 stertorously) and to the sounds of Part 5 ('gash', 'spurts' and so on, including the sinister sibilants in the lines 'and replace it with a shining conscience') as a chorus of efforts to express what Cronin (1983:58), more contemporaneously and a good deal more optimistically refers to as 'the voices of the land'.

Appropriate form is what Jensma seeks in his poetry, form sensitive to his awareness of the manifold suffering of which he is part and to his understanding of the sources of that pain.

By exploding himself existentially and poetically into the multitude of personae and voices which utter in his poems, Jensma appears to have transcended the restrictions of racial, class and linguistic inheritance. In other words, he has defied the single and the either-or by becoming the many. The protean and the multiform in poets is nothing new, but in the instance of Jensma, the matter goes alarmingly further, to the point of creative collapse.

Such collapse is not attributable to severance from one's community, group and society, which opposition to apartheid meant for many whites, especially from

Afrikaans-speaking communities. That can be bad enough, as those whites who took firm stands against apartheid experienced. Isolation from family and community is severe and it needs to be understood that society tends not to remain passive towards those who make such a break. Mere withering in the wilderness by the outcast is often insufficient to it, and society is therefore capable of seeking out such a person and destroying him or her. Assassination takes very many forms. Hence the comment by Gwala, quoted earlier: 'His white world was killing him, as if out to destroy him'.

The question must be asked: When one such as Jensma broke with the prevailing attitudes of whites in South Africa of the sixties, where could he take shelter and receive succour and support?

What social formations had the resources to sustain such a person? Jensma tried many jobs inside and outside South Africa but could neither sustain them nor his troubled marriage. The majority of writers at the time either sought support within institutions, established sustaining groups around them, or else left the country. Little space for creativity and unorthodoxy was to be found outside of the official and the commercial, and repression was dire enough in the late 1960's and early 1970s to seem individually immutable.

A review of the names of people active in music, literature, the plastic arts, drama and other cultural activities in Pretoria and Johannesburg (places where Jensma seemed to work best) at that time suggests a relatively rich weave of creativity. But artists, writers and musicians worked either inside or outside township ghettoes, and opportunities for easy mixing of class and race within a supportive environment were rare. Lionel Abrahams' *The Purple Renoster*, and his writing group, Bill Ainslie's art workshops, the poetry magazine *Ophir* edited by Walter Saunders and Peter Horn, Esrom Legae's art classes at Dorkay House and Barney Simon's drama groups are noteworthy exceptions. The dangers inherent in political involvement combined with a sense of isolation within the country as well as being cut off from the rest of the world led many academics and cultural activists to go into in exile.

It would be a grim irony indeed if the act of remarking upon the achievement of Wopko Jensma in speaking as the other were to imply that the admission of the reality of other beings into the self were an exceptional quality. To do so would be to reduce the notion of identity to quantifiable units. It is precisely this reductiveness which the poetry challenges and through that challenge reveals the horror of that which actively prevents exploration of the possibilities of the self.

Wopko Jensma reached beyond the limits that those from his race and class felt in those two decades to be almost absolute. In doing so, he sought one of the most intimate associations with the other that is possible. His poetry speaks with voices from within worlds that are ordinarily unreachable from without. And the radical nature of this poetic act is underscored when it is understood that he did not do so on

behalf of the other but as the other.

Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:106f) describes Jensma's 'method' as such:

> In fact, in order to show a South Africa sickened by apartheid, Jensma has chosen to speak in the first person, as both hero-victim and the hero-murderer. But it is always the same 'I': it is the same person who suffers, the man who has been stricken by what he has himself conceived or done in a moment of aberration or madness. An inner universe takes shape, like the cross-section of a sick mind: it reveals the terrible schizophrenia of living all the time by two codes of conduct, one for one's family and (white) neighbour, the other for the sub-human black man cast in the role of servant. Thus the hero-victim dies a thousand times over, bleeding from a thousand wounds, while the hero-murderer constantly proclaims a brotherhood which is contradicted by the multitude of crimes committed against the flesh and the spirit of these 'unlike likes'.

There is an implication here that to acknowledge and admit the other under apartheid is to be a schizophrenic. In addition, apartheid generates states of schizophrenia, especially in those drawn from the dominant minority. Seen from this perspective, Jensma's poetry is an analysis of that state in South African society of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus the further autobiographical detail from 'Spanner in the What? Works', 'I suffer from schizophrenia/(they tell me)' (Jensma 1977:6f), has an important significance to it: both he and his society share the same affliction.

Understanding that does not lead to simplistic connections between the experience of South Africa and schizophrenia. Instead, if we accept Berthoud's (1989:9) aphorism: 'If the activist makes history, and the intellectual defines it, the poet experiences it–that is, makes it real to himself'–then it is to poets that we need to look for accounts of experience which are not to be found anywhere else, and which are explored with a complexity peculiar to the nature of poetry itself.

This discussion needs to go one step further and conclude with a focus upon Wopko Jensma himself, as one of us, who opened himself to the effects of South African history. A dimension of his disablement is finely caught in this account by Baudrillard (1985:132f):

> If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore.

> The schizo is bereft of every scene, open to everything in spite of himself, living in the greatest confusion. He is himself obscene, the obscene prey of the world's obscenity. What characterizes him is less the loss of the real, the light years of estrangement from the real, the pathos of distance and radical separation, as is commonly said: but, very much to the contrary, the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things, the feeling of no defence, no retreat. It is the end of interiority and intimacy, the overexposure and transparence of the world which traverses him without obstacle. He can no longer produce the limits of his own being, can no longer play nor stage himself, can no longer produce himself as mirror. He is now only a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence.

There is much more than an individual, idiosyncratic instance in the case of Wopko Jensma. Aside from the sheer pain which being 'only a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence' must be for the person so afflicted, the effects upon a poet are obviously devastating. Jensma's struggle with form thus has a poignancy which is acute. And the bitter irony must be that in transcending with such tender understanding the barriers of race, class, culture and condition, Wopko Jensma now suffers the indignity of being unable to control or regulate the obscene flow of experience and sensation through himself. In seeking a fuller, more complete identity than the system of apartheid decreed, Wopko Jensma has lost his creative identity. He can no longer paint or write. The analyses that his poetry makes of the agonies of southern Africa are now applicable to himself.

Wopko Jensma disappeared from his place of shelter in 1993 and has not been heard of since. The shelter was gutted by fire in 1996.

I began with the quotation from Octavio Paz because it expresses an optimistic sense of the achievement of human beings despite the nightmare of history. But reflection upon the poetry and the predicament of Wopko Jensma makes the words of Paz—'making beautiful and lasting works out of the real substance of that nightmare'—difficult to endorse. Yes, Jensma's poetic and graphic works are beautiful and they will last. But they speak so powerfully of the damage and suffering which are their genesis and their nature that it asks for embarrassing fortitude to be able to acknowledge their beauty. One has to forget the subjects of the poetry so as to see and feel them again. And that is, perhaps, an old irony of art. Though the pressure of history's nightmare is unremitting, the struggle for form continues, a struggle which only the unusually ordinary are able to undertake.

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Marginality, Afrikaans Literature and 'The Undefined Work of Freedom'

Philip John

> Kuns is ons laaste verweer teen chaos
> (Aucamp 1996:20).

I

Sometimes there are texts—and even moments in texts—which seem curiously predisposed to grabbing the attention of readers. For me, as reader of Afrikaans literature, such a text has from my first reading been 'And our fathers that begat us' in a collection of short stories by Koos Prinsloo entitled *Die hemel help ons* (1987)[1]. In this story a young man returns the day before Christmas to his parental home in Natal for a short visit, during which, as we learn at the end of the story, he 'reveals' (Prinsloo 1987:26) something to his father. Within the context formed by the stories in the collection it is probable that this 'revelation' concerned his sexuality. More specifically it is probable that he used the visit to tell his father that he was homosexual. This 'fact' is however never stated explicitly in the story, the focus rather falling on a narrative reconstruction by the young man of the lives of his ancestors. This reconstruction consists of a number of 'real' or documentary texts juxtaposed to one another: a photograph of the young man's father sitting on an elephant shot by his grandfather in Kenia (Prinsloo 1987:12), an autobiographical sketch by the young man's grandfather (Prinsloo 1987:12-14), photographs of the young man's father (Prinsloo 1987:17-18), two letters by the young man's grandparents to his father, signed 'J.P. and E.C. Prinsloo' (Prinsloo 1987:19-20), a newspaper clipping noting the death of the young man's grandfather, J.P. Prinsloo (Prinsloo 1987:21) and finally a letter to the young man from his father, which he received in Johannesburg ten days after his visit to the parental home in Natal (Prinsloo 1987:25f) (while he was busy writing part of the story which was to become 'And our fathers that begat us').

One of the functions which the documents fulfil in the story is to clarify the relation between the ancestors of the young man mentioned in the story (J.P. and E.C.

[1] The story first appeared in 1984 in *Stet* 2,4, an Afrikaans 'minor magazine'.

Prinsloo), the 'young man' and the writer of the story, Koos Prinsloo. These documents make it possible to think that the 'young man' in the story is actually 'Koos Prinsloo'. Such an interpretation is strengthened by other information provided: a biographical note in the front of the book informs the reader that Koos Prinsloo was born in Eldoret in Kenia and came to South Africa in 1962, concurring with information in the story as such (Prinsloo 1987:10), and in the colophon the writer of the book is given as 'J.P. Prinsloo'.

The attraction that this story has for me has less to do with these 'documents' and with their possible veracity as such than with the narrative by which they are linked, and by which the story itself is created. The documents however play an important role in determining the nature of this linking narrative. In this narrative is described—in painfully exact detail—the visit of the young man/'Koos Prinsloo' to his parental home, from his first sighting of the Ingagane power station near Newcastle where his parents reside, through his arrival at the parental home, his walk through the lounge and a passage to his bedroom, a spartan supper to the Christmas lunch he enjoys with his parents the next day. On this Christmas day he also masturbates, looks at photo albums and talks with his father about the past of the family, specifically about his grandfather's farm on the Uasin Gishu plateau in Kenia.

To illustrate what I mean by this, I cite the description of his arrival at the parental home:

> *Op die toegeboude stoep met die blou afdakkie wag sy ma. (Ma is op 27 Junie 1924 op Gwelo in Suid-Rhodesië gebore—die vyfde van nege kinders. Sy het 'n slap voet, waarskynlik weens 'n ligte vorm van polio wat sy as kind gehad het, en sy kry soms asma.) Hy haal sy naweektas uit die kattebak van die motor en stap nader. Die grasperk is reeds nat van die dou.*
>
> *Hallo, seun. Sy soen hom. Hoe gaan dit?*
>
> *Goed.*
>
> *Haar bors fluit effens. Hy stap agter haar aan, verby die breimasjien onder die plastiekkleedjie op die stoep en verby die kaggel in die sitkamer waar die wit Kersboom van plastiek tussen twee kanondoppe en twee ivoortande, wat elk in 'n olifantpoot gemonteer is, staan* (Prinsloo 1987:11f).

On the enclosed veranda with the blue awning his mother stands waiting. (Mother was born on the 27th June 1924 in Gwelo in Southern Rhodesia—the fifth of nine children. She has a lame foot, probably the result of a mild form of polio which she had as child, and she sometimes suffers from asthma.) He takes his travelling case out of the boot of the car and walks closer. The lawn is already wet with dew.

Hello, son. She kisses him. How are you?

Well.

Her chest wheezes slightly. He walks after her, past the knitting machine under

> a plastic cover on the veranda and past the hearth in the lounge where the white plastic Christmas tree stands between two cannon cartridges and two tusks, each mounted in an elephant foot (a.t.; see also citation from *Wolftyd* in footnote 2).

What is first notable about the description of the young man/'Koos Prinsloo's' actions is the disinterested objectivist tenor thereof, mainly the result of the 'objective' third person narration. More than a form of objective vision is however discernible in the fragment, namely something which can provisionally be called alienated observation. This alienation is given clear form in the fragment by the parenthesis which makes it clear that the voice of the narrator is split internally, and that there are actually two voices, both of which can be related to the author of the story, 'Koos Prinsloo'.

In the parenthesis—as is the case in the rest of the parentheses and the letters as well—the narrating voice retains a personalised quality, signalling in itself the presence of others, and of dialogic and filial links to these others. The personalised nature of expression in these sections of the story is further signalled by the references to intense experiences, illness and emotions such as longing, concern and indignation.

In the 'objectivist' narrative sequences, the emphasis falls on a neutral detailing of ordinary actions—standing, looking, walking—and on a focus on domestic objects. The nearly anomic tenor of these sequences is clearly manifested in the description of the young man taking a Sunday afternoon nap. He lies down on a bed and starts masturbating, apparently without much interest. While masturbating he looks at two prints of paintings by Tretchikoff hanging on the wall and then falls asleep without achieving an orgasm (Prinsloo 1987:16).

This 'split' in the voice of the narrator is further complicated when the impersonal narrator switches to a first-person address, speaking as the young man 'Koos Prinsloo' to his father (Prinsloo 1987:24). The manner in which the story is constructed thus emphasises the heterogeneity in the narrating voice, making the upholding of the usual boundaries between third-person narrator, first-person narrator and character untenable. At the same time, with the inclusion of 'documentary' fact in the story enabling one to relate the different voices to the same 'real' person (the author 'Koos Prinsloo'), an extremely intense sensation of alienation and anomie is created.

What makes the 'split' voice of the narrator in this story further remarkable is that by being inserted in a self-reflexive story, it implicates artistic creation in the alienation by which the narrator/author's voice is characterised. In this sense it lends clear form to the process of observation at the basis of artistic creation, showing not only the outer world being taken as object for observation and artistic representation, as is customary, but the 'inner' world of the character/narrator/author as well. The intensity of the alienation that is represented in the story can be seen as an achievement of Afrikaans literature at a specific point in its development, as representing an

important 'marker' in the aesthetic history of this literature—and in the history of the community out of which the text comes and which is reflected therein.

The importance of this 'moment' is borne out by the fact that a representation of a similar intensely alienated observation is found in another self-reflexive Afrikaans novel published four years later at the other end of the generational spectrum of Afrikaans literature, namely *Wolftyd* by Anna M. Louw (1991).

Wolftyd (1991) tells the story of Leonie Obach, a woman in her sixties whose husband, Luk, dies at the age of seventy-five. While going through documents he left behind, she discovers that he cheated on her right from the start of their marriage. The discovery of these infidelities causes her intense pain, more so as it seems that Luk purposely left the 'evidence' of his betrayal for her to discover. The novel basically deals with the process Leonie goes through attempting to deal with the pain caused her by the discovery of her husband's infidelity. After the initial shock Leonie develops an intense resentment towards Luk and starts feeling that he had deprived her of a large part of her emotional life. The resentment soon changes into a very intense feeling of aggrievement and simultaneously, anger. It is out of this anger that she will find the energy to accomplish 'healing' (Louw 1991:21,117,140). This healing Leonie eventually finds in an upsurge in her creativity, events narrated in Chapter four, 'Leonie se storie' (Leonie's story) and Chapter five, 'Winter' (Winter).

The novel however opens with Chapter one, 'Op soek na verlore tyd' (Searching for lost time), after Luk's death. In this first section of the novel the author provides the reader with a third-person report of a journey to Berlin, undertaken by a character identified only as 'die weduwee' (the widow). The purpose of this journey seems to be to trace the tracks of the Obachs, that is of the character Luk who had been married to Leonie. The report of this journey provided in the novel has a curious quality, mainly because of the appearance of a first-person narrator next to 'die weduwee' and the third-person narrator, as in the following extract:

> *Die weduwee skrik ligdag wakker en luister. Stil. Net die stemme van fietsryers onder in die binnehof wat na vroeë werkskofte vertrek. Sy het die vorige aand die rygsel fietse gesien wat met veiligheidskettings aan die fietskrip onder vas is. 'n Ruk lank lê sy nog en luister hoe die verkeer in Grolmanstraat toeneem, terwyl sy haar eerste bewegings beplan.*
>
> *Die duvet is met stekelige bokhaarstof gestop en dit ruik na nikotien. Ek slaan die oortrek terug en ontdek onlangse brandplekke. Iemand het in die bed gelê en rook. Ek gaan 'n ander duvet aanvra. Dis beslis 'n derderangse pension* (Louw 1991:4)[2].

[2] The widow awakes before sunrise and listens. Quiet. Only the voices of cyclists in the courtyard below departing to early work shifts. The previous evening she had seen the string of bicycles chained to the cycle rack. For a while she lies listening to the traffic increasing in Grolman Street, whilst planning her first movements.

This first-person narrator (who appears sporadically in other parts of the novel), apart from being an extension of the third person narrator, seems to be—like Leonie and 'die weduwee'—an older woman (Louw see 1991:163, also 232). This first-person narrator is also on a journey to Berlin—on the tracks of the Obachs. Her attention—like that of the third person narrator—is mainly focused on 'die weduwee'. The first-person narrator and the widow thus appears to be the same person, something which can be inferred definitively from the fact that they share the same intimate spaces.

There is however an important difference between the two personae appearing in the first section, namely the first-person narrator and the widow. The first-person narrator consistently remains neutral and provides an objective report of her journey. In contrast in the description of the widow (by the third-person narrator) consistent reference is made to the emotions she experiences: anger (Louw 1991:1,13), self-pity (Louw 1991:3), loneliness (Louw 1991:16), depression (Louw 1991:14), hate (Louw 1991:15,21) and sorrow (Louw 1991:21). The effect created by this kind of narration can be described in two (paradoxically) related ways: on the one hand an extreme form of alienation is created by the juxtaposition of a third-person and first-person description of the same person, the widow (which is at the same time both of them), and on the other hand this kind of narration actually implies the erasure of the customary barrier between first- and third-person narration.

The similarity with 'Out fathers that begat us' which is apparent from the above discussion is further borne out by other aspects of the narration in *Wolftyd* (1991) which lead to a similar disturbance of the barrier(s) between character or art (Leonie 'die weduwee'; the first-person narrator) and reality ('the writer/third-person narrator'; Anna M. Louw), such that the process which is narrated 'in' the text comes to be seen as 'outside' the text as well.

The first chapter of *Wolftyd* (1991) is concluded with a note informing the reader that the 'first-person/third-person narrator/writer' put down her pen and provisionally closed her notebook in which she had been making notes of her visit to Germany and to the area where the character Luk spent his youth. This act is clearly dated, 'Oktober 1987'—that is, before the publication of *Wolftyd* (1991). One of the implications of this note is that the 'narrator/writer'—also a 'widow' (like Leonie)—had some relation to 'Luk' (or someone 'like' him) and experienced a similar personal trauma. The note also implies that when the notebook was taken up again, its elaboration resulted in the novel, *Wolftyd* (1991) (of which the notebook forms the first part). If the note is read in this way it makes a reading of *Wolftyd* (1991) possible as not only

The duvet is stuffed with prickly angora wool and smells of nicotine. I fold the cover back and discover recent burn marks. Someone had been smoking in bed. I am going to ask for another duvet. It is definitely a third-rate pension (a.t.).

the story of Leonie but also as the representation of the process of the creation of the novel, this process taken up into the novel itself.

Most importantly however, such a reading makes possible an association between *Wolftyd* (1991) as creative text and the process narrated on a thematic level in the novel itself, namely Leonie's process of 'healing' through artistic creation. This would make *Wolftyd* (1991) a text of 'healing'—representing this process with reference to the author, Anna M. Louw (or at least, someone 'like' her), and seen (or extrapolated) sociologically, with reference to the (Afrikaans) reader. Read in this manner, *Wolftyd* carries the implication that it provides a 'map'—it advises the reader on how to—or makes it possible for this reader to see how he or she can—submit his or her self to a process of transformation through aesthetic expression[3].

Wolftyd (1991) and 'Our fathers that begat us' thus—curiously—show clear similarities. In both texts the authorial voice is 'split' between a first-person narrator and a character observed by this narrator with a third-person narrator hovering in the background, effectively erasing the boundary between narrator and character and simultaneously creating the impression of an acute form of alienation. Both texts provide the reader with the means whereby he or she can relate the first-person narrators in the stories to the personae of the actual authors. In both texts the apparently extreme form of alienation represented is simultaneously a representation of the process involved in artistic creation, with the personae of the actual writers ('Koos Prinsloo'; 'Anna M. Louw') implicated in this process. In both cases the representation is part of a process by which someone tries to deal with a personal trauma and the consequent alienation by gathering material which is to be (re)casted in the form of art.

II

Part of the answer to the question why I have always found these two texts arresting appeared when I came across a discussion in which a similarly peculiarly intense observation figures centrally and in which this observation is connected to aesthetic expression and the transformation of the self. In an essay entitled 'What is Enlightenment?' in which Michel Foucault tries to define, amongst other things, what 'modernity' might mean he makes reference to an essay by Charles Baudelaire on the artist Constantin Guys. According to Foucault modernity is defined by Baudelaire firstly with reference to a kind of observation and secondly with reference to a related orientation towards the self:

[3] Burger (1995) comes to a comparable conclusion regarding André P. Brink's novel *Inteendeel* (1993), using Rorty's idea of an 'ironist' creating the values according to which he is to be judged himself.

> For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is. Baudelairean modernity is an exercise in which *extreme attention to what is real* is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it.
>
> However, modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself. The deliberate attitude of modernity is tied to an indispensable asceticism. To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of passing moments; it is *to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration* (Foucault 1984:41; e.a.).

The same elements are found in these words of Foucault that were referred to in the discussion of the two Afrikaans texts above—an 'extreme attention' to the present and simultaneously, a transformative aesthetic relation to the self. In the Afrikaans texts the 'extreme attention' is directed towards the observing and narrating self, this process concretised in the 'split' voice of the narrator, slipping between and from character, third-person narrator and first-person narrator to the autobiographical persona of the author. The clear resemblance(s) between the Afrikaans texts and the 'attitude' Foucault's essay addresses justifies associating Foucault's pronouncements on this 'attitude' with the Afrikaans texts.

Foucault's use and discussion of Baudelaire's vision is first of all part of an attempt to define what 'Enlightenment' might mean in the last quarter of the twentieth century. It is however also part of a development in Foucault's thought which has been characterised as a turn towards the problem of ethics[4]. Foucault's attempt to deal with the problems associated with a conventional approach to the heritage of the Enlightenment results in an ethics which emphasises an 'aesthetics of the self' as the only way of continuing the heritage of the Enlightenment.

In his attempt to provide an 'alternative' definition of the ethical heritage of the Enlightenment in the essay 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault first of all distances himself from the theme of 'humanism' (Foucault 1984:43-45). In the process he also jettisons the conceptual baggage associated with humanism, such as certain ideas about history and progress and the accompanying rationalist orientation towards 'formal structures with universal value' (Foucault 1984:46). To the humanist perspective orientated towards 'bettering' our lives in accordance with a projected, 'rational' metaphysical goal, Foucault opposes what he calls 'the undefined work of freedom' founded on a perspective which treats the world as fundamentally historical:

> ... this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom (Foucault 1984:46).

[4] See for example the following: Harpham (1988); Rajchman (1992); and Jones (1994).

One of the advantages of this approach to the possibility of freedom is that it does not pre-emptively determine what this 'freedom' might be, or what the best approach thereto might be, as was the case in 'liberatory' projects undertaken in the Soviet Union, Socialist China and elsewhere which resulted in increased repression and oppression. In these cases the 'work of freedom' were subsumed under abstract, systematic schemes. By moving the locus of freedom away from systematic rationality to the aesthetic sphere Foucault's approach privileges heterogeneity. It is to this purpose that the references to Baudelaire and to an 'aesthetics of the self' or an attitude of 'self-fashioning' is made.

Foucault feels justified in associating the heritage of the Enlightenment with such an 'attitude' of self-fashioning because, he argues, this is actually in line with the way Kant approached the Enlightenment. Foucault argues that Kant's manner of addressing the question is 'an 'exit', a 'way out' (Foucault 1984:34; see also 38). Foucault thus highlights the fact that there is nothing prescriptive or teleological in Kant's perspective on the concept of the Enlightenment. It is this aspect of Kant's concept—and Baudelaire's perspective—that enables Foucault to see an open-ended, active, personal engagement with the world implied therein. It is also by linking Kant's meditation on the Enlightenment in this way to an 'attitude' (Foucault 1984:39-42,50), to action, that Foucault can justify speaking about such a personal, non-rational aesthetic engagement with the world, and especially the self, as an ethical injunction, analogous to the ethos according to which the Greek philosophers lived (Foucault 1984:39).

The argument in this article is that the 'attitude'—an intensified awareness of the present and the self coupled with an aesthetic transformation thereof—which Foucault associates with the practice of freedom and the continuation of the tradition of the Enlightenment is clearly present in contemporary Afrikaans literature. Following Foucault, it is thus possible to show that the peculiar kind of narrative perspective in Afrikaans texts such as in 'And our fathers that begat us' and *Wolftyd* (1991), as discussed above, is a clear indication of the 'modernity' of these texts and of the manner in which an ethical practice is realised by means of 'elite' aesthetic expression[5].

[5] To the two texts analysed here can be added a number of other contemporary Afrikaans texts in which the barriers between art and life are problematised. In Prinsloo's case such a 'defictionalising' tendency started with his *Jonkmanskas* (1982), and then continued through *Die hemel help ons* (1987); *Slagplaas* (1992); to *Weifeling* (1993). Recent elaborations include *Relaas van 'n moord* by Antjie Krog (1996); *Vreemder as fiksie* by Johan de Lange (1996); and Hennie Aucamp's *Gekaapte tyd. 'n Kladboek September 1994 - Maart 1995* (1996); and *Allersiele. 'n Dagboek Mei 1995 - Februarie 1996* (1997).

III

If the approach followed thus far has seemed to emphasise the elite, universal nature of contemporary Afrikaanse literature, this does not preclude attention to the question of 'marginality'. Attention to the problematic(s) associated with this term is important because it provides a (further) potent 'lever' for the discussion and understanding of contemporary Afrikaans literature.

'Marginality' has in some form or other figured centrally in Afrikaans literature throughout its history. Two of the most important levels on which this has happened are firstly the sociopolitical situation of the literature and secondly on the thematic level, or the 'content' of the literature.

Afrikaans literature was historically positioned marginally first of all on a political level as part of Afrikaans culture's struggle against British imperialism[6], and secondly on a literary-cultural level with relation to the European tradition. At the same time, Afrikaans culture functioned as a centre with regard to the other South African cultures and literatures, as a result of the Afrikaner Nationalist control of the country. The relation between Afrikaans culture and British imperialism on the one side and African culture on the other was mainly a political one. The dominant cultural relation was however oriented towards Europe from which Afrikaans literary theorists derived their conception of Afrikaans literature as a 'national' literature.

Afrikaans culture has currently been displaced from the centre, this displacement however not (yet) resulting in a simple reversal—the old centre now becoming margin, and the old margin becoming the new centre. The new centre is presently itself unstable and insecure, having only recently been occupied after the ANC election victory of 1994. It is still heterogeneous and subject to contradictory (and frequently ill-defined, amorphous) tendencies. Operating with a simplistic margin-centre-dichotomy in this situation is ill-advised, and is one of the reasons for the problematisation of the term 'marginality' which is attempted in this article.

On a thematic level a consciousness of marginality has for some time now been manifesting itself in a particularly intense form and in a variety of forms in Afrikaans literature. One of the interesting things about this development is that the contemporary[7] intensification of a consciousness of marginality can be traced back to the start of the eighties, that is, long before the political changes of the nineties.

[6] Afrikaners fought - and won - their first 'War of Liberation' (Eerste Vryheidsoorlog) against Britain in 1884. They achieved 'national' liberation (i.e. decolonisation for whites) in 1960 with the founding of the Republic of South Africa. Brink (1991) provides an extensive discussion of the positions taken by Afrikaans culture in the course of South African history.

[7] A consciousness of marginality is however not something new in Afrikaans literature. A 'history' of this consciousness will have to include attention to manifestations of this consciousness - apart from the canonised forms, such as in the concern with the poor-white problem in early

A central text in this regard is *Die kremetartekspedisie* by Wilma Stockenström (1981)[8]. This lyrical novel exhibits many of the features which start appearing with an increasing frequency in Afrikaans prose after this date (and by which the two texts analysed in this article, namely 'And our fathers that begat us' and *Wolftyd* (1991), are also marked). These features include the following: a metatextual self-reflexive level, a narrator—a slave woman—who belongs to a marginalised social grouping, a pronounced sense of the narration taking place at a limit, namely on the verge of death. The novel also makes use—through the reference to slavery—of historical material, characteristic of many novels after this date.

One of the clearest indications of a 'turn' towards a concern with the space and questions of marginality in Afrikaans fiction is the large number of novels, published especially since the start of the nineties, in which the central protagonist and (usually at the same time) narrator is a bed-ridden geriatric woman dealing with her reminiscences[9]. The positions which these narrators occupy are all the result of social marginalisation.

Further related forms in which an intensified consciousness of marginality has manifested in Afrikaans fiction over the last two decades include the following: the usage of characters and narrators on the verge of death[10], the usage of 'dead' narrators,

Afrikaans fiction - in such unlikely places as the nationalistically-imbued novels of D.F. Malherbe, especially with regard to his Biblical novels, in which - as early as 1933 with *Die hart van Moab* - a pessimistic perspective as to the workability and acceptability of nationalism can be read off. A significant number of early Afrikaans fiction can in a related manner be 'mined' for suppressed expressions of dissidence or a counter-discourse, usually in the form of the representation of the process by which Afrikaans society tended to destroy 'softer' aspects of the personality such as creativity and compassion. Representations of this kind can be found in figures such as Leonora in *Die meulenaar* by D.F. Malherbe (1926); Hansie in *Langs die grootpad* by C.M. van den Heever (1928); Kosie in *Die sprinkaanbeampte van Sluis* by Jochem van Bruggen (1933); and in the 'softer,' more 'feminine' young man in C.M. van den Heever's prose as analysed by Coetzee (1995).

[8] *Die kremetartekspedisie* has been translated into English under the title, *The Expedition to the Baobab Tree*, by J.M. Coetzee.

[9] Examples are: *Hierdie lewe* by Karel Schoeman (1993); *Juffrou Sophia vlug vorentoe* by Berta Smit (1993); and *Sandkastele* by André P. Brink (1995).

[10] Examples include the already mentioned *Die kremetartekspedisie* by Wilma Stockenström (1981); *'n Ander land* by Karel Schoeman (1984); *Kroniek uit die doofpot* by John Miles (1991); *Abjater wat so lag* by Wilma Stockenström (1991); *Hierdie lewe* by Karel Schoeman (1993); and *Sandkastele* by André P. Brink (1995).

that is narrators speaking from 'behind' death—an extremely marginalised position[11], and texts dealing with life amongst marginalised social groupings such as poor-whites[12]. A significant development in Afrikaans prose bringing experiences of marginalisation into the centre of the literature has been the publication of novels by coloured and black people such as Abraham Phillips[13], A.H.M. Scholtz[14], Karel Benjamin[15] and E.K.M. Dido[16].

IV

Any attempt to engage meaningfully with the problematic of marginality will have to take cognisance of the elaborate and extended scholarship which has developed around the term[17]. All that is attempted in this article is to first of all indicate the relevance of the problematic for the study of contemporary Afrikaans literature and secondly, as a humble contribution to the discussion around the term, to bring it into relation with what is usually placed in opposition to it, namely 'elite' aesthetic expression. In essence, the texts used above, 'And our fathers that begat us' and *Wolftyd* (1991), which were used to establish the 'modernity' of contemporary Afrikaans literature are simultaneously used in conjunction with the 'opposite' of elite expression, namely marginal expression or minority literature.

The main objective of this approach is to show that there need not necessarily be an exclusive tension between marginality and universality and that marginality is actually an indispensable pre-condition for universality. An associated objective will be to forward the argument that attempts to define a literature simplistically or exclusively with reference to marginality as a minor or minority literature, for instance as

[11] In a number of cases the narration takes place from 'behind' death, such as in *Die eerste lewe van Adamastor* by André P. Brink (1988); *Missionaris* by Elsa Joubert (1988); *Die reuk van appels* by Mark Behr (1993); and *Inteendeel* by André P. Brink (1993).

[12] Examples include *Triomf* by Marlene van Niekerk (1994); and *Droster* by Tinus Horn (1995).

[13] *Die verdwaalde land* (1992); and *Erfenis van die noodlot* (1993).

[14] *Vatmaar. 'n Lewendagge verhaal van 'n tyd wat nie meer is nie* (1995); en *Langsaan die vuur. Vyf lewensverhale* (1996).

[15] *Staan uit die water uit! 'n Kaapse jeug* (1996).

[16] *Die storie van Monica Peters* (1996).

[17] Two representative collections are *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* edited by Abdul JanMohamed & David Lloyd (1990); and *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* edited by Ferguson *et al.* (1990).

the expression of a group's identity, might be a serious distortion, limiting the possible profundity of expression in the literature.

'Marginality' can and has been approached from a variety of perspectives. The most recent attention given to the term took place within the ambit of a centre-margin-dichotomy in postcolonial studies (e.g. Seshadri-Crooks 1995). One of the characteristic forms in which the centre-margin-dichotomy appeared before this time, was however as overlaid with dichotomies associated with colonial discourse theory, such as metropole/periphery, coloniser/colonised and oppressor/oppressed. This is to be expected as postcolonial studies can be seen as an off-shoot or development of colonial discourse theory. The general 'climate' in which colonial discourse theory and postcolonial studies developed was simultaneously deeply influenced by poststructuralist theory so that the coloniser/colonised dichotomy was further overlaid with and sometimes displaced by other frameworks expressive of the concerns of social groupings characteristically formed and conceived on the basis of categories associated with race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. In these frameworks the notions of agency, subject, identity and subjectivity figured largely. These frameworks characteristically emphasised the silencing, marginalising working of discourse—especially of Western discourse as seen from the perspective of marginalised subjectivities. Study in this general terrain seems to have two main objectives, namely first of all the critical exposure and unmasking of the marginalising working of hegemonic discourse and secondly the reparative advancing of opportunities for expression by marginalised 'voices'.

An earlier elaboration of marginality took place within the ambit of 'minority studies' mainly founded on an anthropological or ethnic base (e.g. Karrer & Lutz 1990:11). This part of the 'terrain' was also fundamentally transformed by the fervent theoretical activity of the past decade or so, as for instance evidenced by the complexity introduced into the field by the placing of the term 'minor literature' next to the more customary 'minority literature'[18].

A significant part of the discourse on marginality as far as it refers to literature is devoted to exploring the problems associated with the accompanying categories and frameworks, such as 'minority literature', 'women's studies' and ethnic studies. A number of contributions indicate that the placement of a literature with reference to such categories is frequently accompanied by an impoverishment thereof. Such impoverishment happens in two main ways, both where the literature is closely associated with the interests of a clearly delimited social group. In the most severe and

[18] Some of the implications of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's term 'minor' literature are explored in Rumboll (1995).

problematic cases a minority placement limits the literature (and criticism thereof) to the expression of the authentic 'soul' or 'being' of a group of people. In its worst form this kind of placement relegates the literature to the parochial, exotic and touristic. In its more positive incarnations, the implications of a minority placement might be less deleterious, such as where the literature is placed next to and against another, more dominant discourse, the minority or minor literature fulfilling a counter-discursive function. The main problem with such a placement is that the literature is inextricably tied to the more powerful literary discourse, so that it remains dependent and secondary, its semantic horizon set by the dominant discourse. This is arguably the case with most 'counter-discursive' postcolonial approaches.

At the same time discussion has indicated that the placement of literature(s) as minority discourses have unique strengths and can come accompanied by definite privileges. Two of the more positive perspectives on this side of minority discourse emphasise first of all the disruptive potential of such discourse, and secondly its productive potential. The insistence on particularity which is characteristic of (some) minority expression can perform a valuable anti-totalising function, problematising the elaboration of all-inclusive frameworks (see Godard 1995; Wynter 1990:457-462). Minority discourse can also produce new knowledge when it functions as an 'exotic new frontier' (Seshadri-Crooks 1995:53,59).

That a number of the frameworks mentioned above can in varied ways be brought into association with the situation of Afrikaans literature, or with facets of this literature, is clear. The point of this article is however not how to specify which of the mentioned frameworks can be applied to contemporary Afrikaans literature, but rather to problematise any such attempt. The question which this article would like to leave the reader with is thus: what does it mean to on the one hand classify Afrikaans literature as 'marginal' or a 'minority literature', and on the other to be aware of the 'modernity' of the literature, of how it fits into an 'universal' aesthetic expressive regime?[19]

I would like to suggest—on the basis of the analysis of the two texts above—that it is possible to see texts (or a literature)—simultaneously affiliated to 'universal', 'elite', 'modern' aesthetic expression and to a particularistic, 'marginal' expressive base. Such an argument has important implications, especially in the—heterogeneous—South African context. Texts such as those analysed in this article, and the literature from which they spring, place a special burden on South African society. They

[19] In an analysis of Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*, Ina Gräbe (1995) approaches the problem from a slightly different angle, arguing that the 'aesthetic' representation of marginality can fulfill a humanising function.

make clear that any tendency or policy which is knowingly or unknowingly premised on emphasising the 'marginality' of Afrikaans literature at the expense of the aesthetic modernity thereof, is limiting the 'undefined work of freedom' and striking at an important emancipatory resource in the South African context.

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Afrikaans Theatre: A Centre Moving?

J.L. Coetser

Critics such as Brydon (1984) have suggested a postcolonial, counter discursive interpretation of William Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. The existence of three stages of colonisation is confirmed even by a superficial reading of the text.

During the first stage Sycorax, a witch, is left on an island with child by passing sailors. Her son, Caliban, '[a] freckled whelp hag-born—not honour'd with/[a] human shape' (Act 1, Scene 2), is born on the island. An airy spirit called Ariel serves her but because he refused to obey her repulsive commands she fixed him into a cloven pine. The second phase commences after Sycorax had died and Prospero and Miranda have landed on the island. Prospero is the rightful Duke of Milan whom his brother Antonio had replaced and then put to sea to die with his daughter. He reaches and occupies the island, releases Ariel from Sycorax's spell and subjugates Caliban as his slave. During a storm a ship with friends and enemies aboard perishes nearby. Prospero reveals himself to the shipwrecked persons as the true Duke, after which the colonisers return to Europe aboard the repaired vessel. Now the third stage commences: Ariel receives his freedom and Caliban probably remains on the island. 'We want Caliban to be left behind in what is, after all, his own place, but', declares Bloom (1988:6), 'Shakespeare neither indulges nor denies our desires'.

Introduction

This interpretation of *The Tempest* reveals features relating to the discourse on the marginalisation and postcolonial situation of plays written in Afrikaans. These include the consecutive colonising of the southern tip of Africa, first by settler-occupation followed by military invasion. In 1652 a Dutch trading company, the Generale Vereenighde Nederlantsche G'octroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie, or V.O.C., founded a halfway station to replenish its ships *en route* to the East. Britain occupied parts of Southern Africa in 1795, 1806 and in 1902. South Africa officially became the Union of South Africa in 1910 after British victory in the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902). Several instances of internal cultural colonisation ensued after the National Party came to power in 1948 and the African National Congress in 1994.

According to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:260-268) internal colonisation of minority cultures with limited access to political power commonly occurs. In Malaysia, which is the example Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:265) quote, the ruling elite enshrined the Malay language, culture and Islam to the disadvantage of other cultures. The resemblances between Malaysia and South Africa in 1948 and 1994 are striking. However, the South African situation in 1948 differed from the situation in Malaysia. In 1948 Apartheid caused forms of internal colonisation increasingly preventing or hampering cultural expression by most South Africans. The ruling elite enshrined the Afrikaans language in a fashion similar to the entrenchment of the Malay language. Presently it seems as if a reverse process is taking place. In practice it appears as if the ruling elite is enshrining the English/english language and culture to the disadvantage of most minority cultures, including persons speaking Afrikaans.

Essential to this observation is an acceptance that postcolonialism in South Africa represents a continuous process with diverse consequences. According to Ashcroft *et al.* (1989:2) this process originated in an act of European imperial aggression:

> We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.

Postcolonialism therefore refers to the influence of the process of colonisation on plays in Afrikaans after the event has taken place, including events relating to neocolonialism.

Using a general literary systems approach, it suggests that Afrikaans theatre was at different times subjected to diverse kinds of cultural subordination. As in instances elsewhere the consequences were severe: 'Colonisation is insidious', explain Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:2),

> it invades far more than political chambers and extends well beyond independence celebrations. Its effects shape language, education, religion, artistic sensibilities, and, increasingly, popular culture.

Due to its public and often subversive nature, postcolonial theatre is frequently castigated. Afrikaans theatre protested against the power exerted by the colonial centre, and by so doing exposed itself to political intervention. Anticipating political intervention *Die verminktes* (1960; *The Maimed*) by Bartho Smit had its première in English at the Royal Court Theatre, London. *Die pluimsaad waai ver* (1972; *The Plume's*

Seed Blows Far) by N.P. van Wyk Louw had its first performance at the fifth celebration of South Africa becoming a republic. (All translations from Afrikaans are by the author of this article). Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd severely criticised the play because it did not conform to his expectations of an occasional drama. Verwoerd's comments released a barrage of public criticism against the playwright and his play.

The general aim of this article is to explain how Afrikaans theatre was subjected to various processes of postcolonialism. These processes were the result of occupation, invasion and different types of internal colonisation. Concluding, I shall attempt provisionally to characterise the uniqueness of Afrikaans theatre and the marginalisation to which it was subjected at times.

Occupation

Various forms of colonialism arose from establishing a Dutch V.O.C. halfway station at the Cape in 1652. This occupation led to the spread of Dutch cultural influence to the interior as a consequence of the migration of stock farmers speaking a variant of Dutch. Dutch-Afrikaans influence increased at the cost of the cultural heritage and the marginalisation of the indigenous Khoikhoi people, who were mercilessly massacred by the colonists. Wade (1995:xix) therefore appropriately asserts that colonisers have been suppressing South Africans since 1652.

Contrasting with the extinction of the Khoikhoi, the colonists contested the autocratic rule of the Dutch governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel. D.J. Opperman (1978) depicted this event in his play *Vergelegen* (1956; meaning, an unattainable ideal, a remote location) as an example of the rising of Afrikaner nationalism. The action in *Vergelegen* indirectly suggests the playwright's reaction to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in his own time. In the play Van der Stel and his followers clash with a group of 'free settlers' (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:9) led by Adam Tas and Van der Heiden. The governor denies the settlers the right to trade their farm produce freely, which inevitably results in the formation of a united group of rebels distancing themselves from colonial Dutch authority. After submitting a petition objecting to Van der Stel's rule, the V.O.C. disbands his followers and calls the governor back to answer for his misdemeanours.

Opperman's play presents two perspectives. The first relates to an actual historical event, which he transposed as a 'subtext' to the time of writing the play. According to Jameson (1993:81) the historical event is presented in such a way 'that that "subtext" is not immediately present as such ... but rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact'. This perspective culminates in Van der Heiden exclaiming: 'we are no longer Huguenot or Dutchman/but new persons, stronger, more lonely/ than they are .... Yes, I am an Afrikaner' (Opperman 1978:91).

His realisation relates to the second phase of cultural colonisation during which the margin writes back to the centre giving preference to its own cultural productions. Van der Heiden realises that a new identity has grown out of 'Huguenot' and 'Dutchman', and that the name 'Afrikaner' ties him to a new place, which is not Europe. He really expresses what Ashcroft *et al.* (1989:8f) call

> the special post-colonial crisis of identity ... the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place.

Simultaneously Van der Heiden's words suggest the opposition between the 'Afrikaner' and an *other* ('they'). By transposing the historical opposition between the governor ('they') and the free settlers to his own time, Opperman criticised features of society (Kannemeyer 1986:270). Especially relevant is the portrayal of the governor's group as corrupt representatives of government and church. In addition the playwright criticised the division of society in 'blacks, browns and whites' (Opperman 1978:86): 'In this country we shall become one great nation/from many nations, and take from each the best'.

The differences between the playwright's representation of postcolonialism and the importance the historian Davenport accords to the clash between government and citizen, indicate a number of ideological discontinuities. Davenport (1989:37) dismisses the revolt as

> part of the pre-history of Afrikaner nationalism, perhaps, but largely devoid of articulate political ideology and lacking in awareness of the Cape as potentially anything other than an outpost of the V.O.C.

Opperman rejects his claim by emphasising the 'pre-history of Afrikaner nationalism' and by foregrounding the postcolonial tension between *self* and *other*, *centre* and *margin*. In addition the play criticises the development of the discourse of Apartheid. In the end Van der Stel concedes that his ideals for the colony were unattainable, including his dream of 'one great nation/from many nations' (Opperman 1978:86). However, instead of regarding the main ideas of the play as a major subversion of the political power of the developing postcolonial Apartheid state, one may best view these as a mild form of criticism directed at corruption in general.

Invasion

Except Apartheid few events have surpassed the consequences of the Anglo Boer War on Afrikaner society, such as the attempts by the British colonial authority under Milner to anglicise South Africa. Despite internal divisions Afrikaners reacted negatively to

the colonial centre's display of authority. Milner's endeavours had two consequences. The first was protest in plays against the authority and culture of the coloniser. The second reaction emanated a few years later, after 1920, and was to be less bold, but no less intense.

Examples of playwrights and plays depicting struggle, are J.H.H. de Waal (*Die spioen en sy handlanger/The Spy and his Minion*; 1907), A. Francken (*Susanna Reyniers*; 1908), M. Jansen (*Afrikaner Harte/Afrikaner's Minds*; 1914), S.P.E Boshoff (*Jannies, Johnnies en Jantjies/Jannies, Johnnies and Jantjies*; 1917), Jan F.E. Celliers (*Heldinne van die oorlog/Heroines of War*; 1913) and C.J. Langenhoven (*Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika/Hope of South Africa*; 1913), and *Die Vrou van Suid-Afrika/Woman of South Africa*; 1918). None of these plays survived the progress of time. However, using history on stage proved to be effective opposition to Milner's anglicisation of Afrikaner culture. These postcolonial plays simultaneously assisted in shaping a historical discourse which gave rise to a unique form of cultural materialism.

Afrikaner cultural leaders established this materialism by constructing a specific brand of nationalism. Dekker (1964:96) describes its manifestations in literature during the first two decades of the century:

> an own national form of art ... [should celebrate] ... our history, our heroes, our nature as part of the fatherland, as an expression and creator of the character of our people [*volkskarakter*], the Voortrekker in full attire, the ox wagon, the *jukskei*/yoke-pin.

In this description Dekker assumed that the notion, the *Afrikaner*, represents an organic unity motivated by a single nationalism. Hofmeyr (1993:96) contested the assumption. She pointed out that Afrikaner nationalism related to economic and social influences predicating on capitalism. Part of these relations concerned the way in which cultural leaders managed literary production and consumption.

An example of a postcolonial play embodying the ideas of Afrikaner nationalism was C.J. Langenhoven's (1937) *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika* (The Hope of South Africa). The play derives its postcolonialism from the depiction of episodes from history before the Anglo Boer War, as a form of protest against colonial occupation. The presentation is therefore blatantly propagandistic. In this regard Binge (1969:45) points out that 'Afrikaners experienced an upsurge of emotional bondage to a people [*volk*, singular; *volke*, plural]' and that Langenhoven's 'awakening' to this emotion 'related to the ... political movement resulting in South Africa becoming a Union in 1910'.

Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika consists of two acts, each containing three scenes. In the first act every scene depicts a different time and place: 1650 and Table Bay, 1750 and the Western Province, 1836 near Grahamstown. The second act depicts a scene near Chief Dingaan's capital city (*kraal*) in 1838 and 1839. The six scenes in the play

therefore present part of South African history from 1650 until 1839. It is, in particular, a presentation of the way in which time, represented by Father Time, treated allegorical characters such as Hope and Cape of Good Hope seen from the perspective of Afrikaner nationalism.

In the play the stereotypical portrayal of characters is obvious. Langenhoven describes Jan van Riebeeck and Dingaan as 'historical', and Boer, Savage, Slave and Woman of South Africa as 'typical'. The playwright depicts Savage as an example of the postcolonial *other*, making no progress in life and without virtue, being unfair and dishonest (Langenhoven 1937:5-8). Savage is bent on revenge because 'the white man took my land' (Langenhoven 1937:15) and he lusts after 'the white women of the white man' (Langenhoven 1937:30). He brutally replies to the Reverend Charel Cilliers (1937:50): 'Look around you, white man. We shall annihilate all your people. The mountains and valleys are black of my people. Do you see us?'

Langenhoven's emphasis in *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika* on the role of women, religion and race was part of the postcolonial discourse on the empowerment of Afrikaners at the beginning of the century. It also provides an indication of the nature of Afrikaner identity then. Towards the end of the century Deon Opperman (1996) reversed the nuances of the discourse in his epic play *Donkerland* (Dark Land). In the play historical events compel the white man, being the neocolonised subject, to return the land he has appropriated from the indigenous people. Ironically a black woman, Meidjie (a word previously used in Afrikaans to refer to a black servant), becomes the ancestral mother of the family De Witt (meaning *the whites*). In his play Langenhoven had no doubt about the nature of Afrikaner identity. Opperman (1996:157), however, deconstructs Afrikaner identity metaphorically to 'a small heap of broken rubble ... testimony to the existence of a thin line of humanity'.

A similar quest for identity may be found in Herbert Dhlomo's play *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (Nongquase the Liberator) (Visser & Couzens 1985). As with Opperman's and Langenhoven's plays, Dhlomo projected an historical event—the cattle slaughter and subsequent starvation among the amaXhosa—onto contemporary issues. *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (first published in 1935) differs in an important aspect from Langenhoven's play. In *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika* (first performed in 1913; see Visser & Couzens 1985) Langenhoven attempted to legitimise the *status quo* represented by Afrikaner nationalism. Dhlomo does not legitimise but questions the *status quo*. *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (Visser & Couzens 1985) appeals against the portrayal of Savage in Langenhoven's play and against the occupation of land by whites. The text depicts whites as the *other*. The European colonist is a white thief (Visser & Couzens 1985:12) but, as in Opperman's *Donkerland* (1996), he will relinquish the land he has occupied. Compare Chief Kreli's words at the conclusion of the second scene (Visser & Couzens 1985:15): 'Kreli will triumph over the European.

Kreli will rule over all the country'.

The quest for cultural identity is an important part of postcolonial plays written in South Africa since the turn of the century. In Afrikaans postcolonial plays Afrikaner nationalism contributed to the estrangement of the Afrikaans subsystem from other forms (Hauptfleisch 1997:49) of South African theatre.

Postcolonialism after 1920

I have already referred to Milner's attempts to anglicise South Africa in the period immediately following the Anglo Boer War. Previously, during the second British occupation from 1806 onwards, Lord Charles Somerset similarly aimed at anglicising the region. Their attempts included the compulsory use of English by the judiciary and in the public service, churches and schools, emphasising the importance of language in the postcolonial process. Because speakers use language to control reality, Somerset and Milner succeeded in disempowering Afrikaners legally, economically and socially. British colonial rule reduced Afrikaners to an *other* by undermining their dignity, perception of belonging and identity. In this process one may distinguish two phases.

During the phase succeeding the Anglo Boer War, playwrights vehemently turned down all forms of British colonial culture. Then followed a phase of appropriation during which dramatists were directly concerned with the ideology informing the process. Consequently the 'crucial function of language', i.e. 'seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place' (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:38), was reversed. Afrikaner leaders realised that an armed struggle against colonial rule could not succeed. They had to adapt their strategy to the requirements of a cultural battle in a new war zone, the colony. Gustav Preller, for instance, argued that Afrikaners should reject English influence on the vocabulary or grammar of their language.

Historical and ideological considerations evidently influenced postcolonialism in early Afrikaans plays. These considerations included dominance of the economy and civil service by English-speaking persons, a devastating drought, an economic depression and South Africa's participation in World War I as a member of the British empire. Consequently postcolonialism marginalised the mainly agrarian Afrikaner to a collective, urban working class surpassing all cultural boundaries. 'Afrikaners were discriminated against', Kavanagh (1985:13) wrote:

> Unskilled and newly proletarianized when they arrived in the towns, they found themselves in circumstances remarkably similar to those in which the proletarianized black worker found himself.

The possibility that the Afrikaner as a group could disappear, caused serious concern among their leaders.

Dramatists responded to the situation by writing plays depicting social reality. Realism was, however, ameliorated by compassion. Jan F.E. Celliers described this change in the preface to his play *Reg bo reg* (1922; *Having a Right*, quoted by Antonissen 1973:73):

> Plays written until now, concerned themselves mainly with historical matters. In our time of early national construction, this is easy to explain and defend. Similarly we may defend art displaying some moral or other involvement .... However, for art to achieve locally what it should and what it has achieved elsewhere, we should follow an holistic approach, by concerning ourselves primarily with humanity—man, his character, passions, feelings, developments, struggle, the amusing and sorrowful relations following from differences between persons.

An exception is P.W.S. Schumann's play *Hantie kom huis-toe* (1933; Hantie comes Home), which depicts the existence of poor whites with great realism. Plays with a similar theme included *Die skeidsmuur* (1938; The Dividing Wall) by A.J. Hanekom, *Drankwet* (1933; Liquor Act) by E.A. Venter or *Die stad Sodom* (1931; The City of Sodom) by F.W. Boonzaier. Van Wyk (1995:71-79) points out that Afrikaans plays depicting poor whites serve as an indication of Afrikaner leaders' enterprise to encourage cultural (Afrikaners *versus* Jews or English-speaking persons) and racial (whites *versus* blacks) distinctions between Afrikaners and non-Afrikaners. Afrikaner leaders extended the notion of an *other* by including not only the British coloniser but everyone who was not an Afrikaner. The meanings attached to the word 'Afrikaner' increasingly associated skin colour with the language of Afrikaans (Van Wyk 1995:111).

Two playwrights who concerned themselves 'primarily with humanity' (Celliers quoted by Antonissen 1973:73) were J.F.W. Grosskopf and H.A. Fagan. In his plays Grosskopf depicts social displacement and poverty (*'n Esau*/My Brother; 1920; and *As die tuig skawe*/*When the Harness Chafes*; 1926). Fagan is known for his portrayal of female characters. In *Lenie* (1924) the title character revolts against her father's authority. *Ousus* (1934; meaning, the eldest daughter), *Ruwe erts* (1934; Crude Ore) and *Rooibruin blare* (1934; Red-brown Leaves) depict situations representing the repression of women in societies dominated by men.

The marginalisation of women in societies controlled by men confirms the interpretation that postcolonial discourse interrogates all forms of imperial dominance. In plays by Grosskopf and Fagan the postcolonial processes succeeding British occupation as well as phallocentric authority vested in societal structures, 'colonise' female characters twice. In *Ousus* (Fagan 1986), for example, Mrs. Venter manipulates

her daughter by using society's expectation that the eldest daughter should tend to the needs of an elderly parent. Her expectations were based on an interpretation of Christian religious values in which the notion of a relentless God-the-Father dominated. However, fifty years later the portrayal of the postcolonial situation of women in Afrikaans theatre has not changed substantially. Although female characters such as Anna in Pieter Fourie's play *Ek, Anna van Wyk* (1986; I, Anna van Wyk) defy the patriarchal authority of the centre (represented by Senior) more openly, only the context of Afrikaans theatre has altered.

Further evidence of postcolonialism appeared in performances of workers' plays between 1930 en 1950. The historical background to these plays related to the vulnerable economic position of Afrikaner workers (O'Meara 1983 *passim*). Leaders and workers liaised closely and won the general election in 1924, a feat which the National Party repeated on its own in 1929. Exploitation, meagre wages and poor working conditions weakened the association between worker and politician until it ceased to exist. An additional consideration was that Afrikaner leaders entered the field of grand economics. This compelled the capitalist British colonial centre to act more accommodating towards the economic power the colonial margin had acquired. Due to the founding of economic megaconglomerates such as SANTAM and SANLAM in 1918, the results of resolutions passed by the Economic Congress of the *Volk* in 1939, and political victory by the National Party in 1948, a noticeable Afrikaner working class ceased to exist. By 1950 workers' plays in Afrikaans were no longer generally performed.

Die nuwe wêreld (1947; The New World), a worker's play by H.A. Fagan (1956), shows the class divisions which were prevalent in Afrikaner society then. In addition the text portrays the workers' struggle against the power of capitalism (Van Wyk 1989). *Die nuwe wêreld* (1947) relates the story of Gerhard, heir to the owner of Van de Leur Furniture Factory, returning after taking part in World War II. Gerhard tries to change the way his father manages the plant, but without success. He implores Mr. Van de Leur to 'reconcile himself with classes and factions', but his father maintains that 'one has to take people as they are' (Fagan 1956:43). A strike turns violent as workers set fire to the building, but still Van de Leur refuses to share management with his employees.

The continuing empowerment of Afrikaner workers during the thirties and forties due to the expansion of Apartheid disadvantaged black workers. Plays dealing with the position of black workers include *The Foolish Mistress* by Routh and *Tau* by Pinchuk (Orkin 1991:56f). *The Foolish Mistress* involves the relationship between a house wife and a maid, and in this regard it compares with an Afrikaans play by Corlia Fourie. In *Moeders en dogters* (1985; Mothers and Daughters) the crisis evolves around the death of the father, Gert Cilliers-Smit. A political crisis and the fact that Susie, the

maid, loses her child during the riots simultaneously ensuing in Soweto, deepen the family crisis. An important difference between the plays is that Susie's experience is not part of the main action, which is similar to Klaartjie's encounter in Fagan's play, *Ousus*. Susie plays a minor character and Klaartjie does not even appear on stage. In *Don Gxubane onner die Boere* (1994; Don Gxubane among the Afrikaners) by Charles Fourie, Gracie plays a black Cinderella.

In summery one may state that postcolonialism in the thirties and forties predicated on the marginalisation of Afrikaner society overall. Specific concerns related to the position of women, poverty, urbanisation and the fate of the worker. However, Afrikaans plays become increasingly 'aesthetic' in the sense that themes moved away from the depiction of raw realism. 'Aesthetisisation' resulted in plays moving ideologically from the margins of postcolonialism to an own, neocolonial centre. Political transformations resulting in victory for the Afrikaner electorate in 1948, accelerated these changes. A generation of cultural philosophers extended the cultural involvement of the new political centre by reflecting on the role the arts should play in the new dispensation, including theatre. The emphasis fell on the unbreakable bond between individual and group, between the Afrikaner and his *volk*. In some way Celliers preempted this development in the preface to his *Reg bo reg* (1922), that the playwright should depict 'man, his character, passions, feelings, developments, struggle, the amusing and sorrowful relations following from differences between persons' (quoted by Antonissen 1973:73).

Neocolonialism

According to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:257) the notion *neocolonialism* is applicable to

> situations in which the most significant coloniser is not Britain (or one of the former European powers) but some other nation or cultural group.

In this regard one should bear in mind that the transition to a neocolonial situation in the fifties was not smooth and did not take place instantly. Because an internal political organisation, the National Party, initiated neocolonialism, it evolved from inside and therefore exhibited coherence, ruptures (an example being the disappearance of workers' plays) and fractures. An Afrikaans playwright who apparently criticised the National Party government's application of a neocolonial Apartheid ideology, was W.A. de Klerk (1971).

In his play *Die jaar van die vuur-os* (1952; The Year of the Killing of the Afrikaner Ox) conflict appears on three levels, that is in the family of the main character, called 'the General' (*die Generaal*), with the English-speaking neighbours staying on the farm Soris, and with Ngondera who lives on the General's farm called Okonjenje. Inside his family the actions of the General's three sons represent different consequences of postcolonialism. Alexis's actions represent rupture. He becomes part of the brain drain following the change of government, first by challenging the authority of the father and then by emigrating. Representing the 'New Afrikaner', Martin, a medical doctor who has earlier returned after practising in Europe during World War II, embodies the antithesis of Alexsis's ideas. The third son, Pieter, is an extremist wishing to perpetuate the old order. The General calls his English neighbour, John Hammond, a 'jingo' (De Klerk 1971:17), implying that Hammond represents the British coloniser. On his part Hammond reminds the General that Britain won the Anglo Boer War. Wishing to reconcile, the General sends Ngondera an ox as a gift (the ox to which the title refers) reminding him of a pledge to his father, that he would remain a friend of Kasupi's people. Ngondera refuses the gesture, kills the messenger, one of his followers accosts Gillian Hammond and in the end Pieter assassinates Ngondera.

This convinces the General that the isolation between persons belonging to different cultural and racial groups would not disappear without each sacrificing 'much ... that is nearest and dearest' (De Klerk 1971:89). The play ends with the suggestion that Martin and Gillian would marry. Apart form creating the impression of being manipulated, the end of the play anticipates an optimistic future. The Afrikaner (represented by Martin) and the English (represented by Gillian) sections of the population reconcile with each other, but the orientation towards 'the old Black Nation' (De Klerk 1971:91) remains paternalistic and condescending. In the end De Klerk could not convincingly criticise the policies of the ruling elite.

From 1938 onwards several festivities took place in Afrikaner society which added to the rise of neocolonialism. Typically a playwright wrote an occasional drama to commemorate the event. Examples are *Die dieper reg* (The Higher Law), written to commemorate the Great Trek centenary in 1938, and De Klerk's *Die jaar van die vuur-os* and *Langs die steiltes* (Beside Inclines) by Gerhard J. Beukes, both written for the tricentenary in 1952 of Dutch colonisation by Van Riebeeck. Due to the nature of the festivities most of the plays reflected on the significance of past events. A common feature was the way in which people's playwrights mythologised events and characters (Grundlingh & Sapire 1989).

Probably the most conspicuous playwright reacting to the progress of neocolonialism in Afrikaner society, was N.P. van Wyk Louw. It is generally accepted that nationalism informed much of his literary writing. In this regard Van Rensburg (1975:65) declares that he touches on different categories of nationalism in his plays. He (Van Rensburg 1975:66) describes *Die pluimsaad waai ver* as 'a play portraying two major communal ideas', which is nationalism and imperialism. The difference

between *Die pluimsaad waai ver*, performed for the first time in 1966, and *Die dieper reg*, which premièred in 1938, is that the latter is a response to British colonialism and the former a reaction to Afrikaner neocolonialism.

Language plays an important role in any critique of Louw's interpretation of nationalism (cf. Olivier 1992; Kannemeyer 1994; Van Rensburg 1996:125-163; Olivier 1996). In this regard Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:164) points out that language is 'one of the most basic markers of colonial authority'.

> Integrally associated with language is the speaker's sense of autonomy and dignity, both of which are diminished when the coloniser denies the linguistic validity of indigenous languages (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996:165).

The threat posed by British colonialism, for instance, explains the use of metaphors relating to war in Louw's philosophical essays, and his attempts to justify the existence of Afrikaners as a cultural group in his play *Die dieper reg*. In *Die pluimsaad waai ver*, performed five years after South Africa became an independent state under Afrikaner rule, he proposed a broad nationalism recognising the existence of divergent cultural groups. His interpretation of nationalism therefore developed from exclusivity to a form including other cultures.

Opperman (1973:202) stated that by 1934 Louw was a fierce adherent of national socialism. Should we compare pronouncements he made in November 1936, his interest in Nazism was clearly not permanent (Louw 1986:23):

> Not by declaration upon declaration, nor by flaming rhetoric or occasional poetry at every people's gathering [*volksgebeurtenis*], but by an all encompassing beauty will he [the artist] serve his course.

Due to the emphasis on beauty Degenaar (1976:23) labelled this form 'aesthetic nationalism'.

A second phase relates to an essay dated 19 October 1951, titled 'Rondom die begrip "nasionaal"'/'Concerning the notion of "*nationalism*"' (Louw 1986:419). No longer would Louw adhere to *aesthetic nationalism*, but from now on the principle of *justifiable existence* would be the corner stone of an interpretation Degenaar (1976:27) branded 'ethical [or liberal] nationalism'. For Louw this meant that nations and cultural groups or *volke* could tolerably coexist. Ultimately Louw's aesthetic and ethical nationalisms relate to what Viljoen (1977:6) called 'ground questions' on nationalism:

> What is a people (*volk*)? What does a *volk* need to exist? How does one justify the continuing existence of a *volk*, especially a small one? What are the relations between one *volk* and another and with other groups with which it is forced to coexist?

Louw (1978) addressed the justification for the continuing existence of Afrikaners as a *volk* in his play *Die dieper reg* (1938; The Higher Law). In the play the *Voortrekkers* (Afrikaners) reach the Hall of Eternal Justice after death to listen to the verdict the Voice of Justice would pronounce on their previous existence. The Voice justifies their decision to leave British colonial rule by linking their deed to divine intention, implicitly justifying the origin and existence of the Afrikaner as a *volk* (Louw 1978:27f):

> Go, and know that your right/and deed may stand before God/because it was strong and simple/because He Himself is simple:/an unblemished Will, an eternal Deed/ untouched by change.

The verdict confirms that the Afrikaner's blood inspired the decision to leave British rule, that is by the desire to be free. This desire is common to all of mankind, and it is part of the Law of Nature (Van der Walt 1985). God inspired Afrikaners to be free, but they themselves bore the responsibility for the fashion in which they used their freedom to choose. According to the playwright the Afrikaner's decision to leave was adherence to God's Will and therefore their deed and their existence as a *volk* will be sustained.

The idea that Afrikaners were God's chosen people and whatever they did deserved divine sanction, was a fable which commonly occurred among Afrikaners. Such an interpretation undoubtedly carries the stamp of an exclusive chauvinism. This also applies to *Die dieper reg*, because N.P. van Wyk Louw addresses only the plight of Afrikaners, their descendants and their destiny. From the perspective of nearly sixty years later such a vision is limited because it does not account for the multitude of cultural and other groups in the country. Therefore one may regard *Die pluimsaad waai ver* (Louw 1981; first performance in 1966) as correcting the main ideas in *Die dieper reg* (first performance in 1938). Simultaneously *Die pluimsaad waai ver* (1981) represents an ideological transition from an aesthetic to an ethical form of nationalism.

Die pluimsaad waai ver of Bitter begin (Louw 1981) (The Plume's Seed Blows Far or Painful Beginning) is an epic drama in which the playwright represents events from the Anglo Boer War. The double title suggests that the acrid experiences of war were part of what was to become the Republic of South Africa. War was not the end. It was the painful beginning of accomplishing an enduring Afrikaner dream of independence from (British) colonial domination. The action revolves around President M.T. Steyn, the last president of the Free State Republic. The narrator, an old woman, conveys the problem in the first line (Louw 1981:9): 'What is a *volk*?'

She answers her own question: A *volk* does not consist of mythical heroes. It

consists of internationalists (Grandfather Visser), nationalists (Steyn), diehards (General De Wet), traitors (Jan) and persons coming from outside the Boer republics: Pieter, an Afrikaner who is a British colonial subject, and two enemies of the Afrikaner in war, the Scots Wauchope and Hannay. The inclusion of Wauchope and Hannay confirms the postcolonial focus on language and place. Although they were the Afrikaner's enemies, they became part of South African soil and South African society overall by dying in the country. According to the playwright South African society overall also includes persons of colour (cf. Steyn's address to Parliament/*Volksraad* 1981:16f).

Afrikaner leaders did not receive Louw's vision of an inclusive nationalism favourably. Especially Prime Minister Verwoerd's dismissive response (Pelzer 1966:673f) caused a public outrage directed at Louw personally. In this regard the prime minister's response endorsed Chris Barnard's (1974:5) statement that Afrikaans authors 'have always been part of the opposition' and were 'rebels against the authorities of their time'.

One may best describe the mood among Afrikaners during the sixties as reflecting 'cosy contentment'. Yet the manner in which Afrikaners treated other racial and cultural groups caused cracks among Afrikaners themselves becoming increasingly evident. Despite criticism and protest by intellectuals and clerics such as B.B. Keet, D.P. Botha, H.A. Fagan, G.D. Scholtz, W.P. Esterhuyse or Beyers Naudé (Kannemeyer 1983:222), the National Party government neocolonially continued to 'occupy' and 'invade' most South Africans' lives. This confirms that *neocolonialism* does indeed refer to 'situations in which the most significant coloniser is not Britain (or one of the former European powers) but some other nation or cultural group' (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996:257).

Playwrights reacting to this new form of postcolonialism included Bartho Smit (*Die verminktes*; 1960) and Adam Small (*Kanna hy kô hystoe*/Kanna's Coming Home; 1965). One may view *Die verminktes* (1960) as the playwright's reaction to the Mixed Marriages Act (1949) which prohibited marriages between persons from different races. *Die verminktes* (Smit 1976) relates the story of Frans Harmse's involvement with Elize, and the disclosure of Frans's mixed descent. The title latches on to the devastating consequences of the disclosure. Initially Bart (Elize's father) intended to maim Frans physically, which was to castrate him. Although he refrains from doing this, the text implies that being castrated psychologically in a community in which racial considerations were essentialistic (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:44) and absolute yardsticks othered Frans. For society Frans's involvement with Elize implied that the scourge of his skin colour would contaminate her. This convinces Frans to leave. Smit signals his decision in the dialogue. Frans switches to a variant of Afrikaans (Smit 1976:56): 'Ma' die mêem hoef nie sêd te wies oor die castration nie—kôs why, da' wag nou 'n white future vi' haar'. ('Madam need not be saddened about the castration, because for her a white future remains.')

Using a variant of Afrikaans is an example of the postcolonial appropriation of the language of the neocoloniser. In this play the colonised language becomes an appropriated language, afrikaans (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:38). A similar process takes place in Adam Small's plays *Kanna hy kô hystoe* (1974) and *Krismis van Map Jacobs*/Map Jacobs's Christmas, 1983). Other resemblances between Kanna (in *Kanna hy kô hystoe*; 1974) and Frans (in *Die verminktes*; 1960) are evident: Kanna is an excile possibly returning from abroad, his mother (Makiet) is from the working class, and both texts reflect on morality, a culture of poverty, and political and social injustices. Both plays end without hope: Frans becomes a victim of Apartheid and Kanna again leaves the country.

Apart from Smit and Small a few other playwrights have responded in afrikaans to this neocolonial situation (cf. Smith, Van Gensen & Willemse 1985:88-97). They include Pieter Braaf (*Asseblief Miesies*/Please Madam), Peter Kaleb (*Duskant die skietbaanlyn*/This Side of the Shooting Range Line), Peter Snyders (*Political Joke*) or Melvin Whitebooi (*Dit sal die blerrie dag wees!*/That will be the Damn Day!). Most of these texts remain unpublished. This also applies to Hans du Plessis's play *Boerse*, written in Griekwa-Afrikaans and with a similar theme as *Die verminktes* and *Kanna hy kô hystoe* (Engelbrecht 1997). In these plays protest against the discourse of an Apartheid state roughly compare with the resistance depicted in English postcolonial texts from the same period (Fuchs 1982; Kavanagh 1985:51-58). An important difference, however, relates to form.

Neocolonialism after 1960

Contrasting with English postcolonial plays, plays written in Afrikaans after 1960 frequently used literary devices such as allegory combined with satire or irony. The presentations in English plays were mainly direct, realistic and the result of workshop productions. The most important Afrikaans main stream playwrights from this period were Bartho Smit, André P. Brink, Adam Small, Chris Barnard and P.G. du Plessis. Significantly Temple Hauptfleisch (1997:120) characterises their work as 'postcolonial':

> These were writers all working within the Afrikaans theatrical system, which evolved out of the British colonial occupation on the one hand and the Afrikaans language struggle on the other ....

During the seventies a few events took place that profoundly influenced Afrikaans theatre. All of them were directly or indirectly related to the neocolonial policies of the National Party government. Perhaps the most significant events were the riots in Soweto during 1976 and 1977, which were triggered by the compulsory

use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools. By 1990 political and economic pressures from inside and outside the country forced the National Party to relinquish political power to the majority. In 1994 the African National Congress won the general election convincingly, thereby introducing a new era in South African theatre (cf. Hauptfleisch 1997:159-172). Arguably the most prominent Afrikaans main stream playwrights from this period were Pieter Fourie, Reza de Wet, Deon Opperman and Charles Fourie.

The production of plays in Afrikaans main stream theatres declined notably during the seventies. Accordingly the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (Afrikaans Language and Culture Organisation) initiated annual theatrical competitions for university students, called Kampustoneel, that resulted in the production of texts such as *Ek, Anna van Wyk* (Pieter Fourie; produced 1984), *Diepe grond* (*Deep Ground*; Reza de Wet; produced 1985), *Môre is 'n lang dag* (*Tomorrow will be Long Day*; Deon Opperman; produced 1984) and *Don Qxubane onner die Boere* (Charles Fourie; produced 1994). Kampustoneel ended in 1995. However, Afrikaner leaders were concerned that Afrikaans would disappear as a language of cultural expression after the African National Congress came to power in 1994. This prompted the introduction of the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (Little Karoo National Arts Festival). It remains to be seen whether this festival will generate as many new Afrikaans plays as did Kampustoneel.

Many Afrikaners contend that conceding political power resulted in the marginalisation in practice of Afrikaans as a high level cultural language and of Afrikaner cultural workers. Presently government is setting up a system of centralised control over the arts, marginalising Afrikaans theatre even further (Hauptfleisch 1997:169-171). Placing Afrikaans theatre within the South African theatre system, one should, however, accord to the notion an extended meaning including Standard Afrikaans and its variants. This is an important extension if we recall that the compulsory use of Afrikaans in schools led to the unrest in Soweto. It appears as if gradually destigmatising the language preceded the acceptance that dramatists may use Afrikaans and its variants in postcolonial plays written in English. Apart from variants used in plays by Small, Du Plessis, Braaf, Kaleb, Snyders or Whitebooi, variants also appear in crossover plays (Hauptfleisch 1997:66-84) such as *Sophiatown* (1988) by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company or *Cincinatti* (1979) by Barney Simon and cast. These applications are examples of a Creole continuum. According to Ashcroft (1989:47) such a continuum presents 'a paradigmatic demonstration of the abrogating impetus in postcolonial literary theory'.

Afrikaans plays from the neocolonial period consequently display a variety of postcolonial forms. In contrast with English postcolonial plays, Afrikaans texts subverted the neocolonial centre from inside by engaging in counter discursive arguments

with classical texts, using ritual and carnival, rewriting history, by depicting forms of resistance and by examining the position of women in society. (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 have informed these categories and the following discussion.)

A first application of postcolonialism refers to plays reacting intertextually to, or commenting on, canonised or classical theatrical texts. One may interpret Reza de Wet's deconstruction of the myth of Afrikaner patriarchy and bravery in *Nag, Generaal* (1991; Good Night, General) as her reaction to the portrayal of the General in W.A. de Klerk's play *Die jaar van die vuur-os* and as commenting on N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Die pluimsaad waai ver*. Bartho Smit's *Bacchus in die Boland* (1974; Bacchus on Boland) clearly predicates on Euripides's *The Bacchae* as well, for being associated intertextually with (among many examples) Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973). As in Soyinka's play the greatest departure from the classical text appears in die ending. In his text Smit satirises societies in which racial considerations dominate. However, when Bacchus tries teaching the farm owner compassion for his fellow-man, they throw him from the farm. Within Apartheid society, represented by the farm Boland, there is only one choice (Smit 1974:65): 'If one may not show compassion towards your fellow-man, the only alternative is becoming a hermit'.

A second kind of postcolonialism relates to the appropriation of theatrical performances such as ritual and carnival. Presently it seems as if Afrikaans theatre is increasingly borrowing from African theatre, thereby acknowledging that Afrikaans is an African language by virtue of its origin and continuing existence in Africa. A text bearing testimony to this fact is Charles Fourie's (1994) *Don Gxubane onner die Boere*. In the play the title character consults a sangoma (healer) trying to find his 'true love' (Fourie 1994:86). His quest takes him to a hotel in the north of which the guests and patrons are indifferent to the social and political reforms taking place in the rest of the country. In the end Don finds his true love, Gracie, and then they leave the hotel's guests and the town to their chosen destiny: becoming a fool's paradise (Fourie 1994:127). Appealing to public imagination Fourie uses his play to comment on extremists' propensity to political and cultural isolation. As Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:83) put it: 'Carnival presupposes the possibility of social reform by activating the communal imagination'.

Should a playwright design a historical discourse 'by enacting other versions of the pre-contact, imperial, and post-imperial past on stage' (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996:107), a third kind of postcolonialism evolves. In André P. Brink's play *Die jogger* (1997; *The Jogger*) recent history presents a backdrop to the action. The performance includes flashbacks in which Kilian, previously a colonel in the security service, has to confront his past. It transpires that he represents the Afrikaner. He states: 'If we were not one step ahead every time, it would have been the end of the Afrikaner' (Brink 1997:36). In the end he realises that he is a 'monster' and begs forgiveness, but

no one would listen (Brink 1997: 84f).

Die jogger (1997) compares with recent plays examining the Afrikaner's history and its relationships with other cultural groups critically. In the nineties these include Reza de Wet's *Nag, Generaal* (1991) and Deon Opperman's *Donkerland* (1996). Because these plays end by reaching out to postapartheid South African society, they may preempt the healing of an Afrikaner community scarred by the consequences of colonialism.

A fourth form of postcolonialism in Afrikaans theatre relates to body politics. As Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:204) explain:

> In general the postcolonial body disrupts the constrained space and dignification left to it by the colonisers and becomes a site for resistant inscription.

Both *Die verminktes* (Smit 1976) and *Die jogger* (Brink 1997) represent 'site[s] for resistant inscription'. In *Die jogger* (Brink 1997) Vusi's cut out tongue is kept in a bottle on stage, becoming a metaphor for suppressed persons' freedom to present their own cases. In *Die verminktes* (Smit 1976) Bart uses skin colour to separate his daughter Elize from Frans.

A related form of postcolonialism appears in plays treating aspects of feminism. Compared with other forms of postcolonialism, depicting feminism is not dominant in Afrikaans theatre history. Most plays touching on feminism consider the role of a chauvinistic, Lacanian father. Apart from plays by Corlia Fourie (*Moeders en dogters* 1985 Mothers and Daughters) and Jean Goosen (*Drie eenakters*/Three One Act Plays 1992), important exponents of feminism in this period were Pieter Fourie and Reza de Wet (*Trits*/Three Plays; 1993). In both *Ek, Anna van Wyk* (1986) and *Die koggelaar* (1988; The Teaser) the main characters are called by the same name, Anna. In *Ek, Anna van Wyk* (1986) her husband and father-in-law abuses her physically and psychologically. Vermeulen convincingly established that both plays may be construed 'as ... theatrical sign[s] of the Afrikaner nationalist's psychic and sociopolitical crisis during the early eighties' (Vermeulen 1996a; cf. also Vermeulen 1996b).

Conclusion

Departing from Ashcroft's notion of *postcolonial* (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:2) the colonial centre in Afrikaans theatre has clearly moved on several occasions. Critics such as Kavanagh (1985:8f) concede that this movement was the result of colonial occupation and invasion:

> Historically the structures of modern South Africa derive from the inescapable facts of conquest and colonization. These facts remain important today. First, there was the invasion of the area now known as South Africa, the defeat and subjugation of the indigenous peoples by British and Boer forces, and the seizure of the land and its resources. Then there was the protracted struggle of the Boers or Afrikaners to establish their conquest of the indigenous people in states independent of British rule, their defeat in war and their political struggle to reverse that defeat. Third, there was the struggle of the African nationalists for political rights and then hegemony in the land that had been wrested from their forebears.

Different forms of postcolonialism in Afrikaans theatre evolved as a result of historical processes. Apart from the degree to which Afrikaners were marginalised, the association between Afrikaners and other groups determined these forms, whether they were part of the political centre or not. An additional consideration was the tie between playwrights and the people (*volk*). Afrikaans playwrights were mirrors in which Afrikaners could view their own images.

Up to 1950 one may best summarise the historical processes as representing a form of *complementary postcolonialism*. Playwrights depicted the social, economic and political marginalisation of Afrikaners in a more (C.J. Langenhoven in *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika*, 1937) or less (D.J. Opperman in *Vergelegen*, 1978) convincing fashion, siding with the *volk*. Following 1938 forms of *contemplative postcolonialism* appeared, which examined Afrikaner power associated with neocolonialism from a position of loyal dissent. Relevant playwrights were N.P. van Wyk Louw (*Die dieper reg*; 1978), W.A. de Klerk (*Die jaar van die vuur-os*; 1971) and D.J. Opperman (*Vergelegen*; 1978). By 1960 Afrikaans playwrights and Afrikaans theatre fully became an opposition to the neocolonial Apartheid centre (Barnard 1974). The move coincided with the introduction of a form of *subversive postcolonialism* in plays by dramatists as diverse as Bartho Smit (*Die verminktes*; 1976) and Adam Small (*Kanna hy kô hystoe*; 1974), Reza de Wet (*Drie susters twee*/Three Sisters Two; 1996), Charles Fourie (*Don Gxubane onner die Boere*; 1994) or André P. Brink (*Die jogger*; 1997). As is the case with all postcolonial writings, these plays question the abuse of power.

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Rejecting the Mother Tongue: Afrikaner on the Margins

Judith Lütge Coullie

Afrikaner Nationalism concentrated power in the hands of white male Afrikaners throughout the entire apartheid period (1948-1994). It might thus seem fatuous to select a white Afrikaner man's autobiography to illustrate a theme of marginality. But Natie Ferreira's *The Story of an Afrikaner: Die Rewolusie van die Kinders?* (1980) constructs an autobiographical subject which contests the ideological and political scripts encoded in his mother tongue, choosing rather to marginalise himself by registering his unhappy dissent in English.

The use of English as the medium for testimony against apartheid was common amongst South Africans whose mother tongue was not English. Albert Luthuli (a Zulu), Z.K. Matthews (a Tswana), Maggie Resha (a Sotho speaker) and Alfred Qabula (a Xhosa), simply illustrate a general trend by writing or publishing their testimonies in English. In fact, it would seem that most autobiographical texts by South Africans in the apartheid period across the language spectrum[1] are written in English. There are obvious reasons for this: English is the language most accessible to the largest number of readers, both within South Africa and beyond her borders. Thus autobiographies and other writings are more attractive to publishers if they are in English. Moreover, since the aim of most non-English autobiographers was (during the 46 years of apartheid) political—the subversion of the apartheid state—the desire to spread the message to the largest number crucially affected the choice of language.

For all of these South Africans the employment of English has implications beyond the pragmatic. It is hardly a revelation to state that language is by definition ideological. Thus the use of English may indeed be conducive to greater political efficacy, but it can also be construed as simultaneously shoring up a global hegemonic system. As far back as 1986, when the obvious bogey was Afrikaans (this was the time of extended national states of emergency, and increasing militarisation of the conflict between the State and black and brown South Africans), Njabulo Ndebele (1987:219), argued that

[1] There are, in post-apartheid South Africa, 11 official languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Venda, SiSwati, Ndebele, Tswana, Tsonga, English, and Afrikaans.

> the history of the spread of the English language throughout the world is inseparable from the history of the spread of English and American imperialisms.

He further points out that when the colonised 'chooses' to communicate in English rather than in an indigenous language—a Hobson's choice, given the economic and technological supremacy of the first world—the language offers her or him subject positions of inferiority, of disablement, of dissonance, for she or he will almost invariably have to struggle through lack of command, absence of fluency.

> [T]he functional acquisition of English in a capitalist society such as ours [in South Africa] can further reinforce the instrumentalization of people as units of labor ... precisely because [English] has been reduced to being a mere working tool, [it] can actually add to the alienation of the workforce (Ndebele 1987:233).

Every utterance, whether in the mother-tongue or otherwise, involves a dialectical process which simultaneously offers the speaker the position of subject of the utterance while also subjecting the speaker to its ideological power; but the process becomes more brutally one-sided when the speaker is using a second, or, in the case of black South Africans, a third or fourth language. In such cases the empowerment of the speaker through language usage is radically checked. This extreme curtailment of the speaker's position as subject of the utterance is further compounded when the autobiographer has to speak through the layers of mediation provided by mother-tongue English speakers who act as ghost writers, amanuenses (Albert Luthuli has Charles and Sheila Hooper as his amanuenses), co-writers (Frances Baard's title page reads: '*My Spirit is Not Banned*: Frances Baard as told to Barbie Schreiner'), and compilers (Belinda Bozzoli and Hanlie Griesel act as 'arrangers' of the stories of groups of women, Anne Benjamin and Mary Benson for Winnie Mandela).

But the title of this paper is 'English as the language of resistance against apartheid', and while we must not overlook the complex problems involved in the use of English by non-mother tongue speakers as outlined above, we must remember, too, that by and large English was a medium of enablement in the struggle against apartheid. For the indigenous peoples of South Africa, from 1948 onwards (the time of the ascension to political power by Afrikaner Nationalists) Afrikaans culture and language came to represent the primary system of oppression. Hein Willemse (1987:240), a black South African whose mother tongue is Afrikaans, notes that

> Afrikaans is the language of the riot policeman *sjambokking* students. It is the language of the ill-mannered shop attendant. It is the language in which a former minister of police, Jimmy Kruger, said on the death of Black Consciousness activist, Steve

> Biko: 'Dit laat my koud'. ['It leaves me cold'.] Given this proven legacy of callousness, inhumanity and brutality, is it any wonder that black people demonstrated so forcefully their rejection of apartheid and Afrikaans?[2].

It was rejection of the enforced use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in black schools that led to what came to be known as the Soweto Uprising in 1976. The use of English in testimonies of the oppressed served to undermine the apartheid project by helping to enlighten a wide readership about the realities of lived victimisation, and by concretising the statistics of apartheid's horrors which could so easily numb one's sense of living people. These testimonies served, too, to cross the language barriers of the different indigenous South African linguistic groups so as to affirm the importance of the individuals represented therein to those whose experiences might be similar.

But for speakers of the other indigenous South African language[3], the Afrikaner autobiographers, the case is somewhat different. There is and was a small, but productive, Afrikaans publishing industry in South Africa; so the autobiographer was unlikely to turn to English because of difficulty in finding a publisher unless, of course, the work was considered to be so revolutionary that it would be likely to be banned by the South African censors[4]. So when the Afrikaner autobiographer chose to write in English we have to look beyond practical considerations. In the cases of Breyten Breytenbach and Natie Ferreira, the decision to use English arose out of deep alienation with the mother-tongue and its cultural and political institutions. I say that the alienation is profound because Afrikaner culture is generally hostile to the English and their language. Britain had first begun its colonial enterprises in the southern tip of Africa as early as 1795 (but more than a century after the Dutch), and it was the desire to escape British rule that led to the Great Trek, that migration of Afrikaners into the interior of Southern Africa. The Boer War at the turn of the century left even greater

[2] Hein Willemse (1987:241) notes, further, however, that Afrikaans, in large parts of what were the Cape, Transvaal and Orange Free State provinces, is also the language 'of the impoverished underlings: the farm laborers, the fishermen, the general populace of the barren hinterland'.

[3] Afrikaans can justifiably be referred to as an indigenous African language; Hein Willemse (1987:238) argues that the creolisation of Cape Dutch probably developed out of the contact between European colonisers and the aboriginal Khoikhoi and San people, as well as the influences of the slaves from Angola, Java, Madagascar and Malaysia. The language is thus indigenous; the Afrikaner tribe is not. Afrikaans, literally translated, means from Africa, Africa's (1987:238).

[4] For instance, according to Hein Willemse (1987:245), for the black Afrikaans writer who wished to articulate a counter-hegemonic position in Afrikaans 'all the major Afrikaans publishing houses [were] off-limits. The political and economic interests of the South African government and these publishers [were] decidedly coterminous'.

antipathy to the English, for twenty-six thousand Afrikaner women and children died in concentration camps set up by the British[5], and the British 'scorched earth' policy left survivors impoverished. So while it is true that any European language carries with it the stigma of colonialism for the peoples of Africa, the case of English for the Afrikaner is much more complexly problematic than it is for other South Africans. English, it must be remembered, was used as an instrument of oppression of the Boers by the British. Thus for the Afrikaner the act of distancing the self from the mother tongue and its cultural and political milieu is fraught with implications of collusion with the enemy. As we shall see, this is especially true for Natie Ferreira. Writing in English, Ferreira's narrator is distressfully marginalised from the Afrikaner centre, indeed, from his Afrikaner-ness which he believes is central to his identity.

Natie Ferreira was (and probably still is) a journalist who defines himself primarily as an Afrikaner: the autobiography is entitled *The Story of an Afrikaner* (1980). But it is a paradoxical decision to write even that title in English: how can one claim to be an Afrikaner and not declare that in Afrikaans? Does the use of English, the language of '*rooinek*', not contradict the self-defining statement, and more importantly, frustrate the speaker's desire to identify himself as an Afrikaner? That this sort of struggle is not simply a peripheral issue for Ferreira is indicated unequivocally in the subtitle. This is interrogative, and in Afrikaans: *Die Rewolusie van die Kinders?* (meaning, the revolution, or rebellion, of the children). This patently refers to the cover illustration which contains a drawing of a man (presumably the author) in the foreground, against a representation of that most famous of photographs from the 1976 Soweto Uprising of the limp and bleeding body of Hector Peterson. He was alleged to be the first of many hundreds of children shot by the South African Security Forces in what has often been called 'The Children's Revolution'[6]. But, more pertinently, since the Afrikaans version of that name ('The Children's Revolution') has been appended to the title in the form of a question, it serves to suggest that *this* story of an Afrikaner represents a possible rebellion by one of the Afrikaner tribe's children[7].

[5] Cameron (1986:214). Incidentally, what has recently come to be recognised by historians is the fact that even greater numbers of Africans died in British concentration camps; a colleague in the History Department at the University of Durban-Westville says that the current estimate is around eighty thousand black South African fatalities in British concentration camps.

[6] That Hector Peterson (there is more than one version of the spelling of this name) was the first to die at the hands of the Security Police in June 1976 is widely acknowledged. See, for instance, Caesarina Makhoere (1988:4). Ferreira writes 'a small dirge for the children of Soweto' (168-171).

[7] Ferreira (1980) allies himself with the children of the Revolution (180 and elsewhere).

The narrator comments on these two titles; he says to his daughter:

> Your final choice of title, seeing that I've given two, will depend on your vantage point from the end of this letter; your view of words, of the world, of yourself in the world of words.
>
> Personally, I prefer the second one. The first means being trapped in the dull repetition of measured days, the acceptance of defeat, the paralysis of the impossible. The second means the recognition of the possibility of the impossible, which is not a paradox but a refusal to impose my limitations on the limitless (Ferreira 1980:18).

So, for him, (at this point, at least) choosing Afrikanerdom as the essential defining characteristic means nihilation, whereas revolution against doctrinaire Afrikaner nationalism is fraught with liberatory potential.

That this text is indeed 'a quest for freedom' (1980:4) from the strictures of Afrikaner Nationalism and its blind racism is evident from the outset; Ferreira notes:

> I should really be writing in Afrikaans. But as you know it is impossible to do so at this stage. It irritates and saddens me but at least I know that time is on my side.
>
> The point is: our politicians, newspaper editors and Afrikaans publishers will allow us to write (and think, and say) only certain things—those things that fit the grand schemes and narrow thoughts of a powerful cabal. I know because I've tried. I pleaded with them, argued and fought. Nothing helped.
>
> So I will write in English but always with the hope that one day my people will know that they are not free (1980:3f).

The trouble for Ferreira is that rebellion against the politics of Afrikaner nationalism means that this is an admission of failure to be the kind of son his father wanted him to be; it means loss of family, of community, of self. His father wanted him to be a '*boerseun*', in the 'image of the (Afrikaner) father—the strong man; the one who hits first and leaves the questions for later' (1980:9). That he cannot conform had seemed to him as a child to be his failure, not the failure of a father to recognise his individual needs: 'In that world my father had the same authority as God' (1980:9). Thus this adult confession, which is a searching for a position outside of Afrikaner paradigms, is also a rebellion against the father, and his people: 'My child', he writes to his daughter,

> even while I am writing now I sense a vague but nagging feeling that I am wrong in telling you these things. Am I betraying my father and my people's hopes again? (1980:10).

Ferreira (1980:11) identifies the forces of evil within Afrikanerdom, and calls these:

> Dwurg ... a kind of acronym for all the words of my conditioning, the name of the organisation (sometimes called civilisation) responsible for my production. It is also a shortened version of *Doodwurg*, the Afrikaans word for 'strangle to death' .... When I wrote that first letter I was fighting Dwurg *out there*—his ideology, prejudice, petty politics and institutional murders .... I clearly saw his face in our System of Christian National Education; our System of justice based on immoral laws; our elaborate System of self-deception and our pious System of belief in God which we use to achieve our selfish aims .... And now? At least I know that Dwurg lives *inside* me (1980:11).

The Story of an Afrikaner (1980) testifies to the struggle to create a self in the vacuum left by rejection of the evils of the system which had spoken him, shaped him;

> I am wrapped up in words defined by other people, choked by the flotsam of history .... What I am is demarcated by a billion past experiences and fixed ideas. I am at the end of an assembly line (1980:10).

But having come to the point of reconstituting the self in narrative, the narrator faces the terror of aloneness. He says of his indictment of Afrikaner ideals: 'My tainted words are the rope around my neck' (1980:11).

Ferreira himself answers the question of whether he can construct a self in a language which by his own admission is despised by 'good' Afrikaners (1980:4) when he switches to Afrikaans in the last quarter of the book. Interestingly, even in the English part of the text (the first 153 pages) his denunciation of Afrikanerdom is consistently underwritten by his identification with the tribe; he refers to himself and Afrikaners as 'us' and 'we' (e.g. 1980:139), so his relief and exultation when he changes to Afrikaans is not unexpected. He says: 'Now, at last, I am using my own language! And I skip weightlessly from word to word like a honeysucker in a tree full of blossom' (1980:156)[8]. He no longer faces the dilemma of constituting an autobiographical self in the language of the Other.

The Story of an Afrikaner (1980) begins with a profoundly ironic frontispiece which reads:

> I write the way I *talk*;
> *As* I am,
> *What* I am
>
> The echo of a birth-cry ... (1980:*v*)

[8] I am using the publisher's translation which accompanies the Afrikaans text.

What makes this so heavily ironic is the fact that this *English translation* is taken from the folkloric narrativisation of the birth of the Afrikaner language! The narrator recounts that:

> Afrikaner consciousness was born when our language was born—when one of the first Afrikaners, in proud self-recognition, declared to the world: 'We write the way we talk'.
>
> That was the birthcry of the Afrikaner nation. And that is my birthright. And no-one (least of all a coterie of party men) will take that away from me. I will say it again: 'Ek skryf soos ek praat, *soos* ek is, *wat* ek is' (1980:4).

But to say this in English, or to say it again in Afrikaans as an isolated line in an English text, is to rob it of its meaning. It is only in the last part of the text (the last 78 pages) that he can declare in his mother-tongue that he is defined by that which he speaks, that he can celebrate the self as textually constructed, that he can honestly say, 'En my geboortereg is: Ek skryf soos ek praat' ('And my birthright is: I write as I speak'; 1980:158f). Ferreira thus finally solves for himself the quandary which faces all autobiographers who write in English as Other-tongue, namely, can one write/construct an autobiographical self in another language? Is a self in another language not another self? By turning back to Afrikaans he demonstrates that for him an autobiographical self in English cannot be more than a pained approximation, a betrayal of self.

This linguistic act, the change to Afrikaans, denotes the wresting away of power over the very notion of Afrikanerdom, as well as of his own self-construction, from the Afrikaner Nationalists, the racists, the powermongers. Shortly before he shifts to Afrikaans he refers to this mythic birth of Afrikanerdom and argues that the declaration of the *taalstryder* that Afrikaners write as they talk

> meant having the freedom to think, to talk, write and act as a free individual. To express honestly your deepest beliefs and hopes for yourself and for your people .... What has happened to this freedom to talk openly, to say things the way they are? Why should an Afrikaner have to write in English? Why can't I write the way my people talk? In Afrikaans?
>
> Because the 'voice' of the Afrikaner, his press, radio and TV is no longer the voice of my people. It is the voice of the Nationalist Party ....
>
> If only we would learn to write the way we talk again. If only we would return in this crisis hour to those principles—*volkbeginsels*—which once commanded the respect of the world .... When are we going to stand up and say 'Enough is enough!' (1980:136f).

Finally, the return to Afrikaans in the text is, in psychoanalytic terms, the murder of the father by the son; it assumes the right of the son to determine his own identity, to redefine genealogy, to reinvent the very tribe. The issue becomes not only personal survival, but 'the survival of the Afrikaner' which is indeed at risk; he warns, 'Afrikaners, history will not give us another chance' (1980:139).

The narrative concludes in a celebration of self and *volk* as indivisible, a rejoicing which, it seems to me, borders on delirium. For instance, he writes to ex-President John Vorster:

> My people, we have come a long way and today we face our greatest challenge. May this also be *our* finest hour, the beginning of a new beginning freed from the shackles of transitory notions.
>
> History has placed us here and this is where we belong. I believe we have a destiny to fulfil and the courage to do it.
>
> History has also chosen us to be at the focal point of that particular moment in time when it is necessary to act, decisively in the full knowledge of our human potential and worth, instead of drifting like flotsam caught in the undercurrents of our folly (1980 publisher's translation, 226; author's Afrikaans version, 227)

And how is this adulation made possible after the angst-ridden soul-searching which fills most of the preceding pages? How has he come from an admission that 'I exist in a universe of panic' (1980:20) to the jubilatory tones of the concluding lines of the text? How has he come from condemnation of Afrikanerdom's schizophrenia, its deceitfulness, its drive to conquer, to the point where he can celebrate in the final pages 'the Afrikaner heart and hand ... [and] the Afrikaner's direct gaze' (1980:224), and can seek to recuperate, and endorse, the Afrikaner myth of their status as a chosen people?

This *volte-face* is made possible by positing an Other against which the self is defined and congratulated. And who is this Other that Ferreira constructs in the final pages of the text? It is not the Other of Afrikanerdom, 'Dwurg', which is explored throughout the first 153 pages of the text; in this last Afrikaans part the Other is the rest of the world, perhaps, specifically the English speaking world since Ferreira addresses them in English, inserting this English section into the Afrikaans part of the text. And this Other, the *buitelander* who reviles Afrikaner racism, is denounced in Afrikaner Nationalism for being blinded by arrogance. Ferreira comes very close to endorsing this delusion. Ferreira's short message 'To the world's political diviners (in plain English)' (1980:216)[9] denies that apartheid is an invention of the Afrikaner:

[9] Ferreira uses the Afrikaans term *heiliges*, which also means holy ones; obviously, in this context, used ironically.

> In our land apartheid thrives, divides, belittles both black *and* white. In your part of the world it exists, for sure, the same thing but of a different kind. And the results are exactly the same—everywhere (1980:216f).

Now while one can follow his line of argument—that apartheid literally translated means separateness, and that the division and oppression of groups of people by others is not unique to South Africa—I contend that to attempt to dismiss the specificities of apartheid's evils, the particulars of which he has *himself* been at pains to expose in the 153 page long English section, is to engage in (self)deceit.

But the strategy has its uses for Ferreira: he is able to construct the world as being just as guilty as are Afrikaners:

> We [conspicuously aligning himself with all Afrikaners here] want to state quite clearly, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that apartheid is not our exclusive sin. If we are guilty we are not alone.
>
> Apartheid is just our local word for an addiction of the world: a Dwurgish struggle for supremacy of each and every kind.
>
> Our fault has been to call it by its proper name, to enshrine it in our laws, to practise it openly for everyone to see. And how the world is pointing, panting, saying: 'Stop your evil sin, your power game' (1980:216f).

This is just a paler version, it seems to me, of the Afrikaner paranoia of the 'total onslaught'[10]. And just as this fantasy of an embattled (and, in the original version, righteous) people functioned to perpetuate the loyalty of Afrikaners to the notion of the *volk*, so this serves to justify Ferreira's jubilant return to the tribe, a sinning tribe (he concedes) but one which at least avoids what he now argues is the compounding sin of hypocrisy. The text concludes,

> Greetings, Ignatius, Ignatius[11]
> (Kyk net rondom jou, (Just glance around you. alles is só pragtig blou Everything is so beautifully in jubelland blue in the joyous land Azania!) (1980:231)

[10] This notion conceived of the Afrikaner tribe as the whipping boy of the ignorant vainglory of all nations who were critical of apartheid, adding their weight to the struggle of South Africans (who were held to be the dupes of communist states) who sought to overthrow the apartheid state. Afrikaners were thus facing a 'total onslaught' from within and without South Africa's borders.

[11] His forefather was Thomas Ignatius Ferreira, a Portuguese sailor. I assume that the author is named after him (see 56) and that he is addressing here both his great-great-great-great-grandfather as well as himself.

The prodigal son has indeed returned.

As we have seen, Ferreira cannot sustain the rejection of the mother-tongue; English has served him well as a tool to dissect Afrikanerdom's evils but it fails to offer him a position as originary and integrated subject. Needing to crawl back into the centre, Ferreira can only do this by redefining that centre. Ferreira's interrogation of self and culture results finally in the therapeutic reinvention of (Afrikaner) self and the reinterpretation of Afrikaner politics (in the context of global oppressive practices). The drive for resolution which propels most narratives can be found in this text to enable the construction of a vantage point which reintegrates a self torn apart by knowledge and shame. It is an observation post which fictively retrieves advantage.

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Re-placing Dis-placed/missing Persons in Vladislavic's Short Stories

Wonderboy Peters

> For James Ogude and Isabel Hofmeyr, who suggested that, in the articulate silences of texts, in the gaps and holes of narrative, one may discover intriguing stories demanding attention.

Tracking Narrative in the Cracks of History

Ivan Vladislavic, in the short story 'Movements' in his first collection of stories, *Missing Persons* (1989:64), draws the reader's attention to the 'prophetic silence between tracks on a record'. Adopting a satiric mode, Private, the ten years old narrator-protagonist in another story, 'The Prime Minister is Dead', narrativises such silenced and repressed sites in the old recorded history of apartheid. In this story, history personified translates itself into spectacle. History, incarnated in the persona of Verwoerd, transforms into parody when its moments of punctuation, hesitancy and fatigue are caricatured.

These cracks in the story of (apartheid) history become the grotesque fascinations of a re-membering Private. He reminisces, imaginatively of course, the detours, bumps, ruptures and breaks in history's paths. This narrator re-members how in the course of history, the alleged omniscient and infallible protagonists of apartheid, feebled and fumbled, ushering specific moments for the ridiculing of power. With remarkable artistry, Ivan Vladislavic renders visible and audible the silenced clattering noises in the pauses of history. History's pauses, contrary to a supposedly forward marching journey of a 'voortrekkerik volk', are vividly enacted in the image of the jammed truck that carries Verwoerd's corpse.

This truck, Private re-members, 'suddenly coughed, jerked and came to a halt' (1989:8). Here, history is allowed a momentary break, a relaxation, as it were. Despite this pause in this theatricalised history, one already notices restless impersonators (soldiers in this case), who betray a predisposition to overtake history. The truck, history's carrier, is inert. But 'the band and the first soldiers marched on' (1989:8). The gap that emerges between the truck and the soldiers is the exciting moment of narration for Private. He intones, 'between them and the stalled truck, a fascinating gap began to open' (1989:8).

The purpose of this paper is to display the gaps and ruptures which Vladislavic enacts in his depiction of South African whiteness (and) in his renarritivisation of apartheid. The second section of the paper develops this theme by focusing on the author's self-consciously deconstructionist mode of presentation which raises crucial questions about the nature of knowledge and its interpretation. The conclusion specifically re-places the agency of Vladislavic's dis-placed persons in their construction of historical reality.

De-authoring Apartheid: Rewriting the Locales of White ethnicities

Missing Persons (1989) creatively disrupts the officialised myth of the grand design called apartheid. The story of apartheid has often been told as the triumphant transcription of a grand plan designed by a group of white conspirators—such representation is revisited in more detail in Deborah Posel's *The Making of Apartheid* (1993:1-6). Vladislavic's stories, by contrast, question the notion of a monolithic, unchanging, transhistorical whiteness. The story, 'Journal of a Wall' specifically re-enacts internal discrepancies among white South Africans. Possible entrenched divisions among whites are captured in the widespread erection of monumental walls. In a landscape already demarcated white by the Group Areas Act, the Groenewalds are busy constructing, 'an extremely thick, high wall of the kind that is fairly common in [the] suburb' (1989:26). Finding this particular wall, 'a little high ... a little forbidding' (1989:40), the narrator resolves to 'speak to them before they disappear entirely' (1989:38). This narrator tells Mr. Groenewald, 'Perhaps you have seen me. I live right across from you' (1989:40). But feeling treated like an unknown intruder by Mr Groenewald and his wife, the narrator shouts curses: 'They were such a perverse people. What were they planning to do behind those ridiculous walls? Volkspele? Nude Braaivleise? Secret nocturnal rituals ...?' (1989:42). It is Vladislavic's focus in such ruptures in whiteness, a political colour (to use Fusco's term) that serves as a useful strategy at denaturing whiteness.

David Roediger, in *Towards The Abolition of Whiteness* (1994) explores the multiple complex ways through which whiteness centres itself in the articulation of a racial supremacist ideology. His discussion on the history of early white immigration in the US, reveals that not every white immigrant automatically qualified to be classed 'white'. Borrowing from John Bukowczyk, Roediger refers to the white aspirants of whiteness as the 'not-yet-white ethnic'. Citing Fusco, Roediger (1994:12) forcefully argues that 'racial identities are not only Black ... they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalising it.

In the same vein, *Missing Persons* (1989) raises intriguing questions about the visibility (and probably the roles) of white ethnic groupings other than the Afrikaners in the story of racism in South Africa. Vladislavic does not however invite a simplistic

mere listing of white ethnics inhabiting South Africa. The specific ethnicity of the neighbour of Groenewald remains anonymous. This anonymity serves to stress the fact that ethnicity itself is not singular and static, but capable of infinite and unpredictable variations. This anonymous narrator raises questions about his own agency in the enabling of the erection of divisive walls. He completes the journal, an allegory of the brick wall, by saying, 'I must remember to take a stroll past the wall some time and see if I can spot my brick' (1989:44).

This narrator stresses the need to overcome historically constructed boundaries. He does so by attempting to subvert the meaning of frontiers. He writes, 'We have so much in common. The wall .... I began to see it not so much as a barrier between us, but as a meeting point' (1989:39). This echoes very well Martin Heidegger's conceptualisation of a frontier: 'A boundary is not that at which something stops ... [but] it is that from which something begins its presencing' (cited in Bhabha 1992:1).

Vladislavic does not in any way create a fiction of a white South African society devoid of conflict. His short fictions are immensely littered with white ethnics whose interests are frequently competing. In 'Sightseeing', the unidentified white tourist takes pride in the fact that he 'knows that he is not a voortrekker' (1989:20). This story also makes visible the presence of a racist German: 'The German finds natives here more savage, hardly civilized' (1989:20). In 'When My Hands Burst into Flame' (1989:103), one encounters a woman German Tourist approaching Chelsea Hotel in Hillbrow.

A plural, heteroglottic, white South African identity is further emphasised by the enactment of Italian identity in these stories. In 'Movements', one finds an 'Italian neighbour under buttery verandah' (1989:62). The woman who 'cries in broken English' (1989:64) is probably Italian too. Private's granny shouts in Italian, 'Numero Uno' (1989:4). Private receives 'a pair of lucky nail-clippers given to his grandfather by an Italian prisoner of war' (1989:2). The 'Terminal Bar' was at some stage inhabited by an Italian. Boshoff's sticks of grissini which he uses to torture terrorists were 'a gift from an Italian' (1989:113). The dish cloths used in this bar are 'a gift from an American who was passing through' (1989:106). The presence of a Swiss identity in South Africa is inscribed in the business they run like the 'Cafe Zurich' (1989:38).

Vladislavic also retells the chronicle of South African liberation struggle by representing white ethnics as actors in this story. In 'Flashback Hotel', the narrator who, 'went as a missing person' (1989:15) is probably Jewish. He fits the description of a 'terrorist', a category that tended to be synonymous with black freedom fighters during apartheid. The reader is invited to think that this narrator is a terrorist. He blows and kills men and women in the hotel. The suggestion that this 'terrorist' could be a Jewish white rests in the fact that he 'married at Temple David, Morningside' (1989:13). In the hotel, he walks to the urinals using the 'long tiles corridor called whites' (1989:14).

Quentin and his girlfriend who kidnap the Prime Minister in 'The Box' are probably white too. The story begins by suggesting that Quentin was thought to be a close ally of the Prime Minister. But the Prime Minister later suspects that Quentin 'sows the seeds of discord ... of a bloody revolution' (1989:45). After imagining a successful kidnap of the Prime Minister, Quentin and his girlfriend admit that they 'never actually liked him' (1989:27). Also in 'Tsafendas's Diary' the narrator re-members the assassin of Verwoerd, Dimitris Tsafendas, whose ancestry was also Greek.

The depiction of poor white men and women, 'the dislocated dentures' (1989:118) in, 'The Terminal Bar' is an assault on the fiction of white supremacy. Ann Stoler (1989:149) argues that the presence of poor whites, and hence the narration thereof, 'undermine[s]' the image of a healthy, empowered and 'rigorous' race'. The landscape and the mindscape inhabited by 'the dislocated dentures' is diseased and nauseating. Josephine, who was abandoned by the Weinbergs is constantly cleaning the vomit of the 'drunken and the disorderly' (1989:105). Famine is written over the bodies of these inhabitants. They are captured in the metaphor of 'the broken veins, gaping pores, greasy lips, scars, age-spots, acne' (1989:105). This narrativisation of whites raises questions about the actual beneficiaries of the Apartheid state. By foregrounding this chaotic and diseased milieu, Vladislavic directs the reader's attention to the underrepresented, repressed city scapes in the official apartheid map.

Many of the stories illustrate how South Africa's public memory tends to be constituted through colonial, official maps. It is such a map that Private's father followed so dogmatically from his home to the cemetery, 'Hereo's Acre' (1989:4). The obsession with maps is further displayed by Granny in 'Tsafendas's Diary': 'When you set out to find Tsafendas's diary you shall take the map with you' (1989:93). The diary itself contains 'a map of the world [and] a map of South Africa' (1989:97). In 'Journal of a Wall', the narration of urbanity is filtered through the rigid contours of a map: 'The city was spread out below me like a map' (1989:25). It is at such moments when the official contours encoded in colonial maps are transgressed that one discovers the dislocated white (and black) ethnics inhabiting the Terminal Bar.

Ann Stoler (1989) in an essay, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories' has also remarked that the caricaturing of apartheid as a coherent, uninterrupted master-plan is analytically limiting. She points out that the literature in this tradition captures limited features of colonials and tends to homogenise whites. Stoler's criticism has been echoed in a remarkable book, *Apartheid's Genesis* (1993). The editors, Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel critique the representation of apartheid as a thoroughgoing system. Their focus on popular resistance and competing interests between the Afrikaner states and mining capital is a sharp critique of the liberal and radical literature of the 1960s and 1970s. This literature, 'depicted the evolution of apartheid as an uninterrupted, linear process, originating in the prescription of a grand plan' (Bonner et al. 1993:123).

A supposed overwhelming master-narrative of apartheid is undermined by Private in 'The Prime Minister is Dead'. The death of Verwoerd is displaced to the periphery of Private's consciousness. This historic day allows Private to re-member the important events in his life. He recollects that during this year his parents moved into a new house. This day evokes the memory of his granny and his deceased grandfather. Gardening is more central to the consciousness of Private. In keeping with the genre of the short story, this narrator takes detours and provides elaborate notes and tips about the uprooting of weeds. During the burial, Private and his father were occupied with the planting of an orchard. They later participate in this 'big occasion' after being reminded by Private's mother that, 'you can't go through life taking the great events of history for granted' (1989:5). During the procession, Private and his father deprive Verwoerd of the ritual attention he is accorded by the spectators. The clanking noise of their wheelbarrow transforms the two into a spectacle. It is finally Private and his father who carry the monumentally dignified prime in a wheelbarrow, and dump him into a hole. Employing a comic mode of representation, Vladislavic rewrites the tragedy of apartheid. Apartheid's intellectuals and architects are re-presented as commoners. In these pages one discovers a 'Prime Minister [who] sank his teeth into Quentin's forefinger, and Quentin gasped and dropped him .... and [the Prime Minister] fell with a soft thud on a bean bag' (1989:46).

The context is apartheid. The content is not always apartheid. The walls inside the Terminal Bar, for instance, portray famous sportsmen. Cinema is part of the mental geography, hence a shaper of the intellectual categories of these commoners. The reader is told that the idea that 'drunk people are like fish' is 'a quote from Smith, the film director' (1989:107). But Vladislavic could also be suggesting that sports and cinema were central to anaesthetising many whites, reinforcing and compounding their ignorance of the political alienation of black people during the apartheid era.

Discursive Sites of Knowledge: (De)Composing the Materiality of Narratives.

In *Beginnings* (1978:82), Edward Said articulates the idea that fictive narratives are the 'aesthetic objects that fill gaps in an incomplete world'. *Missing Persons* (1989) bears the stamp of the plenitude of narrative that Said refers to. Yet plenitude in Vladislavic's stories does not define a fossilised, pre-given reality. Here, reality is always negotiated as radically contingent. He is an author who opens up more gaps by enacting more holes in what he construes as an already fractured milieu.

South Africa's 'articulate silences', to borrow a phrase from Bhabha, are forcefully captured in striking metaphors of emptiness, displacedness and dismemberment. These 'tales of pot-holes' (1989:20) are told through such images like, 'my skull cracked open like an egg' (1989:81); 'a butcher with three fingers' (1989:89); 'the pregnant

girl .... presents the hungry foetus' (1989:19); 'there was my house with its gaping wound' (1989:25); 'I climb into a hole'; and so on.

Disintegration is the principal construct in *Missing Persons* (1989). It is the trope of decomposition that structures these fragmentary narratives. The 'Prime Minister is Dead' serves as a prologue for the recurrent motif of a decaying social body. Verwoerd's corpse becomes 'a piece of meat' that will be 'rotting in the soil' (1989:4). When he dies, he becomes a 'compost heap on which practically anything would grow' (1989:2). The 'fallen fruit [that] rots into the ground' (1989:4) allegorises the (de)composition of Verwoerd's body.

The sea itself enacts the disappearance of words. A missing person writes in large letters in 'the margin of the sea' but 'the sea erase his message' (1989:86). Old statues are described as 'the flesh blistered and corroded' (1989:7). The materiality of statuary, vegetation, bodies and even words is emphasised. Hence their tendency to decompose. All of these items seem to be composed of the granny's decaying 'meat blanket' (1989:98). The narrator indicates that granny 'pulls the meat-blanket up to [his] ears and tucks it in. By morning it will be rotting' (1989:92). The story of all these (im)material artefacts, *Missing Persons* (1989) itself, (dis)appears destined for the inevitable (de)composition in 'the meaty broth at the centre of the earth' (1989:98).

Missing Persons (1989) constitutes numerous instances that bear testimony to the 'intriguing materiality' of language (Bhabha 1989:107). Words have a mass. Notice for instance, 'her bones [are] heavy with words' (1989:87). Words like bricks can inflict a wound. In 'Journal of A Wall', the 'words ... like bricks are as bland and heavy and worn as the metaphor itself' (1989:43). One hears of 'a wounded world' (1989:76). In the townships, the liberation fighters are crafting freedom by 'hurling bricks into the burning bus' (1989:24). It is this possibility of viewing words/language as 'the very material of literary practice' (Bhabha 1989:112) that enables one to conceive of *Missing Persons* (1989) as Vladislavic's own museum of words in which specific identities may be, and indeed are, articulated, performed and naturalised.

Vladislavic does not, however, exhaust the possibility of agency of the recipients of official knowledge. The texts illustrate that the audience does not passively embody the politicised identities official texts circulate. William Cohen (1989:512) describes monuments as 'ways of constructing and communicating a political culture'. He sees the erection of public statuary as a strategy for imagining communities. Vladislavic shows how the meaning of such artefacts is contested. A narrator describes a monument as 'a chronicle, telling the whole story of our people. A story of origins, of pioneers, of battles and massacres, of long journeys marked by heroism and suffering' (1989:71). But some people assault these memorials simply by disregarding their rituality: 'The people paid no attention. There were no tour buses full of pilgrims. The people knew that a statue is only a statue' (1989:73).

Krishenblat-Gimbelet (1992) conceives of a monument/museum as a 'tomb with a view'. Vladislavic's own 'corpse of a text', his museum of words, is self-consciously deconstructionist. Vladislavic dislodges the alleged neutrality of the act of writing. Writing, he shows, may be an important act in the process of displacing, disciplining and configuring of identities. The contestation over words and meaning causes 'a wounded silence' (1989:51) in the story 'Box'. The pen is capable of performing both corporeal and psychic violence. The tourist's pen in 'Sightseeing' is both an 'equipment for violence' and an instrument to 'inflict metaphor' (1989:17). In this sense, Vladislavic dramatises less overt forms of 'verbal assaults' whose enactment display the capacity to displace and illegitimise oppositional discourse.

It is in this sense that Vladislavic (de)constructs the underlining power operative in the (de)composition of texts, museums and monuments. To take a further instance, bricks, hence by extension words, assume infinite, ambivalent and contradictory significations. A brick possessing a 'stony silence [and] an impenetrable skin' (1989:33) can suddenly transform into a surrealistic, rioting object. Remember, a brick encapsulates power in its material form. A brick is an end-product of fire. The brick in 'Journal of a Wall' 'began to look like a loaf of bread, hot from the oven, steaming and fermenting inside' (1989:33). It is these 'bubbling and hissing' bricks that dis-members and disfigures the house, leaving it with 'a gaping wound' (1989:25). The bricks are also reminiscent of the compost 'mixture [that] bubbles and steams' (1989:92) in 'Tsafendas's Diary'. Bricks too, Sue Marais (1992:33) states, 'are part of the compost mixture of South African reality'.

Sue Marais (1992:54) further illumines that Vladislavic depicts a white society that is 'pre-occupied with recording its achievements and unity and its desire to perpetuate itself'. One way of achieving this objective is to alter artefacts into chronicles. In search of a 'usable part' the architects of apartheid re-compose the decomposing corpse of Verwoerd into a chronicle which becomes imprinted on the landscape. 'Once the Prime Minister was dead', Private remembers, 'they started renaming streets after him, and stations and schools and even pleasure resorts. They even renamed the suburb after him. They wanted us to live in a monument' (1989:3). Carol Duncan (1991:94) views museums and monuments and similar ritual sites as 'the means through which the relationship between the individual as citizen and the state is enacted'.

In *Museum and Communities* (1992:279), Ivan Karp stresses the need to recognise museums (and monuments) as 'contested arenas, settings in which different parties dispute both the control of exhibitions and assertions of identity made and experienced through visual display'. Vladislavic depicts statumania as a mode of communicating and manipulating knowledge. The erection of public statuary, William Cohen (1989) observes, expresses the desire to inscribe 'a stronger imprint' in an 'already dominated space'. Ivan Karp further shows that the contestations over exhibitions

often result in debates about the 'ownership of culture and how it is defined' (1989:283). This attempt at propertying culture is displayed by the grandmother: 'We must have Tsafendas's diary .... we are its rightful owners' (1989:91). The statue in 'We Came to the Monument' frowns upon the fact that she is gazed upon 'as if she was public property' (1989:72). Vladislavic critiques however, the uncritical valorisation of sacrifice and martyrdom, what people elevate as 'the historic bloodstains' (1989:93).

Vladislavic's museum, his monument, *Missing Persons* (1989), depicts an ethnicised, racialised, divided society. He shows that apartheid's apparatus of power, its 'symbols of power' like state monuments, attempt to displace and obliterate missing persons from the national psyche. The persons missing from the public memory are 'the homeless, and the hungry, the persecuted, the persued, the forgotten, those without friends and neighbours' (1989:43). Vladislavic's numerous and complex first person narrators, seeking identification with the missing persons—'those in transit, dispossessed and faceless', negate, 'any alleged sense of shared history' (Sue Marais 1994:54). Vladislavic tells stories of the South African rural dispossessed whose experiences remain uncommemorated in a context of apartheid political culture. The white tourist in 'Sightseeing', 'sees some characters demanding to be documented: a toothless old man sucking pilchards through a hole ... in the tin, a baby breast fed (he averts his eyes); a child whose face is full of the newsfronts of the world' (1989:21f).

Within all cultures, writes David Ruffins (1992:509), 'various versions of the past exist simultaneously'. Vladislavic shows that the act of remembering privileges particular versions of the past as more significant than others. In 'Science of Fragments', he writes that 'there were hundreds of versions of the heroine, herself, each differing slightly from the next' (1989:87). But on the anniversary of the heroine's death, the heroine's lover recalls only 'two versions of her, a dancer and a sleeper' (1989:90). Sadly, he 'can no longer remember why he chose these two [versions] from among the hundreds' (1989:90).

Vladislavic's re-presentation of displaced and dismembered versions of the past forces the reader to journey towards the re-placing and re-membering of missing persons. His sometimes disorienting mode of narration cracks the tracks of canonical narratives, enabling a shift in focus away from the mundane to the more disturbing accounts. The nightwatchman in 'Terminal Bar' describes himself as a 'stickler to detail' (1989:106). It is this ability to read closely that makes visible for the nightwatchman' the broken veins, pores, greasy lips, scars, age-spots, acne' (1989:105). It is not an ordinary daylight but, 'mist that forces [the sightseer's] attention to finer details' (1989:17).

Contradiction, irony and ambivalence characterise the nature of meaning derived from attempts at sticking to detail. The curator of 'Journal of a Wall' reaffirms the notion that, 'it [is] very important to catch every detail' (1989:29). Gaps and holes

begin to emerge, allowing for the de-authorisation of the genre called 'objective reality'. Vladislavic skilfully enacts subjectivity in order to allow the reader to disclaim the assertions of the curator. This narrator-character thinks that he has developed 'sufficient emotional distance from the incident to put it down objectively as it happened' (1989:38). Feeling insulted by the Groenewalds, this person suddenly rages, 'who the fuck were they anyway? Lunatics, blind people, fat slobs, smug shithouses' (1989:41). Like many of the narrators in the stories, this journal writer obscures reality by viewing it through the corner of his eyes: 'Out of the corner of my eye ... I've watched the wall edge' (1989:42). Even the racist German in 'Sightseeing', 'out of the corner of his eyes he sees the faces of the people' (1989:22).

This is the moment of ambivalence, contradiction and irony. The racist German who 'finds natives here more savage, hardly civilised' (1989:20) filters (and pigeonholes) reality through a racially tainted lens. This German is actively engaged in displacing Vladislavic's already disappearing, missing persons. Vladislavic therefore resists the fixing of *Missing Persons* (1989) into a simplified, monolingual and hegemonic narration of the past. The meaning is always provocative, amorphous and open-ended.

Memory, the fundamental prop in re-membering the past and imagining future identities, is a political act. Memory is always mediated. The nightwatchman in the Terminal Bar narrates, and in parentheses he puts the emphasis ' (if my memory serves me correctly)' (1989:115). The narrator in 'Journal of a Wall', realising that 'already memories are fading' (1989:24) because his vision has been obstructed by the monumental wall, invents in the domain of the imaginary narratives about the Groenewalds: 'I imagine that she is there with him, holding a bottle of champagne' (1989:42). During a seminar at the Department of African Literature, Wits University (1997) Vladislavic used the term 'semi-fictionalized memory'. It is the idea of a 'semi-fictionalized memory' that captures well the notion in *Missing Persons* (1989) of a box, 'full of chaos and decay' (1989:85). In this 'box', *Missing Persons* (1989) itself, narrators 'spill out the bits and pieces of a puzzled world' (1989:87).

Ivan Vladislavic is himself a missing person. In the presence of absence, 'missing' becomes truthfully intelligible. He is a writer whose authority over meaning of his stories tends to be absent. Is *Missing Persons* (1989) 'missing a chapter or two' (1989:86) like the heroine's story in 'A Science of Arguments'? Vladislavic's desired authority appears to be the desire to re-place and transform his unidentified, missing reader, into an active creator of meaning. Verna Brown (1990:127) encapsulates this aptly:

> The reader is freed from the guiding hand on the elbow anxiously pointing the way. He is allowed to co-create each story, constructing and deconstructing at a nudge and a wink from its confident author

Accounts of the past seem to remain incomplete for this author so long as there exist unpublished, repressed stories in people's pockets. In 'Science of Fragments', for instance, the unposted letter becomes, 'a voice speaking softly in his pocket' (1989:84). *Missing Persons* (1989) is destined to remain a story of fragments. Quoting Lionel Abraham, Vladislavic writes, 'Fragments neither close/ nor open meaning:/ they may mean anything except wholeness, except certainty' (1989:84).

Re-membering Agency: Extratextuality and Violence

The agency of missing persons, those actively marginalised by the dominant groups, may become more visible if one begins to listen to the audible, yet silenced and unread 'extratexts' like the unposted letter. The notion of extratextuality may serve as a useful index for the sites of knowledge familiar to common people, but which could be deemed trivial or unnecessary by officialese. These hidden texts may be retrieved from such unfamiliar shelves like a trouser's turn-up. Notice, for instance, the military iconography readable in Private's father's turn-ups: 'My father said he had desert sand in the turn-ups of his khaki pants, left over from the war .... dyed with the blood of the patriots ... if the sand was red' (1989:3f). The 'thinking cap' that the granny knits using flesh is also 'shaped like a turnip' (1989:91).

Private's father gives the orchard a chronicle when he gives every of its thirty trees a name tag. War and violence is textured over his body which is said to be 'stained with combat' (1989:6). Accordingly, he calls the orchard, 'a platoon of trees' (1989:3). Also, the body of Boshoff is a text depicting power and violence. The 'word Bossies' for instance, 'is tattooed across his chest, in letters six inches high and coiled around with serpents, the "i" dotted by a hairy nipple' (1989:114).

Missing Persons (1989) re-members a sensibility of violence and dislocatedness characterising a South Africa of the 1980s. The violent context of the 1980s in which many of the stories are set, is an era characterised by massive political unrests in the townships. A cyclic brutal violence and the state of emergency engulf large sections of black townships. Violence is one such material that (de)composes the society's social fabric. This violence is recycled and re-invented in domestic spaces via the print and electronic media: 'I for one was finding the news more depressing—full of death and chaos' (1989:28). The journal writer asks, 'who would build amid these ruins' (1989:28). These ruins were the very same foundations of apartheid. Private reminds us that, 'When the Prime Minister died he left us a compost heap, on which practically anything would grow' (1989:2). The text shows that South Africa's narrative of freedom cannot be separated from a violent struggle against apartheid.

Achille Mbembe's (1992:3) conceptualisation of power in the postcolony as 'those elements of the obscene and the grotesque', characterises very well the naturali-

sation of the vulgarity of power depicted in 'The Terminal Bar'. Mbembe uses the 'postcolony' in order to capture a specific consciousness of an epoch in history. The postcolony refers to 'those societies recently emerging from the experience of colonisation and the violence which the colonial relationship, par excellence, involves' (1989:3). Mbembe also stresses the need to surrender the old binary categories of ruler and ruled, collaborator and resistor in order to understand the effectiveness of postcolonial relations of power. Of great significance, is Mbembe's illustration that 'ordinary people' are 'not impervious to the charms of majesty'. Mbembe thus speaks of 'the logic of conviviality', that is, 'the dynamics of domesticity and familiarity, which inscribe the dominant and the dominated within the same episteme' (1989:10). Below, I seek to illustrate, briefly, how Vladislavic employs the modes of the grotesque and the obscene in 'The Terminal Bar' to direct our attention to the manifestations of postcolonial relations even during the apartheid era.

Characters in this story betray a fascination with the monstrous and outrageous. It is a stylistic whose logic is akin to the grotesque and the obscene. Vladislavic displays such obscenities as 'the dregs go into a bucket for the New Year Punch' (1989:105). Boshoff and his associates are preparing a 'horse-meat' braai (1989:110). The effectiveness of the grotesque as a narrative technique lies in its ability to shock readers about the obscenities of power which have become so banal, especially in a socially starved environment like the Terminal Bar. The alienating (shocking) effect inherent in the grotesque is better dramatised in the depiction of Boshoff who took his wife and his daughter into, 'a duty free shop' and simply 'blew their brains out' (1989:115). Boshoff, whose conduct betrays discernible semblances of military lunacy, is probably an ex-war ruin(wreck) like Private's father. The assertion is plausible. Consider the fact that Boshoff is 'familiar with the wide open spaces. Here he's like an animal in a cage' (1989:115). It is for this reason that this compost heap from the army, Boshoff, keeps ripping his shirt 'so that his chest can bear witness to the fact that he's Bossies' (1989:114). Boshoff also re-plays and re-lives how he tortured 'terrorists' by clamping Wilson's hands in the nutcracker's jaws of the pliers. Boshoff does not bury the dead bodies of his wife and daughter. Instead, he erects a memorial, as it were, by freezing the corpses in his refrigerator. The attempt at narrating 'historical bloodstains' is also evidenced in the portrait hanging in the police museum which depicts, 'the path the bullet took between the barrel of the rifle and the brain of the child' (1989:95). In the Terminal Bar as in the police museum, the vulgarity of raw power achieves a state of ordinariness which even ordinary people mimic.

Violence has become endemic in the Terminal Bar. The narrator depicts the bar as a stage where 'major battles, with teeth kicked out' (1989:107) have been fought. Rather than expressing remorse at the death of Mrs Boshoff and her daughter, the 'dislocated dentures' had 'a great deal of drinking that night' (1989:117). Even when

Boshoff staged the torture of Wilson using the pliers, we heard that it remained 'quiet in the Terminal Bar [and that] the silence [was] thicker than blood' (1989:114). Achille Mbembe reads such silence as a marker of possible co-option of the ruled in the postcolony.

The women 'carrying sticks and stones and pieces of concrete from bomb craters' (1989:117) attempt to punish Boshoff for murdering the child and her mother. The irony, however, is that the men in the bar, probably experiencing an assault on their masculinity, join Boshoff in chasing these women away. Mbembe describes the postcolony as 'a simulacrum, a hollow pretense' (1989:11). These are the same men who are always giving 'spontaneous applause' (1989:116) when Wilson is buying them drinks. Wilson is the man who advises Boshoff to 'keep [the corpses] in the refrigerator as facts' (1989:116). When Boshoff beats Smith in the bar, we are told that, 'Wilson does likewise to Moloi (out of a sense of loyalty to his friend, he says)'. Is it also 'out of a sense of loyalty' that the 'ordinary men' in the bar assist Boshoff in displacing the women? These men, the narrator intones, 'surge[d] forward, carrying Bossies like a banner' (1989:117). Boshoff is transformed into a kind of a fetish. Even when Boshoff is asleep, he is captured in the metaphor of statuary: '[he is] balanced like a fallen statue between two bar-stools' (1989:119).

Boshoff is not depicted as a protagonist or genius of apartheid like Verwoerd. The space he occupies is rendered invisible in the master-narrative of state apartheid. In many ways, Boshoff and the inhabitants of the bar are the marginalised, displaced, missing persons. In re-membering Boshoff and his applauders in the bar, one is forced to confront their own sense of agency. These particular subaltern subjects may laugh and ridicule power, but they also seem to share a certain imaginary of what power is about. If indeed marginalisation through official discourses and state power does not exhaust the possibility of an agent, it is possible for us to avoid reducing the complex and contradictory experiences of Vladislavic's missing persons into mere victims of externally imposed systems of domination.

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Writing Resistance on the Margins of Power: Rampolokeng's Poetry and the Restoration of Community in South African

James Ogude

> i belong to the shithouse
> but it's on shit that i thrive
> (Rampolokeng 1990:70).

Recent debates on the state of South African writing have tended to suggest that the theme of apartheid, and by implication the theme of resistance within the context of 'decolonisation', may have become exhausted. Njabulo Ndebele has once again thrown into focus the crisis that South African writers, black and white, are likely to face in the new political dispensation. 'What we are likely to have in our hands', Ndebele writes, 'is a general loss of focus. And there lies the crisis of culture in our country' (Ndebele 1992:25). For Ndebele (1992:25), 'the possibilities for new writings are inseparable from the quest for a new society'. In other words, for Ndebele, the creative agenda is intricably bound to the challenges that are likely to be thrown up by the new political scenario in the country. As early as 1987, Lewis Nkosi had suggested that apartheid had become a sterile source of inspiration for black South African writers, and he went further to suggest that only fresh ways of looking at the apartheid theme can salvage black South African writing from its present state of stagnation. He wrote:

> only NEW ways of telling the story of Apartheid and resistance against Apartheid can dust up the old plots of township removals, resettlements and police shootings and make them seem new (Nkosi 1987:50).

Given the quality of South African black writing over the last three decades or so, the anxiety of these two leading South African critics is understandable. In an earlier article, entitled 'Turkish Tales', Ndebele had drawn attention to the superficial way in which black writers probed into the South African experience. 'This superficiality', he wrote, 'comes from the tendency to produce fiction that is built around the interaction of surface symbols of South African reality' (1991:23). Ndebele's argument is now familiar and seems to me to be sufficiently forceful enough to need repeating in this

paper. What interests me in this paper is the possible misunderstanding that this position may create. For example, it is possible to believe that because the apartheid theme and resistance narrative in South Africa has been badly handled by some writers, the past as a theme has also become irrelevant. It is also possible to be led into believing that the bulk of black art was badly crafted simply because they were rooted in the surface symbols of apartheid, and that in order to release new creative energies, there is a need to look beyond apartheid history. But is it true that even in the quest for a new democracy we can easily forget the experience of apartheid? The old adage that those who forget their history are likely to repeat it seems to me to be relevant here and, as Rampolokeng (1990:64) reminds us, 'plastic visions of history' come with dangerous consequences. Apartheid history, just like the Jewish holocaust, continues to haunt the imagination of many South Africans that any attempts to suppress it is unlikely to succeed. At any rate, can we argue that we have adequately disposed of the theme of the apartheid past? Has resistance—the act of decolonisation—become irrelevant in South Africa's emergent nation state? It is these and other related issues that, I believe, Rampolokeng contests in his poetry.

My aim in this paper is to locate Lesego Rampolokeng's poetry within the tradition of what Edward Said (1994:252f) has called resistance literature, which aims to 'reconstitute a shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all pressures of the colonial system'. The paper aims at showing that Rampolokeng's poetry belongs to a corpus of African literature which not only begins by probing and asserting its functionality within the context of decolonisation, but also becomes 'an instrument that wills new ... realities into being, that imagines alternative configurations of our "real histories" to either affirm or transcend them' (Gikandi 1991:2). In this act of imagination, the paper argues, Rampolokeng's poetry asserts the relevance of apartheid past in any meaningful ordering of the present nation state and in the building of a universally humane society. In *Horns of Hondo* (1990), Rampolokeng seems to be convinced that the apartheid past and present is still a relevant theme and, like Achebe, he insists that we must dispose of the first things first. This concern is so real and urgent in Rampolokeng's imagination that he cannot agree with fellow poets that the re-telling of apartheid has suddenly become sterile. In an obvious reference to the leading black poets, Willie Keorapetse Kgositsile and Wally Serote, Rampolokeng flatly rejects their censure:

> bra willie tell us
> how do we sing the sunrise
> deep night in our hearts' loins
> caught in castrating clutches
> of transitions (Rampolokeng 1993:24).

> bra wally there's no beautiful poetry
> in cowardice's distortion season
> where through the mist in god's eye
> the devil finger descends
> caught in pit bull terror worship (Rampolokeng 1993:27).

Born in Soweto, Rampolokeng grew up under the shadow of political resistance and the cultural renaissance of the Seventies. It is therefore proper that his poetry should be located within the tradition of struggle against political and cultural repression in South Africa. The effect of apartheid's denials not only of the black people's humanity, but more significantly of their cultural integrity and their capacity to create any culture worthy of name, seems to be at the heart of Rampolokeng's poetry. For Rampolokeng, the history of apartheid South Africa has been a history of struggle over the cultural protocols of imagination, of intellectual and figurative means of seeing and rethinking relations of domination. Like Frantz Fanon's native poet, it is the struggle to lay claim to that terrain of creative energy which offers the possibility of willing new realities into being and repossessing/restoring, through the power of the word, that which had been fractured by generations of domination—the sense and fact of human community. If nationhood had been appropriated by a powerful racial group, Rampolokeng seeks to restore the imprisoned nation to itself: to 'put this land to psychological examination to combat its extermination' (Rampolokeng 1990:76). But how does one restore an imprisoned community to itself? Alternatively, how does a culture seeking to become independent of domination imagine itself? Edward Said (1993:258) has suggested that there are three choices:

> One choice is to do it as Ariel does, that is, as willing servant of Prospero; Ariel does what he is told obligingly, and, when he gains his freedom he returns to his native element, a sort of bourgeois native untroubled by his collaboration with Prospero. A second choice is to do it like Caliban, aware of and accepting his mongrel past but not disabled for future development. A third choice is to do it like Caliban who sheds his current servitude and physical disfigurements in the process of discovering his essential, pre-colonial self.

Edward Said makes the point that both Calibans nourish and require each other in order to produce the radical cultural intervention capable of restoring the imprisoned community to itself. In fact, Said (1993:258f) seems to be well convinced that it is difficult to understand the

> history of empire—throughout most of the nineteenth century ... unless one recognises that sense of beleaguered imprisonment infused with a passion for community that grounds anti-imperial resistance in cultural effort.

But Rampolokeng is only a Caliban to the extent that he rebels and asserts an identity free from the centre. His fundamental recognition that Caliban is capable of development and creativity to which only whites had seemed entitled is significant. But this is as far as the Caliban analogy goes: Rampolokeng does not seek to discover his essential, pre-colonial self. Like the Martiniquen poet, Aime Cesaire in *Return to My Native Land*, Rampolokeng's (1990:77f) poetry may evoke violent images of change and revolution, but his guiding ideology is rooted in universal humanism:

> celebration of humanity is my quest
> blessed is the god who grants this request
> let them who bar this incur the wrath of humankind
> let the tide of time leave them behind (Rampolokeng 1990:81).

It seems to me that Lesego Rampolokeng's poetry of the last few years, while continuing in the tradition of resistance poetry that has tended to characterise black poetry in South Africa, redefines resistance and seeks to reach out for new aesthetic and political horizons. If Rampolokeng's poetry seeks to restore the imprisoned community/nation to itself, it also attempts to reconstitute resistance into an alternative way of conceiving humanity rather than just as a mere reaction to imperialism—to push humanity towards a more integrated view of human community and human liberation. If his poetry is full of obsession 'with the past and its accumulated injustices', as Andries Oliphant (in Rampolokeng 1990:iii) correctly suggests, it is because that past is still too fresh in memory to be forgotten so easily, as many are wont to suggest. But Rampolokeng's poetry also subverts the simple binary polarities we tend to associate with oppositional narratives, because his poems seek to transform and humanise those relations of power that have kept his people in servitude, and in this Rampolokeng is unrelenting in his insistence that true humanity can only flower where hate is bathed with love and when 'domination becomes an abomination' (1990:61f,6):

> when one seeks another's domination
> he becomes an abomination
> vile as the devil's corruption
> impure of mind as an abortion
> i was born not vomited
> but inhumanity was excreted
> if man's freedom is a life distant
> to give mine i'll be content (Rampolokeng 1990:6).

In order to restore the imprisoned community to itself, Rampolokeng starts by rejecting the conditions of marginalisation by dedicating himself to the art of praxis. The

first question of resistance that Lesego seeks to dispose of is what constitutes good poetry. Who sets the standards? And why has black writing been received with so much scepticism and disdain? To raise these questions is not only to confront the whole issue about literary canonicity—the process and conditions in which some literary works are accepted and others denigrated—but it is also to contest the literary terrain as well as redefining a new literary imagination away from the centre.

For these reasons, Rampolokeng positions himself as the community's prophet/griot and rejects any attempts to channel his creative energies according to some grand literary convention, nor is he prepared to pervert his art for commercial gain:

> dear lesego
> if you want us to give you an ear
> tell us something we want to hear
> make the deed supersede the motive
> our applause will be explosive
> dance action more than dense thought
> is what more often bought
> make our minds drown
> our hands will give you a crown
> nothing that lingers in the mind
> is what we flock behind
> replace your pocketful of hope
> with bucketsful of dallas soap
> ag man polemics is mos nie poetry
> give our minds toiletry
> look at the way of james hadley chase (Rampolokeng 1990:2).

'This double-edgedness', writes Andries Oliphant, 'constitutes the matrix of Rampolokeng's work' ('Introduction'; Rampolokeng 1990:iii). He displays that acute anxiety to protect his freedom as a poet and to cultivate new aesthetic ethos that are neither compromised by commodification of art nor the naked mimicry of conventions of white or black literary barons. And on this he is unapologetic:

> some say my poetry has a sick soul
> it belongs in a deep hole
> dread colour of fire and blood
> till i come like flood
> my words are wine & rose
> a lover's perfume in a progressive nose
> my words gush rush in a storm
> lacking all poetic form (Rampolokeng 1993:1).

And in an indifferent tone of sarcasm, he asserts:

> i'm neither keats nor yeats
> juggling words stretching doing acrobatic feats
> ....
>
> i'm no william shakespeare
> i write in the flight of the nations's spear (Rampolokeng 1993:23).

Rampolokeng's play on the way the idea of rhyme has been mystified in high art is tongue in cheek. He undermines by appropriating the rules of high art and surbordinating them to his mischief. And yet, whether we agree with Rampolokeng's sarcastic references to Keats, Yeats and Shakespeare is besides the point. We are bound to agree with the fact that in spite of the intrinsic qualities in the works of these giants of Western literary tradition, their works have always been used as the ultimate measure of good art and therefore the standard to which the black 'Other' in South Africa and the rest of the empire must aspire. Thus, in the terrain of cultural struggle, the black poet/griot is constantly pushed to the margins and he/she has to rely on the novelty of his/her poetic genius to transcend reification and the constraints that received literary conventions impose on his or her creativity. For Rampolokeng, his poetic language derives from what Pierre Macherey (1978:48) would call 'self-constituting power'—the rescuing of what Foucault has called 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault [1972]1980: 81).

The significance of Rampolokeng's poetry lies in the fact that he locates his poetry within the rap tradition. Traditionally, rap has remained the art of the underdog and the marginalised. It has been used to open up social space and to reclaim back a lost humanity. As Richard Shusterman (1992:201) reminds us:

> ... rap's cultural roots and prime following belong to the black underclass of American society; and its militant black pride and thematizing of the ghetto experience represent a threatening siren to that society's complacent status quo.

Rampolokeng's poetry disturbs the status quo in a number of ways. Written largely for the oppressed blacks of South Africa and the continent in general, Rampolokeng insists on the imperative of resistance and its celebration. This he does by locating his poetry within the terrain of struggle and positioning himself as the people's voice. If the common convention in South Africa is to elevate the so-called high art and to denigrate popular art emanating from the ranks of the oppressed, Rampolokeng disrupts this:

> i come to enlighten
> therefore absorb & brighten
> now is the time
> for a progressive rhyme (Rampolokeng 1990:14).

By positioning himself within the tradition of rap poetry, Rampolokeng is actually introducing a radical black genre which challenges and revises the nature and conditions of creativity as spelt out by the mainstream literary canon in South Africa. Far from turning to some untouched, pristine Africanity, Rampolokeng's poetry displays distinct syncretic complexity. By rooting himself in the aesthetic rules of rap which are premised on what Paul Gilroy has described as the 'dialectic of rescuing, appropriation and recombination' (Gilroy 1994), Rampolokeng's poetry fractures the norm and in a Brechtian version of the 'montage', creates images appropriate to the extreme historical conditions that shape them as in the poem, 'Broederbondage':

> (i cause a riot where iscariot rides the chariot of flame
> come to carry man home where calm is storm
> in the treasonous season of unreason)
>
> i move from the jackal laughter fraternity
> comic stripping man
> making the word make god
> in full stop of bullets
> in the heart of humanity
>
> darkness deeper than bible covers
> of human skin colour judgement (Rampolokeng 1993:11).

Or

> holocaust is nuclear radiation
> touted as a country's international station
> when the choice is brainwash education
> or a nation's extermination
> man is caught in a satanic-spider-web situation
> thus revolution god's solution (Rampolokeng 1990:19).

The dense and implosive combinations of diverse forms which clash and contrast, releasing jarring images, can only reflect the instability of lived and profane social horror that remains the nightmare of the new nation. The violent images themselves undermine convention through shock and artistic estrangement as in the fracturing of

western standard idiom: 'a rose on a piece of shit won't make it smell sweet' (Rampolokeng 1990:5). The fragmentation and dislocation of society is most evident when he deploys the grotesque images:

> i belong to the shithouse
> but it's on shit i thrive (Rampolokeng 1990:70).

One can safely argue that Rampolokeng's art defies the rigid distinction between the so-called high and popular arts, made purely on aesthetic grounds, just as it puts into question the very notion of such pure grounds. Rampolokeng's poetry is also different in the sense that it is devoid of the polemical lines that we tend to associate with black poetry. If black poetry turned the barrenness of language into weapons of attack against formalism dictated by the custodians of high art, Rampolokeng revels in the poetic qualities of his rap. The poetry reveals features of high art of alliteration and assonance: 'flower fallacies' and 'freedom-flash' (Rampolokeng 1990:42), alongside appropriation of the occasional styles akin to praise poetry. Included are also the local idioms like 'dallas soap' and the popular 'james hadley chase' (Rampolokeng 1990:2), as well as colloquial Afrikaans 'mos nie poetry' and many other vernacular expressions of keen insights, but also forms of subtlety and multiple levels of meaning whose complexity, ambiguity, and intertextuality can easily put to shame those of high arts.

> out of my mouth roll snippets
> that cling to the heart like limpets
> i only pierce your ears
> to allay your fears
> let my fire warm your soul
> that we may play a fiery role
> as we put this life's tragedy on the stage
> to show the extent of our rage
> out of the sea man came without a human tie
> like the penguin bird that cannot fly
> i dipped my spear in a sea of blood
> to summon a second noah's flood
> to cleanse & wash away this vileness
> that made me resort to violence
> when inhumanity came
> i became game
> to hunt down with guns
> to fill greed's barns (Rampolokeng 1990:4).

Rampolokeng works through the inversion of language as an act of resistance against

received convention. The quality of the poems lie in their deliberately fractured forms, while simultaneously appropriating some of the qualities that we associate with conventional poetry. An aesthetic stress is laid upon the sheer social and cultural distance which formerly separated the diverse elements now dislocated into novel meanings by their provocative aural/visual juxtaposition. The poems are reminiscent of Adorno's ([1938]1978:127) remarks in another, far distant context:

> They call [it] uncreative because [it] suspends their concept of creation itself. Everything with which it occupies itself is already there ... in vulgarised form; its themes are expropriated ones. Nevertheless nothing sounds as it was wont to do; all things are diverted as if by a magnet. What is worn out yields pliantly to the improvising hand; the used parts win second life as variants.

Rampolokeng also directs his rap against the colonial heresy that Africans had no history:

> to unbounded prophesy
> against colonial heresy
> i echoed to the ruins of Zimbabwe
> harare uzakukhululeka nawe
> stand taller than a mountain (Rampolokeng 1990:14).

As the prophet/poet of the community whose role is to inveigh against the 'moral putrefaction' (Rampolokeng 1990:19) within society, he cannot abdicate his responsibility to teach and uphold the truth. These twin-duties involve de-remembering and remembering. De-remembering the colonial narrative of mental and spiritual slavery—the narrative that came with colonial conquest. It also entails remembering and retrieving repressed history to restore social and historical agency, back to the oppressed blacks. If his detractors insist on art for entertainment, Rampolokeng (1990:25), rejects the easy option, and instead weaves 'a rap against the oppressors's trap' and blows the horn of hondo to prophesy the dawn of freedom. Poetry then is a metaphor for struggle and rap poetry in particular is a vehicle for decolonising the mind. These decolonising poems, the poet avers, the profiteers will not touch:

> profiteers won't publish
> my struggle is not for sale (Rampolokeng 1990:17).

It is Rampolokeng's refusal to prostitute his art that gives him the cutting edge in a society where 'justice's prophets are prisoners' (Rampolokeng 1990:18) and truth is treasonable. He is like Ngugi's *Matigari* who inhabits a space where truth and justice are outlawed.

If he derides the sick and fragmented community engendered by apartheid as grotesque and revolting, he is equally conscious of the possibilities of regeneration:

> the sun shall rise out of earth's bowels
> light rays shall dry tears like giant towels
> erupting fire balls
> shall break oppressive walls
> no longer shall god be man
> & human life lie on man's altar like a slit-throated hen
> the land shall be bathed in light
> saluting the flag of humanity's fight
> ....
> freedom's fire shall lick children's tears dry
> & there shall inhumanity fry (Rampolokeng 1990:83f).

But the nature of resistance and decolonisation that Rampolokeng celebrates in his poetry goes on long after the political establishment of independence. In this he is in agreement with writers like Ivan Vladislavic, who question the much celebrated idea of the post-apartheid state—the rainbow nation—which seeks to conflate class and race differences, and to suggest that the long-awaited kingdom has at last arrived (Vladislavic 1996). Rampolokeng displays serious apprehensions about the new dispensation which, he believes, has been compromised:

> we spin in circles of terror
> caught in cycles of a nightmare
> of judgement
> where the mirror
> of the present
> shows the surface of error
> in transition
> ...
>
> we whirl on our stand
> kicking skulls on soccer-field
> & from the grandstand
> applause rings in blood-drops
> celebrating the abortion
> of freedom's child
> in transition (Rampolokeng 1993:17).

In displaying his apprehensions about the 'post-apartheid' euphoria, Rampolokeng is moving away from the triumphant ideologies of the new nation. He is caught between

the mortar and the pestle because he is writing between the margins of the white canon and the celebratory art demanded of black artists in the new dispensation. If the bulk of the poems in *Horns for Hondo* (1990) are written on the margins of the dominant white literary canon, in *Talking Rain* (1993), Rampolokeng could be said to be writing on the margins of the emergent black art which now insists on an uncritical celebration of the rainbow nation.

Whatever the ultimate fate of South Africa's fledgling democracy, Rampolokeng seems to be suggesting that a great deal has been lost in the brief transition period. He refuses to celebrate at the shrine of the new dawn that seeks conformity in the form of uniform mediocrity:

> heaven is burning in the gorge of the grotesque
> i chew the commandments
> my alleycat condition meows a discordant NO to
> regimentation's
> ORDER COMRADE ORDER (Rampolokeng 1993:27).

Although Rampolokeng's collection of poems in *Talking Rain* (1993) shows a melancholic poet displaying something akin to existentialist *angst*, he still seeks redemption in poetry. His apparent alienation is the result of a national liberation betrayed and a fragmented societal vision which poetry must order, and give hope to the present state of dislocation because only the magic of poetry can bring 'a smile on the face of a mental case' and 'sunrays beyond our sorry days' (Rampolokeng 1993:38). And in the poem, 'History', he warns:

> revolution or evolution
> the game is still the same
> reconciliation negotiation
> it won't take the bait
> it's too late for hate
> when fate is your only mate
> wipe the slate
> you can't dictate history's date
> BLACK on the attack
> won't turn back
> or slack (1993:35).

The moment of history will come, but for now the poet's 'metaphoric pen of fire' initiated by the likes of Agostino Neto must continue in the act of decolonisation (Rampolokeng 1990:16).

In conclusion, I want to suggest that Rampolokeng's poetry gestures towards that redemptive option of 'a new radical cultural politics' which Fredrick Jameson (1984:85-89) suggests is the result of the disintegration of traditional modernist boundaries—a postmodern aesthetic which 'foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture'. Rampolokeng's poetry is also special in the sense that it combines the best elements of high art and those of popular art, thereby undermining the artificial dichotomy often created between these art forms. And finally, in rejecting commodification of art, Rampolokeng also creates what Jameson (1984:85-89) has called the 'minimal aesthetic distance' necessary for art to stand 'outside the massive Being of capital'—the radical rapture from the cultural logic of late capitalism.

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Labour and South African Literature in the 1980s

Priya Narismulu

Introduction

> The real artist in the world is human labor. It's human labor which has created the social environment out of the natural environment. All the modern technology and science and the arts are a product of human labor. When the product of that social human labor becomes the property of an idle few, can the artist be said to be free? .... The liberation of human labor is the only condition for the true liberation of the human being, the artist (Ngugi 1983:67).
>
> The class struggle .... is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist (Benjamin 1973:256).

Marxists have argued that the motivation of apartheid was economic exploitation, with racial oppression playing a significant role in the formation of classes. Given South Africa's history of colonialism and white minority domination, there has been a strong correspondence between racial stratification and class, and race has been quite a reliable index of class. Although much has been made of the white working class, it is tiny in comparison to the black working class (disproportionately so, as a result of apartheid). In addition, the income of the white working class under apartheid bore no comparison to the black working class, for instance white railway workers in the 1970s had wage packages that were better than those of qualified, 'middle class' black teachers. This was besides the other benefits that accrued from racial privileges, such as job reservation, conditions of service, pensions, housing, medical facilities, and so on.

Workers in South Africa have been systematically oppressed. They have had starvation wages and harsh working and living conditions. Many workers risked imprisonment under the influx control and pass laws, and they have faced a range of

dangers at the workplace. The experience of working life finds voice in various workchants and songs, of which 'Shosholoza' is the best known. Their singing is often all that a gang of workers has to sustain them through dull and exhausting manual work. Workers have used chants and songs to obviate the boredom induced by repetitious tasks or to keep time.

While poems about the struggles of workers tend to focus on male workers, and while the Black Consciousness Movement treated the subject of the struggle as a generic black man, many workers were women. Few black women found work in the industries (where they received the lowest wages, and the least secure conditions of employment). Most women who sought work could only find jobs as domestic workers: 'One in three African women workers in South Africa does a service job including domestic work' (Badsha & Wilson 1986:151). Research by Behardien, Lehulere and Shaw suggests that in general domestic workers, together with women in agriculture,

> earn the lowest wages, work the longest hours, suffer bad living and working conditions and have little job security. Furthermore they have low status occupations and are in extremely vulnerable positions in relation to their employers (Badsha & Wilson 1986:151).

It is the absence of alternatives that leave women most vulnerable to exploitation. Unable to organise adequately, domestic workers have subsisted in alienation from their labour and from each other. Research done in the major metropolitan areas of the country suggests that

> the wages, in cash and kind, of full-time domestic workers fell in real terms (taking 1975 as the base year) by 16 per cent over the period 1973-80 (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:60).

Employers of domestic workers tend to assume that wages in kind are equivalent to cash. But the accommodation and meals that are given in part-payment are only for employees, who must still make provisions for their families, on a reduced wage. The provision of live-in accommodation that many employers find convenient is particularly damaging to working class families because most black South African homes are headed by women. As Roseline Naapo, the poet, former domestic worker, and South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU) organiser has argued:

> Domestic work is not nice. You live in a room which they call a home. But you are not allowed to have visitors, you are not able to live with your husband. You are separated from your family for many months. Your employer expects you to smile every morning when you come into her house.

> When the employer leaves you with her kids, she expects you to be a good mother to her kids. You must be one hundred percent devoted to her kids. Meanwhile you feel a clot in your heart that you cannot even kiss your child in the morning when you wake up (Oliphant 1991:22).

Little tolerance has been shown by most employers for the social needs of domestic workers. Instead they have found it convenient to blame the severity of their conditions of service on the influx control and pass laws. Some employers actively connived with the police in using legislation, such as the 'key-law' (which operated in parts of Cape Town), to harass workers. This was done by supplying the police with duplicate keys to enter the rooms of workers at any time, making it impossible for workers to have children or partners with them (Badsha & Wilson 1986:151)[1].

Most of the 'worker women' in South Africa have been black. Subjected to a range of systems of oppression, their burden has been extreme. The National Household Survey found that the person responsible for the health of a household in South Africa is invariably a woman, to the extent of some 92% of the population (Hirschowitz et al. 1995:12). Most women are poorly educated and earn very little, yet they have the sole responsibility of keeping a family together with few resources.

Miriam Tlali's 'No Shelter for Cleaners' (1987:164-169) and Nise Malange's 'Nightshift Mother' (Evill & Kromberg 1989:18f) represent women who have no option but to work as night-shift cleaners, at great cost to their family lives and their safety. In Tlali's story the office cleaner, referred to as Mrs T.H., tells of how the women finish work at 02h30 and battle to find somewhere to sleep because it is unsafe to travel home to the townships. In her working life she slept at Johannesburg Park Station until the police chased people away, then in the garage of the building where she worked, or she would 'travel up and down, to and fro like that .... until it was safe to get off at Nancefield and go home' (Tlali 1987:167). Mrs T.H. relates that other passengers would caution her:

> 'You'll get hurt in the trains here; going up and down alone, and a woman for that matter'.... Then I would answer: 'What can I do? I've got to try and save my life as I work. I have to work; I have no husband' (Tlali 1987:167).

The ironic statement in the second stanza of Malange's poem conveys the anger and bitterness of workers who fully realise that they are exploited but have no alternative:

> Left with a double load
> at home
> my children left uncared

[1] For additional information see Barrett et al (1985) and Meer (1990).

Anxiety
at work
my boss insists we should
be grateful for the opportunities
he gives women to be exploited
(Evill & Kromberg 1989:18).

Malange exposes the isolated and alienating nature of the work in images that challenge the reader with the injustice of the dispensation:

And I work wandering on my knees
through these deserted and desolate spaces
the group of us lost in these vast buildings
forgotten and neglected
exploited as you sleep
(Evill & Kromberg 1989:18)[2].

Service sector jobs generally pay a little more than domestic work, but the money is never adequate, as Mrs T.H. relates:

> We are holding on because .... What shall we do? We have children and grandchildren. We have to send them to school. How are we to feed them? There's not much we can do with that R34 [per fortnight]. We complain but it does not help .... The money only pays for the rent and for a few bags of coal. We just go on (Tlali 1987:168).

Some workers tried to deal with the precariousness of their situation by coming together in collectives, which have generally taken the form of church groups (the best known of which are the Zionists), but there have been skills and literacy classes (usually run by church or educational groups). The *Thula Baba* collective comprised a group of domestic workers involved in a literacy programme. The workers composed a poem 'Domestic Workers' (1987:11), which addresses the challenges and problems they have faced:

We are called girls. We are called maids.
It is like we are small.
It is like we are children.
We are told what to do.

[2] The stanza recalls the photograph by Lesley Lawson of an office cleaner working on her hands and knees in the middle of a large boardroom table, to polish it (Badsha & Wilson 1986:152).

We are told what to say.
We are told what to think.
We are told what to wear.

We are women. We are mothers.
Our bodies are strong from hard work.
Our hearts are big from suffering.

We struggle against hunger.
We struggle against poverty.
We struggle against sickness.
We struggle against suffering.

The workers identify the isolated nature of their work and lives as an important challenge:

Our problem is that we live alone.
Our problem is that we work alone.
Our problem is that we suffer alone.

But we find friendship if we meet together.
And we find answers if we talk together.
And we find strength if we work together.
And we find hope if we stand together.

While such efforts may be characterised as 'provisional, rudimentary, hybrid forms where people were moved by events to represent themselves and their experience in the face of silence' (Brett 1986:26), there is more to the poem than is immediately apparent. Given the nature of their working situation some domestic workers have learnt to count on their collective strength. The optimism and resolve that is expressed in the final stanza is based on an implicit recognition of the significance of solidarity. The (oral) technique of repetition is harnessed to underscore their only source of power. Further, repetition imparts momentum to their words, supporting their solution-oriented approach. They use poetry as a resource, and the poem is treated as a struggle manual as they anticipate the power of organised worker structures.

Few employers tolerated the rights of workers to organise even when black trade unions were legalised. People in domestic service were particularly vulnerable (because of the isolated nature of their work), but even workers in the commercial and industrial sectors suffered dismissals because employers were suspicious that they were attempting to form unions. Two plays show this very clearly: in *Woza Albert!*

(Mtwa, Ngema & Simon 1983) the character Zuluboy is dismissed from Coronation Bricks, and in *Asinamali* (Ngema 1985) Bongani Hlophe tells of how he was dismissed from the Savage and Lovemore company. Both companies are based in the Durban area, and they had poor records of industrial relations in the 1970s and early 1980s.

A poet such as Malange has not been strictly part of the working class since the 1980s, when she joined the Culture and Working Life Project at the University of Natal. However, owing to apartheid, most black writers have functioned in a largely working class social milieu, and many have come from working class families that continued to remain so even though that particular individual, through education (scholarships in some cases) and work, could be considered as middle class. The handful of black writers who came from families considered middle class in the 1960s or 1970s often made the class transition during the working lives of their parents. As there were virtually no alternatives, such families generally continued to live in working class townships, among their working class neighbours, friends and relatives. As a result, the term 'middle class' does not accurately describe such a nebulous intermediate class, the members of which could just as easily move downwards as upwards in class terms, at the mercy of the vagaries of the apartheid state. The 'class' was not large enough or powerful enough to reproduce itself. There was no established middle class milieu in the 1970s and 1980s, although the Botha government attempted to develop such a group, particularly in the homelands. But their numbers were tiny and they did not act as a class any more than they did as part of another group.

The term 'middle class' often masked the huge discrepancy that existed between the black and the white middle classes, which Marxists and liberals tended to gloss over. Marxist discourse has tended to essentialise class to the exclusion of other variables. The poet Mafika Gwala (1984:52) challenges this approach: 'When whites talk of a "middle class" there springs up the immediate question: middle class between what?'. Gwala was justified, for the position of local Marxists was further weakened by the way in which they dealt with the racial categories that privileged themselves: they tended to respond defensively by dismissing various black writers of the 1970s as being petty bourgeois, without unpacking how that correlated with their own subject-positions. Their silences regarding their own enormous race- and class-bound privileges was deafening. Writers like Gwala and Serote were well aware of the contradictions that were obscured under the class rubric. Yet class analyses have immense theoretical and practical value, catalysing the formation of working class organisations, and disclosing the hesitations and contradictions in the black intermediate classes' contributions to social change[3].

[3] Among the oppressed minorities (Coloureds and Indians were the largest groups) class distinctions were far more discernible (although most of the middle class people in these groups were about a generation away from having been part of the working class/peasantry). But these groups were often too tiny or too hegemonised by the ideology of apartheid to play a significant role in building class solidarity across race.

Trade unionism

> you shall settle accounts with the oppressor
> You shall settle accounts with the exploiter
> (Qabula & Hlatshwayo 1986:56).

> The working class has always been creative (Hlatshwayo *Weekly Mail* 17/7/87:28).

During the 1970s unions of black workers began to emerge from the repression. Some unions were the spontaneous products of shop floor activity, some were linked to the activism of radical white students who participated in Wages Commissions and worker benefit groups, while some had support from church or trade union organisations abroad. In 1972 the BC movement set about establishing a workers' council to serve the needs of black workers, to build solidarity and to create a sense of black development (Mothlabi 1984:125). BAWU, the Black Allied Workers' Union, was established in the same year. However, the worker organisations tended to be divided and vulnerable, and under constant security police surveillance. The material conditions of capitalism, repressive legislation and security force action hindered the development of black working class organisations and consciousness. Nevertheless,

> [a]ll the unions were part of a ferment of popular struggle, evidence of the remarkable capacity of oppressed people to evolve ever new forms and instruments of struggle in the face of suppression (Mashinini 1989:138).

The 1972-1973 strikes which began in Durban and spread across Natal, the Transvaal and the eastern Cape signified the rebirth of black trade unionism after the silencing of the 1960s. However, the unions' struggle for factory-level recognition met with few successes, and the frequency of strikes signalled growing political frustration. The government and capital were faced with worker militance, which challenged the cheap labour system. Given the close links between itself and local capital, the apartheid state was pressured to undertake reform. Transnational capital (which had traded for a long time on the subordination of the black working class) was under pressure to disinvest, and was therefore moved to support superficial reform. As a result the government appointed the Wiehahn Commission of Inquiry. Acknowledging the right of African workers to form and belong to trade unions, the Wiehahn Commission (1979)

recognised that the unions were growing rapidly and that to leave African workers outside the official system would weaken the state's chances of controlling them.

The non-racial Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was formed in 1979, and by the end of 1981 had 95 000 members. The Black Consciousness Council of Unions in South Africa (CUSA) was formed in 1980. By 1982 it had 130 000 members, of whom 100 000 members were from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Other trade union blocs were formed in the 1980s, culminating in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 with 450 000 workers (NUM had joined in), while the smaller BC/Africanist National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) was formed in 1986. Ari Sitas (1989b:36-45) conveys the momentum for worker representation in graphic images in 'The Origins of Today's Tribulations':

> A trickle of workers
> pock-marked with worry
>
> A downpour of issues
> Then the flood.
> Factory gates burst
> a trampling of humanity
> and poured it into tiny rooms
> then big church halls
> and then the stadiums
>
> Unions emerged
> on the back
> of a galloping grievance (Sitas 1989b:43-44).

The launch of the giant trade union federation COSATU in November 1985 inspired workers across the country to organise to improve their conditions of work:

> The federation was born into a state of emergency. It was a product not only of worker organisation, but also of a climate of uprising and even insurrection (Baskin 1991:89).

COSATU's launch caused great panic among the opponents of black working class power: the state, most employers and reactionary black political organisations[4]. 'The Tears of a Creator' by Alfred Temba Qabula and Mi Hlatshwayo (1986:49-56) was

[4] In 1986 Inkatha founded the United Workers Unions of South Africa (UWUSA), which started out by launching a series of bitter attacks on COSATU.

performed at the COSATU launch, at Kings' Park Stadium, Durban. The poem begins with an address to the worker, one of the most exploited and neglected subjects of society, in terms that elites usually reserve for the divine:

> O' maker of all things.

The analogy is as pertinent as it is ironic, and it is sustained in the questions that follow, which have Biblical overtones (of Christ's suffering):

> Your sin
> Can it be your power?
> Can it be your blood?
> Can it be your sweat? (Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:51).

The power of COSATU is celebrated through the comparison to the mythical tornado-snake Inkhanyamba, which, once liberated, is impervious to its enemies:

> Here it is:
> The tornado-snake of change! Inkhanyamba,
> The cataclysm
> Clammed for decades and decades
>
> By a mountain of rules.
> The tornado-snake
> Poisoned throughout the years
> By ethnicity
> And tribalism (Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:54).

COSATU is perceived as being part of the long struggle to establish trade unionism in South Africa:

> Where is the ICU of the 1920s to be found?
> Where is the FNETU of the 1930s to be found?
> Where is the CNETU of the 1940s to be found?
> And the others?
>
> They emerged
> They were poisoned
> Then
> They faded!

COSATU
Today be wise! (Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:55).

Qabula and Hlatshwayo perform the praise in Zulu, although it has been published in Zulu and English. COSATU has had a strong tradition of promoting communication through translation, whether in meetings, on the shop-floor or in its documents. The loss of time in meetings is made up in accessibility and increased participation, which is vital to the democratic character of the trade union federation.

COSATU and NACTU played a vital role in preparing their members for the struggles that were necessary to obtain optimum class leverage in the turbulent period that followed:

> The trade union movement as a key pillar of the broader working class is an important factor in the struggle for a complete transformation of our society. It has secured this position not merely through mass mobilization and protest action, but through building working class confidence, raising consciousness, developing grassroots leadership and mass education which form part of campaigns that fundamentally question the present organisation of society (Meintjies 1989:25).

COSATU, with its huge membership and highly developed organisational bases, was well positioned to challenge the state, as Peter Horn (1991:123f) suggests in 'Canto Thirteen: There is a Writing on my Body':

> as a union together we will write our history
> on the body of the South African state.

There were important challenges related to gender inequalities. Nise Malange (1989:78) has pointed out that as more and more women become part of the organised labour force, they were better able to struggle to 'change patriarchal attitudes, share the double shift, and achieve higher wages and better working conditions'.

The harassment and persecution of workers

Before the development of the independent trade union movement, the state's reaction to worker activists was as visceral as it had been towards its other black political opponents. Many workers, most of them unionists, died in detention: Masobiya Joseph Mdluli died while being detained in Durban in March 1976, and Neil Aggett, an organiser in the COSATU-linked Food and Canning Workers' Union, died after being tortured in detention in February 1982. The state claimed he committed suicide, but this was unconvincing, and in an unprecedented show of solidarity a hundred thou-

sand workers went on a thirty-minute work stoppage. Workers continued to die in detention, among them the trade union leader, Elija Loza, who died in 1987.

In May 1985 Andries Raditsela, who had been a prominent leader from the time of FOSATU and was a senior shopsteward of the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union, died shortly after being released from detention under the Internal Security Act. Raditsela died of a head injury sustained when he fell out of a police Casspir at the time of his arrest some ten days earlier (Cooper 1988:632). There were mass work stoppages and his funeral was attended by thousands of people. Nise Malange composed an elegy 'This poem is dedicated to brother Andries Raditsela' (Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:63), which begins with striking images that contradict the claim of the first line:

> I have a few words to say—my mouth is a
> grave without flowers
> It is like a river without water
> But it has faith in your death.
>
> If I had strength enough I would go and avenge
> your blood
> Our blood

The middle section of the elegy issues a defiant challenge to the government:

> Comrade, I did not come here to open a wound
> nor to mourn
> I am here to challenge the minister of law
> and order
> I am here to condemn death in detention
> (1983:63).

Malange nears her conclusion with a pledge reminiscent of the Mozambican poet Noemia da Sousa's 'Poem for Joao' (Soyinka 1975:197-199) which was written during a strike in the capital (Lourenco Marques, now Maputo) four decades earlier:

> Your blood, Andries will not be in vain
> Your blood will be a moral lesson for us to punish the oppressors,
> Treason, detention and murders
> Your blood will give power to your comrades,
> To the workers, to your family and to us all (1983:63).

Despite pressure and harassment, and the possibility of dismissal or death, workers

chose to continue with the process of unionisation, as Mlungisi Mkize (himself a victim of the war in Pietermaritzburg) argues in 'echo sounds in maritzburg' (Ndaba 1986:118f):

> the gun that walloped
> graham hadebe
> the gun has harnessed
> my people together
> the gun has fuelled the struggle (Ndaba 1986:118).

The polarisation of political interests (the UDF/ANC versus the IFP) led to the violence delineated in the following lines, which also show the impact of worker unity:

> oppressors are now standing to lose
> for i have
> once more
> seen union taking root-
> at the stroke of death
> once more there is
> awareness, togetherness
> solidarity, fraternity
> take heed for
> once more foes have turned to comrades (Ndaba 1986:118f).

However, the crisis was escalating for the labour movement:

> For unions, the 1985/6 emergency was tame compared to the one declared on 12 June 1986. The second emergency was better planned, more harshly implemented, and gave virtually a free rein to the army and police. In contrast to the first emergency, it was applied to every region of the country (Baskin 1991:134f).

Within six weeks of the declaration of the June 1986 emergency 2 700 unionists were detained, of whom 81% were from COSATU. Some 320 elected trade union leaders and officials were detained. (The figures necessarily refer only to the detentions that were known.) Union offices were raided, members were intimidated, and the work of the unions was disrupted. It was difficult to run a mass union movement from hiding (Baskin 1991:135). In addition to the ban on outdoor meetings, indoor meetings were also prohibited, making organising extremely difficult for workers. Some Eastern Cape factory workers were detained for up to three years. In Northern Natal virtually every COSATU organiser and most key shop stewards were detained. Unions struggled over

job security for detainees, as well as for payment during detention. In Johannesburg 950 dairy workers were detained for two weeks for protesting the detention of two unionists. On their release they discovered that they had all been fired (Baskin 1991:139). The trade union movement was subject to dirty tricks campaigns, including fake pamphlet campaigns. But the conditions of the second emergency failed to suppress the resistance:

> it became simply another hurdle to be overcome, another obstacle to organising the workers. For COSATU it reaffirmed the need to remain strong at the factory level, and not to centre unions around offices (Baskin 1991:145).

Most employers were silent about the emergency clampdown, some supported it, and some, such as Premier Milling's Tony Bloom complained that 'we are now faced with attempting to run our factories and enterprises by dealing with the mob because the leaders are in custody' (Baskin 1991:137).

While some of the harassment of the state was directed at union and shopfloor leadership, the everyday harassment of ordinary workers was unremitting, as the expression of resistance through song and other genres demonstrates. People have always sung on South African trains, although in the past the songs were mainly of a religious nature. Njabulo Ndebele (1991:32) recounts having 'listened to countless storytellers on the buses and trains carrying people to and from work' and in the short story 'Fud-u-u-a!' Miriam Tlali (1989) focuses on the struggles of women workers on the packed trains to and from the Johannesburg townships. By the mid-1980s the resistance meetings held on the trains were supplemented with dances and songs. A sacked worker made a play to show on trains, pointing out, 'If we entertain people, they are more likely to support our struggle' (Slovo in Corrigall 1990:60). There was also a train play called *Workers Lament*. A play performed by women passengers was called *Women stand up for your rights*. The police responded by raiding the trains daily and in three months in 1989 some 460 people were arrested for disturbing the peace on trains (Slovo in Corrigall 1990:61). In August 1989, when 47 workers (most of them members of COSATU) were charged with 'disturbing the peace' by singing on the trains, some 500 workers took the Johannesburg-to-Kempton Park train to attend the trial. On the way they sang and chanted freedom songs and praises of their unions, the ANC, SWAPO, the Sandinistas and their own strength. When the workers arrived at Kempton Park they were dispersed with sjamboks by the police. Some 15 workers were injured. More police harassment was experienced on the road to the court. It seemed that the security forces were determined to stop the singing of political songs. However, the workers were not to be quelled. Eventually the 'singing trial' of the original accused was postponed indefinitely (*Weekly Mail* 11/9/89:2f).

Mining

> .... we begin to understand that the truly heroic *is* the ordinary, the everyday of the South African working class (Cronin 1987:19).

The focus of several writers on mining clarifies the nature of the exploitation that occurred in one of the largest and most profitable sectors in the economy in the 1970s and the early 1980s. Mtutuzeli Matshoba's story 'To Kill a Man's Pride' (Mutloatse 1980:103-127) addresses some of the problems migrant workers experienced with accommodation in Johannesburg. The play *Egoli*, by Matsemela Manaka (no date)[5], which was banned in 1979, portrayed the troubled lives of two miners. Alfred Temba Qabula addresses the exploitation many migrant labourers experience in the ironically-titled poem 'The Small Gateway to Heaven' (1989a:49-51). The poem is based on his own bitter experience of leaving the impoverished eastern Cape for a compound (the 'small gateway') in Carletonville ('heaven'), which he alternately describes as the 'place of gold, dagga, drink and oppression':

> When the recruiters invaded our homes
> To get us to work the mines,
> They would say:
> '.... Come to the place of the
> Hairy-jaw
> Where starvation is not known'.
>
> And we joined the queues through the small
> gate to Heaven
> And we found the walls of our custody,
> And degradation,
> And of work, darkness to darkness,
> With heavy shoes burdening our feet with worry,
> For nothing,
> At the place of the Hairy-jaw,
> Away from our loved ones.
>
> I have seen this prison of a Heaven,
> This kraal which encircles the slaves
>
> I saw it as the heart of our oppression,
> I saw the walls that separate us
> from a life of love (Qabula 1989a:51).

[5] Chapman offers two different dates for the playscript, 1979 (1996:353) and 1981 (1996:498).

Qabula's juxtaposition of hope and cynicism, desolate homesteads and makeshift mass accommodation, the oral tradition and an urban idiom, offers a poignant expression of the experience of millions of workers against a formidable system:

> Popular art can be seen as a new kind of art created by a new emergent class, the fluid heterogenous urban mass .... The syncretism of their art, drawing as it did on both indigenous (hinterland) and imported (metropolitan) elements was therefore an expression and a negotiation of their real social position at the point of articulation of two worlds (Barber 1987:14).

Discrimination has been rife on the mines. While the gold mines were very profitable the wages of black miners remained poor and inequitable, as various analysts have indicated:

> In early 1987 the lowest monthly wages, according to NUM [the National Union of Mineworkers], were R200,00 on gold mines, and R194,00 on coal mines. While most miners earned more, their wages were still low: in 1986 the average black mineworker earned a mere R427,00 per month. During that year mine industry profits reached a new record of R8,3-million (Baskin 1991:226).

Ben Magubane (1990:142) points out that black gold miners earned an average of R5 127 per annum, while white miners earned an average of R27 679. Goodman Ntsasa (1988:9) of the NUM offices in Carletonville wrote the poem 'What have you done to us?' which challenges the lack of transparency on the part of the mine managements:

> They give you pay with a lot
> of deductions
> But they don't give you full
> details about them.
> They don't show deductions of food
> and rent in your payslips.

However, the discrepancy in the earnings of the black labour force is only part of the picture. In the mid-1980s whites got 35 days paid leave while blacks were given only 14 days. There were safety incentive bonuses for whites but not for blacks, yet it was the white staff who had responsibility for the production quotas of the blacks under them (Magubane 1990:142-3). This meant that such staff were rewarded for placing productivity above the safety of the black staff. Discrimination also extended to racially segregated lift cages and inferior canteens (*Weekly Mail* 29/9/89:10-11).

Mining, and deep-level mining in particular, is a very dangerous activity, as Cyril Ramaphosa pointed out: 'Between 1973 and 1984, more than 8 500 miners were

killed on the mines' (Baskin 1991:149). In 1985 alone, 'over 500 men were killed (a fatality rate of one per one thousand people employed) and 13 000 were disabled for at least 14 days by accidents in the gold mines' (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:80). The overwhelming majority of the casualties were black miners.

In addition to the high number of fatalities, the lives of hundreds of thousands of miners were ruined by accidents or by occupational illnesses. Compensation for disability or death has been inadequate. A NUM study concluded that

> a mineworker who spends 20 years working underground risks one chance in 30 of being killed and a 50% chance of being permanently disabled. Since 1900 over 68 000 miners have died in mining accidents, while a further one million workers have been permanently disabled (Baskin 1991:152).

As COSATU contended, 'Black miners were paying with their lives for a profit they did not share' (Baskin 1991:149).

In the context of such data stand the last two lines of the first stanza of Jeremy Cronin's (1983:58) poem 'To learn how to speak':

> The low chant of the mine gang's
> Mineral glow of our people's unbreakable resolve.

Cronin's poem celebrates the real wealth of the country: the people, whose will to be liberated has been more durable than the prized mineral. Unionisation offered the only hope of relief for the mineworkers. In the 1980s the National Union of Mineworkers was the fastest growing union in the world, with a paid up membership of more than 260 000 mineworkers (Baskin 1991:224). The size and the strength of the National Union of Mineworkers attested to the capacity of migrant workers to unite despite the conditions that worked to divide them and to prevent the development of a homogeneous working class culture: a large proportion of workers were employed on contracts (even though many stayed for their working lives), while the hostels for migrant labour were segregated on the basis of 'ethnicity'.

Millions of women's lives were affected by the conditions on the mines. In an untitled poem, Boitumelo (1979:60)[6] writes of the grim toll of industrial accidents, from the point of view of a rural woman:

> Here I stand
> With no child in sight
> Did I conceive to throw away?

[6] The poet's surname has not been supplied, but it is quite likely that she is Boitumelo Makhema.

> My children have gone to the towns
> To seek bread
> They never returned
> They went to the mines
> To dig gold
> They died in Shaft 14 ....
> My children
> Children of blood, blood of my children.

A similar sense of catastrophe and powerlessness is depicted in Matsemela Manaka's play *Egoli* (n.d.:25), where the character John learns that his young son Oupa, whom he thought was still living at home on the farm, has died in the mining accident that he himself was lucky to survive.

The worst mining disaster in this period occurred at the Kinross mines in September 1986 when 180 miners died. The disaster highlighted the dangers of secretive, management-controlled safety procedures. It also indicated the necessity for a strong union movement to act as a check. The full extent of the Kinross disaster was uncovered only because NUM, which had been established under the slogan 'organise or die', had challenged the mineowners on safety issues and racist procedures (*Weekly Mail* 29/9/89:10f). As Qabula and Hlatshwayo declared in 'The Tears of a Creator' (1986:49-56), which they performed at the COSATU launch a few months earlier:

> We
> Have dared to fight back
> Even from the bottom of the earth
> Where we pull wagons-full of gold
> through our blood (Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Nise Malange 1986:52).

May Day

The struggle over May Day in South Africa was an index of the power struggles that occurred between organised labour and the state. The government first demonised the demands of workers for the recognition of the day, and then struggled over conceding it in the face of unremitting pressure from organised labour.

Initially commemorated in 1896, the first day of May has long been recognised in many countries as International Labour Day. May Day was first observed in South Africa in 1904. Since 1926 workers have battled to have the day officially recognised. By 1961 May Day was excluded by law as a paid holiday from all industrial council agreements. Attempts in the 1980s to revive the day met with severe state repression (Baskin 1991:120). In 1985, workers involved in cultural groups were determined to

use May Day to demonstrate their solidarity, and for three months they made time after work and on weekends to have rehearsals at their union offices (Von Kotze 1988:61).

COSATU tried to transcend the boundaries drawn by the state and business in their conceptualisation of May Day, as is evident in the poem that the trade union cultural activist Nise Malange read at the 1985 May Day function at Curries Fountain, 'I, the unemployed' (Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:59f):

> I'm here
> Living under a Black cloud
> Here, living in thinning light
> Here
> Freedom is nailed to a tree
> To die.
> Here I am living: in a matchbox
>
> I am here dying of hunger
> And my country is also dying
> My children are dying too
> Look at them.

The identification with the unemployed shows the larger social interest of the trade union movement represented by COSATU. The federation saw itself not only as a representative of workers, but took into account the welfare of those unable to secure work in an economy that was slowing down (as a result of the political pressure on the state). The fact that unemployment has affected more than half of the African population (Hirschowitz et al. 1995:50) clarifies COSATU's concern. Malange's second stanza, in particular, represents the expanded consciousness of organised workers, implicitly challenging the narrow self-interest of the state and its business allies.

By 1986, the conservative liberal press acknowledged that the unions had won the right to May Day: 'If there was ever any doubt about workers' May Day wishes, it was removed yesterday', noted *The Star*, arguing that: 'An undeclared holiday is disruptive, bedevils industrial relations, creates anomalies, undermines the authority of law, makes a mockery of statutory holidays' (Baskin 1991:126). Even the more conservative *Sunday Times* recognised that

> South Africa's black workers have for all times unilaterally declared May 1 a public holiday. Government acceptance of this week's holiday by public fiat would not only be wise but gracious (Baskin 1991:126).

Many employers grudgingly conceded the development.

In May 1986 Premier Foods was the first major employer to recognise both May 1 and June 16 as paid holidays for all employees. Recognising that the government had lost the initiative, many companies followed:

> The government was unwilling to concede to COSATU's demands, which it had labelled both communist and subversive. Having labelled 1 May a communist day with Marxist links, it had painted itself into a corner (Baskin 1991:127).

Most large employers had a more sophisticated approach than the government: realising that it was not possible to destroy the union movement, they sought to curb the power of the unions. But the government's intransigence was consistent with its programme of repression. Having focused on curbing the power of the 'young comrades' in the emergency declared in June 1986, the security establishment seemed to have decided that it was time to act on the union movement:

> In 1987 the state declared that the first Friday of every May would be known in future as Workers' Day. The unions rejected this and stuck to their 1 May demand. However, conflict was avoided during 1987 since 1 May happened to coincide with the first Friday in May that year (Baskin 1991:127).

However, COSATU's Living Wage Campaign, due to be launched on May Day 1987, was declared a communist plot by the state, and the rallies around it were banned. Nevertheless, the May Day rallies went ahead, to the reading of much poetry and the performance of songs and music. The academic and activist Peter Horn's 'Canto Seven: One and Many' (1991:113f) was performed on 1 May 1987 at Athlone Stadium in Cape Town:

> You were all alone until you understood
> that you were not alone. Until you looked and saw:
> There are others alone like me, but together
> we can lick them. Because we are many.
> Because we are many, and we, many, are one,
> we can win this war for freedom
> we can win this war for a human existence.
> Because we are many more than them,
> we can win this war for food and housing
> and comfort and knowledge and power (Horn 1991:114).

Celebrating the meaning of solidarity, Horn delineates the material significance of the unity that COSATU workers sought to develop with other workers across the country and the world:

alone we are helpless and victims of power,
together we win the war and we win our life:
together means union, united in struggle,
together means workers united to win (Horn 1991:114).

The political situation was tense because of the election scheduled for 6 May 1987, when the white electorate was polled for its support on two issues: the government's reform moves, and security force action to crush 'communist subversion'. COSATU, with other sections of the democratic movement (principally the United Democratic Front and the National Education Crisis Committee), supported the call for a two-day stayaway on 5 and 6 May. Almost 1,5 million workers and 1 million students responded. In regions such as the Eastern Cape almost 100% absenteeism was recorded (Baskin 1991:190).

On 7 May 1987 two explosions, clearly the work of professional saboteurs, destroyed COSATU house. Two weeks before, in the midst of intensified government attacks on the union movement, police had warned COSATU members during a raid of the premises 'that the building would either be burnt or bombed 'to the ground" (Baskin 1991:191). COSATU and five unions lost their head offices. The regional, branch and local offices of many affiliated unions were also destroyed. Besides accommodating the offices of the federation and several unions, COSATU House had also been used to co-ordinate the broader labour movement and the mass democratic movement. Some news reports implied that COSATU itself had been responsible for the bombings. During this period there were many attacks on union offices throughout the country. COSATU launched a 'Hands Off COSATU' campaign.

In 1988, May 1 fell on a Sunday. Organised workers decided that in addition to observing the day, they would also take off the first Friday, 6 May: 'What the government had sown, it should reap, they argued' (Baskin 1991:127). The government, though out-manoeuvred, remained intransigent and declared that in future Workers' Day would be observed on the first Monday in May. Conveniently, this coincided with 1 May 1989, as Baskin (1991:127) commented ironically. Peter Horn's (1991:126-128) 'Canto Fifteen: We demand a living wage!' which was performed on May Day at Athlone Stadium picked up on the Living Wage Campaign that the government had attempted to crush in 1987. This was a more strident call than the one that he made in the May Day poem two years previously:

Comrades,
the cost of living has made a hole in our
pockets
and the wealth of the country is not there!
The rent goes up, and the landlord thrives,
and the pay packet shrinks (Horn 1991:126).

Demonstrating a sense of solidarity that goes beyond the divisions of class and race, the poet challenged the position of the authorities:

When we want to live,
I mean just to live,
they tell us
that living is seditious
that living is revolutionary
that living is treason to the state
that living is bad for business

But we say: (Let me hear you!)
We demand a living wage! (Horn 1991:126f).

The government first (though qualified) recognised May Day as a public day of commemoration on 1 May 1989. On that morning David Webster, an academic and a human rights activist with strong links to the labour movement, was killed. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1997) has heard evidence that Webster's killers were part of a security force death squad.

Only in 1990, after the declarations of February 2, did the apartheid government finally accept that 1 May would be observed as Workers' Day. 'It had taken four years to acknowledge what the majority of the people had proclaimed in 1986' (Baskin 1991:127). The battle for the recognition of a day that is observed internationally characterises the struggle for power in South Africa: enormous effort was required to secure basic rights.

The MAWU strike and *The Long March*

Since the 1950s workers at the British multinational in Howick, B.T.R. Sarmcol have struggled to gain union recognition. In April 1985, some 870 workers affiliated to the Metal and Allied Worker's Union (MAWU) at B.T.R. Sarmcol went on a legal strike over their demands. Two days later the entire workforce was fired. Most workers had an average of 18 to 25 years of service with the company. Scab labour was hired with the help of government labour bureaus. MAWU instituted court proceedings on the grounds of unfair labour practices and began solidarity campaigns. Developments arising out of the MAWU strike are of significance because they show that 'cultural activism established itself as an organised consolidated form of struggle alongside labour organisation and a strong worker leadership' (Von Kotze 1988:18).

Owing to overt government and other ruling class controls, engaging with the social order has never been easy for workers. Working-class people, whose lives are

dictated by the inimical interests of capital and by various social agencies (e.g. the media), rarely see their interests fairly represented in the public arena. After six months of being on strike, the B.T.R. Sarmcol workers established co-operatives to sustain unity, to provide some income, and to establish participatory methods in production and distribution which the strikers hoped to see introduced at B.T.R. Sarmcol. One of the co-operatives was the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative (SAWCO). Through the process of a week-long workshop, a group of workers with no experience of acting developed the play *The Long March*, with assistance from the Durban Workers' Cultural Local and the Culture and Working Life Project at the University of Natal. As with its bulk-buying and silk-screening co-operatives, SAWCO made a deliberate effort to engage in democratic production practices.

MAWU workers 'organised themselves around cultural activity because they realised that united action does not just mean political struggle and the fight for union issues' (Von Kotze 1988:14). The plays that they workshopped helped them explore collective ways of reflecting on their experiences and articulating their vision for the future (Meintjies 1989:25). Besides enabling workers to think through their challenges, play-making helped them test their concepts with other workers who shared their experiences and frustrations; to establish relations of solidarity across unions, regions, ethnicity and even race; and to explore options and challenge imposed points of view. Organised worker culture has served to counter the helplessness, isolation and alienation that industrial work in particular generates. It allows workers in the audience to learn about the experiences of fellow workers and recognise the bases for solidarity and unity. It also enables exposure to the experiences of workers who have gone before, as well as access to the history of working class struggles, from the point of view of working class people. As Von Kotze (1988:12) explains, the plays give workers the chance to do what is too dangerous to express at work: disagreement, anger, frustration, rejection, or even contempt for managers. Although worker plays often show the exploitation and abuse of workers, they do not show workers being defeated or crushed: 'The notion of a depressed "down-trodden" workforce is as unacceptable to the makers of plays as it would be to the audience' (Von Kotze 1988:13).

The Long March traced the history of the workers, many of whom experienced forced removals twice before being settled in Mpophomeni (where 40% of the strikers lived). Typical of worker plays, *The Long March* was interspersed with many songs that clarified the main messages, such as 'Sophinda siteleke' (We shall strike again), and the poem 'It's a long, long march to freedom'. Everyday language was used. The play addressed the exploitation at work (through parodying assembly-line mass production), and the long struggle for union recognition that resulted in the strike. Through the creation of characters such as 'Maggie Thatcher' (by means of a vivid mask donned by one of the male actors), the play exposed the collusion between neo-imperialism and capitalism in South Africa. It also addressed the resulting poverty and the police

attacks that the Mpophomeni community endured, as well as their attempts to defend themselves.

The play was first performed in November 1985, for the Mpophomeni community, the shopstewards and other unionists. In 1986, under the state of emergency, it played to workers across the country. The aims of the tour, according to a worker (identified as 'Peter, the spokesperson for the players'), were:

> to spread our struggle right through the country so everybody should know what is really happening about the Sarmcol strikers. To inform the people was our major objective. Fundraising was meant to provide the families of strikers with food parcels (Von Kotze 1988:80f).

Besides union newspapers and meetings, workers have not had the means to express themselves publicly over issues that affect them deeply. By touring, the Mpophomeni workers were able to share their struggles with workers across the country.

In December 1986 armed Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) vigilantes and people dressed in the uniforms of KwaZulu police tortured, murdered and then burnt the bodies of two MAWU shopstewards and the daughter of a striker. A day later Mpophomeni township was attacked, a youth was killed and others were injured. SAWCO decided to dedicate the play to the deceased, who were the township leader and head of the MAWU shop stewards, Phineas Sibiya; the actor and the play's main motivator Simon Ngubane; the SAWCO activist Flomin Mnikathi; and the youth activist Alpheus Nkabinde. The killings were characteristic of the struggle in Natal, where a sustained campaign of assassinations against COSATU and the UDF was being waged. The workers responded by strengthening their unity and productivity. In this *The Long March* was like the earlier *Clover Worker's Play,* which showed the capacity of drama to articulate the feelings of workers under attack, and to mobilise collective power. Later, *The Long March* players were invited, in an expression of international worker solidarity, to play in Britain, so that the unfair labour practices of a British multinational in the 'third world' would be exposed.

At COSATU's second national congress in July 1987, a resolution to the effect that 'culture cannot be left in the hands of the enemy' (Von Kotze 1988:18) resonated with the struggles around the country and particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Across the country community and worker structures have been involved in making and performing plays about their living conditions and struggles, with the understanding, as Hlatshwayo explained that the plays 'have the potential of popularising our worker politics' (*Weekly Mail* 17/7/87:28). Drawing on the oral history of the Mpophomeni area, SAWCO developed the play *Bambatha's Children*, which used sophisticated dramatic devices, powerful mime and songs to recount the hidden history of three genera-

tions of dispossession[7]:

> *Bambatha's Children* breaks new ground in workers' theatre. It not only focuses on a single union issue or struggle but it also attempts to contextualise current repression historically .... Plays like these, drawing on the popular memory of resistance heroes of the past, help to shape and articulate popular resistance in the 1980s (Purkey, *Weekly Mail* 2/10/89:33).

In September 1987 the courts found in favour of BTR Sarmcol. The judgement suggested that '[c]ollective democracy of the kind practised by unions should not be tolerated in South Africa' (*Weekly Mail* 18/9/87:8f). However, on appeal, the Natal Supreme Court ruled, in March 1989, that the Industrial Court had acted incorrectly. The union continued to seek negotiation with the management to resolve the matter[8].

A few months before these judgements the successor to MAWU, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) was launched. A powerful union with strong socialist-leanings, NUMSA was created through a process of unity among unions who managed to overcome deep historical divisions. When NUMSA, the second largest COSATU affiliate, was launched in May 1987 Moses Mayekiso was elected as the general secretary. This was an expression of solidarity and defiance, for Mayekiso and other Alexandra Action Committee activists were detained for a long time before being charged with treason, for attempting to improve the Johannesburg slum in which they lived. It would be two years before Mayekiso was acquitted of treason and could take up his post. Alfred Temba Qabula, who had been a member of MAWU/NUMSA, composed the praise poem 'Jangeliswe: For Moss Jangeliswe Mayekiso' (1989b:135f):

> Jangeliswe -
> live up to your Israelite name
> and lead.

Qabula's poem celebrates Mayekiso's long record of struggle, both in the trade union movement and in Alexandra township, in terms that express reverence for Mayekiso's sacrifices and his ability to teach by example, despite the onslaught of the security forces:

[7] In 1906 the dispossession of African people resulted from the British imposition of crippling poll, cattle and hut taxes. To try to meet their debts, many people were forced to seek work in the white mines and factories. Any resistance, such as Bambatha's, was ruthlessly quelled.

[8] For developments in the 1990s see Bonnin (1995:9-12).

> Like Mandela
> you pushed around the seat of their kingdom
> and now you are thrown in kwanongqonqo [prison]
> the sealed box of endless nights
> trying to stop you in what you were up to
> trying to erase you from popular memory
> they put forward sellouts and they prize people to praise them
> but you resurface and they shout that 'it is getting hot at Alex
> we can't stand all this pressure'
> then they charge you
> to put you away forever
> but you look them in the face
> and you speak out the truth
> about how the people are crushed and exploited
> and how they light fires to help see through the darkness
> and how to choose stones to erect new bridges
> to pass over the floods
> and how to trail through the thornfields
> how to care for each other on the road
> with such heavy burdens
> with your own life neglected
> your own homesteads in tatters
> you move on and speak the truth.

SARHWU workers and *Township Fever*

Mbongeni Ngema's play *Township Fever* (1989)[9] stands in stark contrast to plays of the Clover workers and the Sarmcol workers. Ngema's play which dealt with the 1987 strike by the South African Railways and Harbour Workers' Union (SARHWU), unwittingly showed the need for the involvement of workers in representations of their struggle.

During the troubled SARHWU strike involving 20 000 railway workers, three workers were shot dead and many were injured by police on 22 April 1987. Police then occupied COSATU headquarters for five hours, holding workers at gunpoint, spread-eagled and facing the wall[10]. A few days later some strikers killed four scab workers and burnt their bodies using the 'necklace' method[11]. When the bodies were

[9] The play was staged in 1989-1990. A version of the script appears in Ngema's publication *The Best of Mbongeni Ngema: An Anthology* (1995:127-191).

[10] This was captured in a well-known photograph by Eric Miller (*Weekly Mail* 24/4/87:1).

[11] Paulus Zulu offers the following explanation of the growth of physical violence among the oppressed, in a society with a long history of repressive structural violence: 'As the state meets

discovered a day after the killings, the police, claiming to be looking for the killers, laid siege to COSATU house again, and videotaped thousands of workers whom they led out at gunpoint past masked police informants: '11 were arrested, including a 12-year old child' (Baskin 1991:179). Eventually eighteen people were tried for the murders, eight were found guilty and four were sentenced to death. COSATU and SARHWU condemned the killings, but they denied responsibility for them, stating that the first that they had heard of the murders was after the raid on COSATU House (1991:179).

The local reception of *Township Fever* was in stark contrast to the reception of *Woza Albert!* (1983) and *Asinamali* (1985). Ngema's earlier work had demonstrated a thorough grasp of the social and political problems of oppressed South Africans. Ngema defended himself against the outcry by explaining that he had been overseas touring with *Sarafina!* when he heard from his lawyer about the SARHWU strike. On his return, he visited the workers who were on death row for the murder of the strike-breakers, disguised as a legal interpreter. Ngema argues that he based *Township Fever* on the stories of the strike breakers, the court reports and the attorney's reports (1995:viii).

Workers, unionists and others who were involved in or familiar with the SARHWU strike were in an uproar over the play. The workers believed themselves to have been oppressed thrice, twice by the state as an employer and as a repressive force, and then by the playwright who misrepresented their struggle. As the playwright and director, Ngema was accused of treating the industrial action as a curiosity, evidently because he was more interested in appealing to foreign (possibly United States) audiences, whose remoteness from the context explained his liberties with complex issues. Ngema was criticised for behaving like the stereotype of an arrogant and misinformed visitor, who was merely interested in framing the quaint locals to fit a reductionist and self-serving theatrical model. It was also charged that he sacrificed the facts of the strike to create an impressive musical and choreographic spectacle, e.g., most of the songs had little to do with the subject. There is little explanation in the play of the connection between the actions of management and the police, and the attacks made by a few workers on the scab labour.

Some of Ngema's critics argued that he demonstrated a lack of comprehension of the complex forces that had shaped the violence, and of the connection between workers' daily experiences and apartheid. In the play there is the suggestion that the

each challenge with growing repression, from sheer brutal forms such as baton charging to teargas and shooting, to more sophisticated forms such as banning and detention, so has the potential for violence from the resistance groups grown. In essence, violence is not on the formal agenda of resistance groupings, but is often a momentary response or retaliation to more organised violence by the State' (Meer 1989:18).

workers became militant because they were drugged by a 'sangoma' (a traditional healer), an inaccurate and sensationalist misrepresentation of the conditions of labour that gave rise to the national strike. Further, Ngema's critique of the actions of a small group of SARHWU workers failed to contextualise the role of the labour movement in uniting and mobilising severely oppressed workers to challenge the combined might of the state and capitalist systems of oppression (*The Weekly Mail* 30/3/90; *New Nation* 20/4/90).

COSATU's Living Wage Group claimed that Ngema had misquoted and misrepresented SARHWU and COSATU in the play. The issue of responsible representation was elaborated by Carol Steinberg (1990:73):

> Ngema made a play that purports to represent real historical events. Clearly he has a responsibility to depict those events as accurately as possible. That responsibility deepens when there is so much at stake in the way the events are interpreted. In this case four people's lives are in the balance: the SARHWU members sitting on death row.

The problem of representation grew more complicated as certain newspapers reported that the COSATU Living Wage Group had attempted to censor the play, which the union denied. Of related concern was the issue that, since the state had placed severe restrictions on the media (under the various states of emergency), South African plays had represented resistance struggles abroad. Therefore inaccurate and damaging dramatic representations were particularly harmful.

The play and its personalities offered unintentionally incisive insights into the shortcomings of populist literature, particularly in the playwright's manipulation of topical industrial-political themes to give his play token credibility at the expense of workers' movement. Bheki Mqadi, who played the most controversial character in *Township Fever* (which he has described as 'a tragic comedy'), unwittingly summed up the contradictions in an interview:

> I see nothing wrong in the way the play is done. Sometimes people do not understand stage plays .... If you get on to the stage as simply as you are—in real life—you will not be interesting to the people watching the play (*Weekly Mail* 18/5/90:23).

It is the liberties that are taken with the construct of 'the people' that are enlightening, and in stark contrast to the labour movement's struggle to affirm the rights of one of the largest and most exploited sectors of society.

Long before the *Township Fever* debacle Mi Hlatshwayo, the national culture co-ordinator of COSATU, recognised that '[c]reativity without a base, without direction, without the support of a democratic movement, is easily manoeuvred into com-

mercial art' (*Weekly Mail* 17/7/87:28). In another remark, which could well apply to the challenges and contradictions facing individual dramatists like the talented Ngema, Hlatshwayo pointed out that:

> It takes a lot for an artist to deprive himself of money and glory and stick to principles, to say I am not selling my principles, my nation, my class. This is people's culture (1987:28).

Focus on cultural production

> The people are the real producer of culture, just as they are the real producer of material wealth (Machel in Mattelart & Siegelaub 1983:25).

> We have been culturally exploited time and time again: we have been singing, parading, boxing, acting and writing within a system we did not control. So far, black workers have been feeding all their creativity into a culture machine to make profits for others .... from penny-whistle bands to *mbaqanga* musicians, from soccer players to talented actors .... they are taken from us, from their communities, to be chewed up in the machine's teeth. Then ... they are spat out—an empty husk, hoboes for us to nurse them. This makes us say it is time to begin controlling our own creativity (The Durban Workers' Cultural Local, *Weekly Mail* 17/7/87:28).

The *Dunlop Play* was initiated in 1983 to pressurise the Dunlop tyre company to recognise the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU). The play examined the history of the Dunlop tyre company from the point of view of the workers. Some of the players had been working at Dunlop for 25 years (Von Kotze 1988:29).

> Through culture, the working class affirms its identity and its interests, and rediscovers its history; it also unravels, in a dynamic and life-giving way, the hidden patterns and structures which underpin subjugation of the working class (Meintjies 1989:24).

Recognising the importance of encouraging workers to take control of their creative powers COSATU created structures to focus on cultural production. Through cultural activity workers developed the content and form of worker culture, as has been evident in their posters, graphics, banners, songs, poetry, plays and T-shirts (such as those produced by the unemployed workers' cooperative, *Zenzeleni*, in Durban). Articulating their identity as a class, workers clarified their relationships to other groups.

In 1983 the *Dunlop Play* created space for cultural activity within the labour movement and led to the formation of the Durban Workers' Cultural Local. Von Kotze

points out that the workers' cultural local was initiated in 1984 and established in 1985 (1988:54). Following recognition within COSATU that the struggle for cultural transformation was central to the liberation struggle, there was a surge of cultural activity in the labour movement. COSATU established cultural locals, which paralleled shop stewards' structures, in Durban, Howick and Pinetown. COSATU also established a culture office and created the post of national culture co-ordinator. Workers were able to acquire extensive training at the Culture and Working Life Project in Durban and the Community Arts Project in Cape Town. These initiatives demonstrate the seriousness with which the worker federation attended to the cultural development of workers even as it fought for its existence under the various states of emergency.

Many worker plays deal with the dismissals arising from strikes. During the state of emergency members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) at Clover Dairies went on strike against an alleged conspiracy between management and the Inkatha-aligned United Workers Union of South Africa, and 168 workers were dismissed in July 1986. Workers developed *The Clover Workers' Play* to publicise their version of the dispute. The process by which the play was created is explained by Mi Hlatshwayo:

> This is the story of things that really happened to these workers. As such one person couldn't really sit down and write it. Shop stewards suggested an outline for the play and the worker-actors then workshopped each scene, in no particular order, for four weeks. We didn't put people into parts, but tried each scene with different actors, until someone got it right. The scenes were then woven together into a whole which, however, keeps getting unpicked. Workers from Clover branches and other factories would tell us to put other things in (Chapman 1988:28).

The workshop method is an established characteristic of South African resistance drama (Fleischman 1990). In a country based on hierarchical structures of exclusion the cooperative method of production represented an ideological move towards a society based on the social process of democratic communality, although there were many contradictions in practice (Gready 1994:179-183). Working class theatre is not merely an event but a process that involved a huge range of participants. Chapman (1988:28) points out that the worker play has a communicative function for fellow workers that is real rather than merely symbolic. But it also had a developmental function for the strikers and for other workers facing similar conditions. That *The Clover Workers' Play* was effective may be gauged from the strong community support it generated, which resulted in a boycott of Clover products. In October 1987, after a long court hearing Clover agreed to pay the dismissed workers R200 000 in severance pay and to drop charges against FAWU.

Worker literature has been an integral part of organised labour's discourse of resistance:

> through organisations the labour movement is forging a language of resistance that powerfully contests the language of domination and articulates the deepest aspirations of the people (Meintjies 1989:25f).

This is not a straightforward process. Many workers were turned into artists by the pressure of events. Recognising that consciousness is not fixed (and that the consciousness of the most oppressed class is vulnerable to manipulation by various interest groups), the trade unions invested in cultural production as a means of consolidating worker consciousness. Hlatshwayo remarks on worker enthusiasm for dramatic performances:

> No union gathering passes without poetry recitals, chanting and singing. There is no way we can begin to articulate the richness of worker poetry which sometimes erupts spontaneously during union gatherings (Oliphant 1991:7).

Meintjies and Hlatshwayo (1989:5) argue that given the conditions of its production, worker culture represents a greater investment of commitment than the cultural production of any other class:

> Workers face the most crippling effects of economic exploitation: long work hours, long travel distances, low wages, poverty, and a serious lack of cultural resources in the bleak townships, settlements, compounds and hostels. These conditions make every cultural work an act of sacrifice as much as an act of creation and imagination.

This is supported by a statement that the Durban FOSATU Local Cultural Group made about their public presentation of plays, music, dance and poetry:

> we are involved in this, however hard it is for us after work, because we believe that our struggle is not only there to destroy the oppressive powers that control us. It is there to also build a new world. To do this, we must begin now (Meintjies & Hlatshwayo 1985:72).

Nise Malange (1989:78), who was a member of the Durban FOSATU Local Cultural Group, has addressed the nature of women's participation in performance culture:

> Participation in performances—both acting and the performance of poetry—is a powerful experience and .... [t]he absence of women in this field is therefore particularly distressing, because in performance culture they have a platform for expressing their

> anger, their perspective and an opportunity to conscientize their audience. Furthermore, it is important for women to realize their potential and extend their self-confidence as participants in the struggle for cultural transformations.

Malange (1989:79) further pointed out that the campaigns on women's issues that succeeded 'were pushed by women themselves'. This is evident in the position of Roseline Naapo, a South African Domestic Workers' Union organiser and writer who believed that encouraging domestic workers to tell their stories was an integral part of the work of a labour organiser:

> I encourage other domestic workers to write short stories .... to be a writer does not mean you have to go to school. You can say whatever you want to say without knowing how to write. The next person can write it for you. I regard it as my duty to assist other domestic workers .... [a]s an organiser for the South African Domestic Workers' Union (Oliphant 1991:22).

Naapo's statement supports Malange's (1989:78f) argument that 'each person has a story to tell .... you do not need to be well-educated or specially gifted to tell a story or to write'.

Most worker-artists have been obliged to use the materials near to hand. Fugitive forms of expression have come into existence amidst indifference and hostility from the dominant, and without cultural precedent or authority, as Brett (1986), Barber (1987) and Mattelart and Siegelaub (1983) have pointed out. By adapting traditional forms to suit the demands of the period, the industrial environment and the new political challenges, worker poets have made significant contributions to the development of South African literature through oral poetry:

> oral poetry, thought by many to be a dead tradition or the preserve of chiefly praises, resurfaced as a voice of ordinary black workers and their struggles (Sitas in Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:3f).

When he was a shop steward Alfred Temba Qabula composed *izibongo* for a Metal and Allied Workers' Union annual general meeting in 1984. Qabula drew upon the praise form, a distinctive and old art form with socio-political resonances, to raise workers' consciousness of their union and its role in their lives. His performance acted as a catalyst:

> he released an untapped source of popular energy which, without warning, exploded everywhere .... in the context of labour struggles and their mass-gatherings.
>
> Ordinary black workers with performing and rhetorical power began orating

> their poetry in Zulu, using all the elements they could gather from their cultural formations to express a new sense of self-identity. Hundreds of workers have been performing their poetry since 1984—some of it vibrant, some of it an index of assertiveness and defiance, some of it written first and then recited, some of it totally spontaneous (Sitas 1989a:47).

Qabula related that after he started performing, 'all the poets came out' for, as Sitas (1989a:56) explains,

> [f]ar from being the product of colonial domination, or a sign of backwardness the poetry of Vilane, Zondi, Qabula and Hlatshwayo, and many more is .... the consummate result of a struggle by people who have a large immediate audience, a clear organizational project, to create a popular poetry that is OF the people, as the people are changing themselves and the world around them.

Through poems that are innovative while expressing continuity, the worker poets contested the monopoly of the Inkatha Freedom Party over Zulu cultural traditions, just as they challenged the IFP's claim to inheriting the mantle of Zulu resistance to colonialism. In their use of the praise form the poets Qabula, Vilane, Zondi, Hlatshwayo and Ntanzi showed the

> symbols of the Zulu past being lured away from an aggressive ethnic nationalism and put to the service of a wider, more egalitarian cause [which] challenges the notion that oral forms belong to the margins of contemporary life (Gunner 1986:37).

Sitas (1986:52) confirms this view of the progressive politics of the worker *izimbongi* in his reference to the work of Hlatshwayo as a chronicler, who

> *consciously* transform[s] tradition propelled by a future he longs for as opposed to the izimbongi of KwaZulu who are attempting to *preserve* social hierarchy by linking it to the past.

Gunner (1986:37) went on to argue that the *izimbongi* 'hold the centre stage in the attempt to define contemporary worker consciousness in South Africa', which is supported by Sitas' (1986:56) assessment of the COSATU oral poets: 'They do not have to imagine themselves to be people's bards, they are that'.

Dikobe wa Mogale's written poem 'bantwini ngcipe's testament' (1984:46-49) represents the confidence and authority of the oral poets:

> i come from a lineage of warriors
> and we know martyrs are not born
> but tempered like steel in the furnace of struggle.

While the poem as a whole focuses on the national liberation struggle, there is reference in these lines to conservative and reactionary forces among the oppressed, who tried to draw their legitimacy from past heroes. Like Qabula and Hlatshwayo, Wa Mogale (who was a COSATU organiser in Pietermaritzburg) treats Bhambata and Shaka as an integral part of the history of the liberation of the working class (as the industrial image of the furnace suggests). For Wa Mogale (as for Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Madlizinyoka Ntanzi) the subject in the line 'i come from a lineage of warriors' refers as much to the political activist as to the poet.

Many poems began to appear in worker newspapers, pamphlets and other publications. To (partially) address the problems of access and linguistic diversity, poets like Qabula, Malange and Hlatshwayo published Zulu and English versions of their texts (e.g. *Black Mamba Rising* (1986), *izinsingizi* (1989), *A Working Life: Cruel Beyond Belief* (1989) and *Ear to the Ground* (1991). Because a great deal of worker literature is dual medium worker poets 'do not have to worry about "proper" English, they compose in the languages they know leaving the translation of their work mostly to others' (Sitas 1986:56). However, while the print medium increases access among (literate) workers, the printed poem that is extracted from the context of performance tends to lose much of its oral power, its songs, chants, ululations, improvisations and audience participation (Sitas in Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malange 1986:2). Other media, such as video and audio tapes are more effective than print.

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Van Gogh was Really a Punk: The First Afrikaans Graphic Novel

Juanita van Rensburg

Vincent van Gogh is alive and well and living in Hillbrow. The well-known story of the famous painter comes alive in *Hemel op Aarde*, the hilarious first Afrikaans graphic novel that does not only have punk credentials, but provides with its visual impact and narrative drive, entertainment on many levels.

In this article I will attempt to explain:

1) the progression from comics to the graphic novel,
2) the 'language' of comics,
3) why *Hemel op Aarde* will fit into a 'punk' library, yet can be enjoyed on various levels,
4) why it ultimately fails as a challenge to the political *status quo*.

A few tangent points regarding punk and comics:

Punk and comics were, and still are, frowned on by the establishment. Comics were labelled: the marijuana of the nursery; the bane of the bassinet; the horror of the house; the curse of the kids and a threat to the future (McCue 1993:29).

Punk Rock has been described by Frank Sinatra as a 'bad scene'. He asked the question: 'Why does it have to exist when there is so much in life?' (Green 1982:85)

Both art forms thrive on the fact that people are, apparently, easily shocked. This 1954 interview appeared in the book *Dark Knights*. Senator Kefauver is questioning William Gaines:

> Senator K: Here is your May issue. This seems to be a man with a bloody axe holding a woman's head up which has been severed from its body. Do you think it's in good taste?
> Gaines: Yes sir, I do, for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the neck could be seen dripping blood from it and moving the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody.
> Senator K: You have blood coming out of her mouth.

> Gaines: A little.
> McCue comments that 'as persuasive as he was, Gaines was undermined by the Senator ... he quickly discovered that he had been black-balled—no distributor would handle his books' (McCue 1993:31f).

The above mentioned scenario is typical of any new art form. Joseph Witek had this to say about the matter:

> Whether the comic-book form will make good its bid for wider cultural acceptance as adult literature remains to be seen, but it is worth remembering that the major modes of expression of this century, the novel and the cinema, were both first scorned as vulgarities until serious artists demonstrated their potential (Witek 1989:5).

Greg McCue writes in *Dark Knights* (1993) that comic books owe their genesis to the New York newspapers of the 1890s. The newspapers of the day were dominated by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. Their mutual hatred and their desire to dominate their industry could only be achieved by boosting sales.

The object was to grab public support and attention. The best way to do this for an audience that was mainly lower class, adolescent and semi-literate was to include pictures, and those preferably coarse and funny. The 'funnies' were born because newspapers had to sell to the common man (McCue 1993:8).

As soon as comic books appeared, they had their critics. In 1940 the *Chicago Daily News* labelled the comic as 'a poisonous mushroom growth' (McCue 1993:28).

Psychotherapist Dr. Frederic Wertham in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1955), connected comic books with every kind of social and moral perversion imaginable including sadism, drug abuse, theft, murder and rape (McCue 1993:30).

As a result of this the industry started to regulate itself by adopting the Code of the Comics Magazine Association of America.

After years of declining sales, the comic *Deadman* was drawn in starkly realistic tones and written on an adult level. The comic book community woke up to the serious potential of the medium. Comic book specialist shops began to appear.

Marvel's first attempt to target this market came with the first new comic book term: the graphic novel. 'Graphic novel' is a term used by some comic book intellectuals to denote a new respect for comic books of old, McCue (1993) writes on page 61 in *Dark Knights*.

It meant a very specific magazine-sized book with high quality, glossy paper. McCue (1993:77) concludes that comic art is now a literary medium in transition from mass popularity and cultural disdain to a new respectability as a means of expression and communication.

The shadow of the Deconstructionists loom large over this development. Roger Sabin writes that with the growth of cultural studies in tertiary education and the fashionableness of post-modernist theory

> ... it became increasingly acceptable of 'culture' as including not just the 'high arts'—opera, prose literature, fine art—but also areas such as television, video, rock music and 'pop' culture generally (Sabin 1993:92).

He writes:

> The barrier between 'high' and 'low' culture, it seemed, were, if not breaking down, then leaking badly and there was pressure on the 'arbiters of taste' to expand their horizons (Sabin 1993:92)

The fact that *Hemel op Aarde* (1997) is characterised as a 'graphic novel' is a device to mark the book as something new, to distance it from the childish connotation of the word 'comic'. By the same token it hopefully elevated the book to the status of a novel (Sabin 1993:93).

The story is very simple. Vince has a hard time in Hillbrow. Nobody buys his paintings and the debt collectors are after his blood. Sometimes he loses head or a part of his ear. But luckily there are the prostitutes, even if they laugh at him and his yuppie brother Theo, even if Theo always preaches before giving him a cheque.

Vince's friend is the narrator and events are seen through his eyes. The Van Gogh-like illustration on the cover suggests that the classic tragic story of Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh will be used to tell a story about the real South Africa. The Hillbrow tower can be seen in the background.

The painter Van Gogh was never afraid to go against the grain following his own artistic bliss against considerable odds. Very few of his contemporaries understood his genius. Vince also finds that establishment artists and critics like Trent Read and Linda Givon are indifferent to his art.

Vince and Van Gogh have brothers who support them through thick and thin. M.E. Tralbaut writes in *Vincent van Gogh* (1969:23):

> The links that were forged between Vincent and Theo van Gogh were far stranger than any of the ordinary bands of blood, so that their names always remain inseperable in the history of art.

On page 48 of *Hemel op Aarde* (1997) Vince's yuppie brother Theo is handing out cheques left, right and centre to all the wronged parties Vince attacked when he got one of his 'fits'.

Like his real life artistic counterpart, Vince feels close to the underdog, likes prostitutes, cuts off a piece of his ear and ends up in a lunatic asylum.

Hemel op Aarde (1997) is a fine example of the graphic novel. There are thematic unity, character development, (Vince exchanges his painting brush for a gun), detailed scene setting and the generation of mood—one can almost feel the resignation with which Vince and his friend's turn in a state hospital ward is awaited. In Sabin's words: the graphic novel is to the comic what the novel is to the short story (Sabin 1993:236).

Glimpses of the society South Africa has become are witnessed by the two characters. White and black beggars are standing on street corners with placards and a notice against a state hospital wardroom reads: 'No emergency procedures undertaken without cash deposit' (Horn & Findlay 44).

Yet it is impossible to really appreciate the power of the graphic novel without knowing how comics 'work'.

The conventional signs which indicate the status of verbal text in comics are well known: words in oblong boxes function as a narrative voice. Words in rounded 'balloons' with pointed projections represent direct speech. Cloud-like balloons, with circles leading to a human figure indicate unspoken thoughts, shaded and capitalised letters denote various degrees of emotion and emphasis, and so forth (Witek 1989:22).

Robert Harvey writes that what makes a comic strip art are speech balloons and narrative breakdown. Speech balloons breathe into comics their peculiar life. In all other graphic presentations characters are doomed to wordless posturing and miming. In comics, they speak. Speech balloons are giving the illusion that we are seeing living, breathing and speaking people (Harvey 1996:108).

Dialogue balloons and caption boxes in comic books are almost always hand lettered for two reasons, one practical and one aesthetic. It is much easier with hand lettering to make the required speech fit exactly into the available space in the panels (Harvey 1996:23).

Freehand lettering, no matter how precisely done, always betrays the calligrapher's hand, and thus more closely approximates the nuances of the human voice than does mechanically produced type.

According to Harvey, one litmus test of good comic art is to ascertain to what extent the sense of words depends upon the pictures and vice versa. But when words and pictures blend in mutual dependence to tell a story and thereby convey a meaning that neither the verbal nor the visual can achieve alone without the other, then the storyteller is using to the fullest the resources the medium offers him (Harvey 1996:4).

Example: on page 18 Vince and his friend are attending a party organised by artist Braam Kruger. Kruger is an artist specializing in acquiring and sending up kitsch art. He owned the 'Kitchen Boy' restaurant in Johannesburg and is well known for the

exotic dishes he served there. Although they berate Kruger, suggesting that he paints kitsch, they are blissfully unaware of the disapproving looks the brunette on the left (pouring wine from the box) are giving them. She obviously doesn't like the way they are tucking into the free food and drink.

Another example: a critic judging Vince's work advises him that it is high time he puts finishing touches to his art work in a professional manner. Vince's reaction to this advice is vividly illustrated on page 11. In the second frame he is still all ears. He is listening attentively, with an open mind, if only for his brother's sake.

In the third frame he explodes with rage, forcing the critic to physically retreat. A striking illustration of 'the blending of word and picture for the greatest dramatic economy in narration' (Harvey 1996:8).

The question if pictures do anything for the story that prose could not do just as well is answered on page 57 of the novel. The narrator is pondering Vince's heartfelt conviction that one day he will be surprised to know how great God's mercy is. (Vince's friend sees in his mind's eye how a benign Jesus Christ welcomes four characters resembling Hitler, Barend Strydom, Robert McBride and an APLA soldier in heaven.)

The capacity to vary panel size and position gives the comic book format its most potent means of creating dramatic effect. Large splash panels have a crescendo impact on the course of the story.

Bursting into a packed bar, it is our first encounter with Vince. He is a live wire, gesturing and demanding at the top of his lungs that the television set be switched off. His angry defiance is in sharp contrast to the rest of the bar regulars. They are in a relaxed, half-drunk and jovial mood, their only concern being the rugby match on television.

The powerful opening scene sets the tone for the story to follow: a genius constantly misunderstood and at loggerheads with the rest of society. It indicates that although he may *sound* like one of the 'manne'—he uses three-letter expletives—he certainly *is* not one of them. He is an outsider living according to his own rules and will rather risk physical injury than conform to society's norms.

The above mentioned is typical of a Punk personality. If the essential spirit of punk is provocation and creativity in a suppressive system and is represented by 'underdogs with a sense of vision' (Vale 1995:5) then *Hemel op Aarde* (1997) can be seen as an example of the genre.

Vince and his friend's irreverence is similar to that in Punk. It challenges and sends up the cosy Johannesburg art establishment. Satirising influential art collector and dealer Linda Goodman, Vince mentions that Linda Givon likes his work, but is more interested in black lesbian artists (Horn & Findlay 1997:6).

Trent Read advises that he uses a 'friendlier line' (Horn & Findlay 1997:6). And their comment on Braam Kruger's work: if he does, as he claims, works on a send-up of kitsch, Picasso must have done a send-up of cubism (Horn & Findlay

1997:18). It is interesting to note that Trent Read owns an art gallery in Johannesburg and Braam Kruger a restaurant. These are real, living, breathing characters satirised mercilessly. The unspoken implication is that they too will not recognise art works that are ahead of their time because their only concern is to make money and buy works that are in vogue.

About the godfathers of punk, The Sex Pistols, Jon Savage writes in his book *England's Dreaming*:

> The group were caught in an impossible double-bind: intelligent in a working class culture that did not value intelligence, yet unable to leave that class because of lack of opportunity. The result? An appalling frustration (Savage 1991:114).

Johnny Rotten, lead singer of The Sex Pistols, had this to say about their predicament: 'We were all extremely ugly people. We were outcasts, the unwanted' (Savage 1991:114).

Colin Wilson writes in *The Outsider*:

> The Outsider's case against society is very clear. All men and women have these dangerous, unnamable impulses. Yet they keep up a pretence, to themselves, to others: their respectability, their philosophy, their religion are all attempts to gloss over, to make look civilized and rational something that is savage, unorganized, irrational. He is an outsider because he stands for Truth (Wilson 1978:23).

For the Outsider, Wilson writes, the world is not rational, not orderly. When he asserts his sense of anarchy in the face of the bourgeois complacent acceptance it is not simply the need to cock a snook at respectability that provokes him; it is a distressing sense that truth *must be told at all costs*, otherwise there can not be an ultimate restoration of order (Wilson 1978:25).

Johan van Wyk writes in the literary magazine *Spado*:

> If the Sex Pistols sing 'I am an anti-Christ' it is not a metaphysical statement ... it is rather directed against the church as a social institution that is used to keep the working class obedient and passive (Van Wyk 1991:43).

Compare this with Vince's viewpoint on religion: 'The shit began when I told him (his father) that the church knows nothing about love, but everything about hypocrisy' (Horn & Findlay 1997:16). On page 27 he is assaulting his preacher-father, abusing his mother and robbing the church's petty cash.

Punk musicians were regularly involved in fights and street brawls. Some mutilated themselves. Johnny Rotten on the subject: 'I won't have people slag me off for

what I do to my own body. Because it's *mine*. If I want to cut my leg off, I will' (Coon 1988:55).

It is interesting to note that these words echo Vincent van Gogh's reply when questioned by police after shooting himself in the stomach: 'What I have done is nobody else's business. I am free to do what I like with my own body' (Tralbaut 1969:329).

In *Hemel op Aarde* (1997) Vince explains his cutting off of a piece of his ear: 'All I remember is this knife in my hand. There was a fight. I stabbed someone. On the way back I decided to teach myself a lesson. The next thing I woke up in Weskoppies' (Horn & Findlay 1997:35). There were punks who ended up as Vince does, in the lunatic asylum.

The Sex Pistols wanted to make the youth of their day self-reliant. Johan van Wyk writes in *Spado*:

> They wanted the youth to be independent of record companies and social prescriptions. They wanted to demonstrate to society that luxuries and bribes mean nothing to them. They wanted to have their own identities (Van Wyk 1991:35).

Vince and his friend know exactly what it takes to be successful painters. (They have to paint elephants.) They prefer to be poor rather than to conform to the snobbish and prescriptive Johannesburg art circles. Vince tells his brother:

> You really don't understand. I *want* to sell my paintings to ordinary people, not to musea or Sanlam or rich old ladies in Rosebank. But I feel ordinary people deserve better than the shit they get (Horn & Findlay 1997:15).

Hemel op Aarde (1997) is not particularly politically correct. When a black beggar asks Vince's friend for money, he declines, remarking: 'So what's the going rate for Bostic nowadays?' (Horn & Findlay 1997:41). When looking for Vince he wonders 'if somebody has knifed him because he is a settler' (Horn & Findlay 1997:29).

Women are seen as nothing more than sex objects or creatures who love being manhandled by their boyfriends. Johnny Rotten had this to say about love: 'You can't love anything. Love is what you feel for a dog or a pussycat. It doesn't apply to humans, and if it does it shows just how low you are. It shows your intelligence isn't clicking'. What happens then between people who like each other? 'Lust. That's all' (Coon 1988:60).

In Europe one can not be more politically incorrect than to wear a swastika. Yet this is exactly what the Sex Pistols did. In their song *Holidays in the sun* they compare the Jewish concentration camp Belsen with a holiday resort.

Jon Savage writes that the basic punk attitude was that a sharp shock was needed

to get a reaction from dulled reflexes. As well as exhibiting their exciting incompetence, the New York Dolls occasionally used the swastika.

Johansen of the Dolls explains:

> You carve a swastika in a desk. You don't know what Fascism is, it is not anti-Jewish at all. Kids don't care anything about that shit. When you want to make a statement about how BAD you are, that's how you do it (Savage 1991:64).

Hemel op Aarde (1997) sends up the cultural establishment in South Africa. We have also seen that it has points of contact with the punk genre. I believe, however, that a punk sensibility cannot, in any serious manner, challenge the South African political *status quo*. We do not react to violence and discordance the same way than do a trendy British adolescent in a relatively safe environment.

Consider the following scene described by a punk in *England's Dreaming*:

> There was this trendy bar called Pips and I got Berlin to wear this dog-collar, and I walked in with Berlin following me, and people's jaws just hit the tables. I walked in and ordered a bowl of water for him, I got the bowl of water for my dog. People were scared! (Savage 1991:184).

An average South African will find the above mentioned scene mildly interesting, even charming. Over the years he has been exposed to, among others, public lynchings on the news at eight.

Who can forget Maki Skosana being kicked to death and set on fire on newsreel after newsreel. It is doubtful if a person entering a bar with a dog collar on will send anyone here in a flurry.

A member of the punk band The Dils said the following on punk violence:

> Compared to real rebel activity, such as twelve year-old kids fighting cops and burning schools in Soweto, South Africa, or grade school kids organizing strikes in Jamaica, the petty spitting, trashing and throwing is just another fashion imitation (Vale 1995:105).

It is difficult to say if *Hemel op Aarde* (1997) points to a new direction in Afrikaans literature. The profanities in this graphic novel might shock Afrikaans-speaking people on the platteland, but they will not be the people buying the book. It is only for sale in selected book shops, frequented by urban dwellers, used to everything. It will most probably be read by the converted.

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Hedonism in the Margins: Dolf van Coller's *Die Bieliebalies*

Johan van Wyk

Hedonism and Literature

Hedonistic texts form an important part of literary subculture since time immemorial, and also have a marginal presence in South African literature. This article is focusing on the folk novel *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) as an important contribution in Afrikaans to this subculture. This importance is foregrounded through the links that is established between it and Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque in Rabelais and his world (1984) and Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy as integral to bacchantic rituals in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956).

Literary hedonism refers to texts in which excessive pleasure is depicted as the highest purpose of life, as the meaning of life itself. Nietzsche refers to it as 'Excess revealed as truth' (1956:46) and as an expression of the 'exuberant fertility of the universal will' (1956:104). In the hedonist text the emphasis is on excessive sex, drinking and eating. This is the material from which Van Coller's *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) is constructed, although transposed to the familiar, but hardly explored, Afrikaans context of escort agencies, small-town restaurants and hunting weekends.

Nietzsche

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956) is a profound critique of the theoretical person and that, which also emerged in our time as the dominant institutions and discourses: democracy, scientific optimism and utilitarianism. He writes:

> Could it be possible that, in spite of all 'modern ideas' and the prejudices of a democratic taste, the triumph of optimism, the gradual prevalence of rationality, practical and theoretical utilitarianism, no less than democracy itself which developed at the same time, might all have been symptoms of a decline of strength, of impending old age, and of physiological weariness (1956:21).

Against reason he places wisdom, against optimistic philosophy he places tragedy.

The tragedy, according to Nietzsche, supposes pessimism about human attempts to exert power over nature through reason and the transcendental ego of the individual. In contrast to the logical schematism (1956:91) of reason, expressed through the notion of representation (the depiction of the material through measurement, or in politics where politicians and their parties represent in quantifiable way the aspirations of particular interest groups), tragedy is an expression of wisdom. Wisdom is founded in an acceptance of contradiction as an essential part of nature; it recognizes the instinctual, powers, which transcend the human mind, the unknown and the unconscious. Nietzsche states the possibility that 'Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is exiled?' (Nietzsche 1956:93).

Wisdom is a humble acknowledgement of human helplessness in the context of an illusory world. Hamlet personifies this wisdom and it explains why he cannot act, why he cannot come to a decision. Wisdom is marked by nausea in the tragic hero:

> nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint (Nietzsche 1956:60).

Wisdom implies an order that is different from the regime of reason (personified by Socrates and Euripides) with its blue prints for change in the world: 'Socrates conceives it to be his duty to correct existence' (Nietzsche 1956:87) and he refers to Euripides' 'audacious reasonableness' (Nietzsche 1956:84) and 'rationalistic method' (Nietzsche 1956:84).

Despite the 'nausea' at the absurdity of existence, tragedy is marked by a joy in the incomprehensible abundance and fertility of nature. The underlying principle of this abundance, and of life itself, is the mortality of the individual. Death frames individual life as a dream and an illusion.

Reason attempts to reduce the abundant diversity of life to uniformity; the human being as reasonable master over nature becomes the only acceptable image of the human being. This is expressed in petite bourgeois morality plays in which the audience see themselves represented on the stage, a mirror image of themselves and their values:

> Through [Euripides] the everyday man forced his way from the spectators' seats onto the stage; the mirror in which formerly only grand and bold traits were represented now showed the painful fidelity that consciously reproduced even the botched outlines of nature (Nietzsche 1956:77).

Oppositions, right and wrong, rather than the acceptance of contradictions form the foundation of petite bourgeois morality. It is therefore a morality of rights. Against

this in tragedy there is no definite right or wrong: 'all that exists is just and unjust and equally justified in both' (Nietzsche 1956:72).

Against the petite bourgeois caricature Nietzsche places the drunken satyr of tragedy. Tragedy becomes a product of the dream and of intoxication (Nietzsche 1956:33). Dionysus, the god of wine, is also the god of tragedy:

> Either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the songs of all primitive men and peoples speak, or with the potent coming of spring that penetrates all nature with joy, these Dyonissian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetting (Nietzsche 1956:36).

Part of the 'self-forgetting' in an intoxicated state, and also important for *Die Bieliebalies* (1993), is the bonding that occurs between human being and human being and between human being and nature (Nietzsche 1956:37). The satyr is an embodiment of this union: he/she is an expression of the joy and abundance of nature:

> The metaphysical comfort—with which, I am suggesting ... every true tragedy leaves us—that life is at bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations (Nietzsche 1956:59)

Van Coller's *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) is an expression of the indestructible presence of pleasure in existence, in spite of dominant moral discourses and blue prints and in spite of the life-threatening consequences of the excessive behaviour. The character Vaatjie (meaning wine barrel or tubby) is infected with Aids for instance.

For Nietzsche (1956:61) the satyr is symbol of sexual omnipotence in contrast to the cultured, civilised person, he represents the limits of logic, embodies the wisdom which transcends logic, the wisdom which is associated with art and tragedy. Tragedy is an art form, which expresses the symbiosis of existence and nature. Tragedy is a ritualised perception:

> ... the mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness (Nietzsche 1956:74).

Reason places the human being against nature, it wants to master nature, is a discourse of power, is founded in the transcendental ego of the individual. *Die Bieliebalies* (1993)

work with the contradiction between the human and nature within the institutions of reason: it portrays the satyr, ironically, in the costume of the small-town lawyer. E. Britz (1994) describes, from a feminist perspective, *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) as one of the most chauvinistic, sexist and racist texts in Afrikaans. Feminism, as a political program (like the Christian pietism from which it derives) has a particularly repressive attitude against the portrayal of the human body (especially that of women) as nature, as sexual. It further presupposes the rationalisation of institutions of society on the basis of equality and uniformity.

Bakhtin

Bakhtin's notions in *Rabelais and his world* (1984) relate closely to that of Nietzsche, although it focuses on a different historical period, namely the early Renaissance. In stead of the satyrs of antiquity he refers to the renewing and utopian energy of folk humour. Like Nietzsche (in his arguments against naturalism and literature in the service of the social sciences) he sets humour against the dogmatic bombast of official ideology:

> In ... official culture there prevails a tendency toward the stability and completion of being, toward one single meaning, one single tone of seriousness (Bakhtin 1984:101).

Folk humour, marked by blasphemy, the bodily and the sexual ('revelling in oceans of strong drink, pools of sausage, and endless coupling of bodies'—Bakhtin 1984:xix) affirms the abundance of nature ('The leading themes ... are fertility, growth, and a brimming over abundance'—Bakhtin 1984:19). The feast, which is a celebration of this abundance, is for Bakhtin central to folk culture and points to social renewal: '... for a time (people) entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance'. It points to the abolition of dominant dogmas, it plays with the contradictions between ideal and reality within an existing order, and emphasises the relativity of truths:

> All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with [the] pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities (Bakhtin 1984:11).

Folk humour derives from the familiarity of the market-square and is dominated by the portrayal of the grotesque body, the body as fertile nature, as excessive, as open; the mouth, anus and vagina is essential to life as interactive process between inside and outside, human being and human being:

> ... the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world ... the stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world ... the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking or defecation (Bakhtin 1984:26).

What is high is brought down low:

> To degrade ... means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth (Bakhtin 1984:21).

It is the body, as image of collective life, against the bourgeois ego of the individual, that is emphasised:

> The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed (Bakhtin 1984:19).

Van Coller's *Die Bieliebalies*: story as feast

As Bakhtin points out carnival originated at the market place, in economic activity. In the exactly hundred episodes of Van Coller's *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) the economic also plays a central role. The characters are broadly divided in two opposing groups as represented by two economically competing law firms: the law firm of Loekie and the one of Buks. But there is also the portrayal of countless subgroups, which have only incidental contact with the law firms. The economic rivalry is responsible for the tension and main story line in the text. It regularly alternates, though, with the escapades of other characters that are not, or only indirectly, involved with the two central opposing groups. Van Coller in this way succeeds to make a whole town part of his book as an extended feast. Feast becomes an expression of the characters' lives. Eating, drinking and sex in excess are the main motifs in the text and is present in every episode. Time and again the sexual is determined by economic motivations, as contained in the image of a 'finger in a wet purse' (1993:68). The economic focus though is completely different from a ponderous naturalistic exploration of social impoverishment; the economy is rather part of fate where characters survive through trickery embedded with humour.

***Die Bieliebalies* as utopian freedom**

Within a context where non-sexist and non-racist ideologies (increasingly expressions ironically of extreme racism and sexism) are dominant dogma, *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) is one of the most liberating texts in Afrikaans due to its utopian perspective. It is a participatory perspective, a worldly perspective which makes it transcend sexism and racism. The narrator as voice of the people does not satirise; as objective omniscient narrator he does not place himself above that with which he is jesting. Through the use of folk speech (jokes, idiomatic expressions, pranks and slang) the narrator identifies himself with the folk; he belongs to the amoral, ambivalent laughter of the people; 'The people's ambivalent laughter ... expresses the point of view of the whole world; he who is laughing also belongs to it' (Bakhtin 1984:12).

As expression of the utopian, the texts narrate the highest degree of pleasure possible, the unconstrained freedom that transcends repressive reason. During one of the weekend hunting expeditions the characters 'reached that stage where their behaviour becomes totally uncontrolled' (Van Coller 1993:61).

Regression

The unconstrained freedom (which is also a regression; the savage, which awakens in the overly civilised, the satyr that behind all civilization remains an essential part of humanity) is best depicted in episode 70. In this chapter the 'boys' during a hunting expedition surrender themselves completely to drinking until they were 'blue' (Van Coller 1993:99). They feast for the sake of life. As in primitive rituals they smear themselves with the blood of antelope:

> It looks as if they dipped [baptised?] their hands in blood and smeared it across their cheeks and necks. Most of them are naked and the blood lies in strokes across their stomachs and legs. They dance insanely around the fire and sing and scream (Van Coller, 1993:99f).

and:

> Joop looks the worst. He drank of the warm antelope blood. His mouth, throat and chest glimmers with blood. He cuts the throat of the first antelope with his sharp Bigfoot Kershaw and then holds his big beer glass for the thick blood to spurt in. Then he adds three double brandies and gulps it away in one draught. Then he taps again and each one had to take a sip (Van Coller 1993:100).

Interesting is the black assistant's commentary on this regression: 'If the white man is like this, then one with a black skin stays far away' (Van Coller, 1993:100).

Death and the highest degree of pleasure

Joop is the character, although not as central as Loekie or Vaatjie, who expresses best the central theme of the text, namely the highest degree of pleasure. His thoughts are focalised as follows:

> Oh fuck, it was great, the boys together. A woman will never know what such a weekend alone with one's mates means (Van Coller 1993:105).

Joop also embodies the price that is to be paid for the excessive indulgence, the physical economy of pleasure, but also the unavoidable ritual of nature, namely death. From memories to the weekend, and the pleasure he derives from it, his death flows. His death is a consequence of laughter. The combination of laughter, death and sexuality reminds strongly of Nietzsche's view thereof as origin of tragedy:

> He thinks of Bubba's big white drilling bum while he screws, and starts laughing without reason. He laughs and laughs until it changes into a coughing fit. The heartburn pushes up in his throat. He thinks of all the farm sounds they had to make every time Wynand phoned his wife and he laughs louder. He coughs and coughs and starts to gasp for breath.

And then a terrible burning pain came. He grabs his chest and brakes. The truck slides across the sidewalk against a streetlight (Van Coller 1993:105).

The grotesque and the petite bourgeois

Van Coller (1993:100) uses the word grotesque, which is central in Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, to describe the bodies of his drunken characters. In the grotesque realism of the carnival the focus is on the feasting, eating, drinking, discharging and sexual body. Like Nietzsche in his implied critique of nineteenth-century naturalism, Bakhtin contrasts the petite bourgeois realism of the nineteenth century with the grotesque realism of earlier centuries. He states that grotesque realism was replaced by

> moral sententiousness and abstract concepts .... The result is a broken grotesque figure, the demon of fertility with phallus cut off and belly crushed. Hence all these sterile images representing 'character', all these professional lawyers, merchants, matchmakers, old men and women, all these masks offered by degenerate, petty realism (Bakhtin 1984:53).

Van Coller, through the use of lawyers and bank managers (therefore figures from the petite bourgeois class) as characters, play with the genre. Without any internal or psycho-

logical characterisation there is no sense of alienation, typical of character depiction of nineteenth century realism, present in this text. There is no guilt and no confessions pointing to the individual bourgeois ego in the text.

The exaggerated physicality of the characters makes them into caricatures, with the emphasis on the repulsive, the degrading, and especially on

> those parts of the body that are open to the outside world ... the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world (Bakhtin 1984:26).

The grotesque body in its openness to the outside world is best portrayed in the figure of Joop in the hospital 'connected to a diversity of tubes and stabilizing apparatus' (Van Coller 1993:105). This grotesque scene jests with medical science and modern inability to see death as part of life:

> [The opposition life and death] is completely contrary to the system of grotesque imagery, in which death is not a negation of life seen as the great body of all the people, but part of life as whole—its indispensable component, the condition of its constant renewal and rejuvenation (Bakhtin 1984:50).

Death is therefore not only a negative fact, but is accepted:

> Old Joop died the way he wanted it. After a few drinks, cigar in the mouth, his mates around him and a woman on each arm. I think he is happy where he is now (Van Coller 1993:115).

For Bakhtin (1984:179) there is a point of contact between the physician and the grotesque body ('The body that interests him is pregnant, delivers, defecates, is sick, dying and dismembered ... it is the body as it appears in abuses, curses, oaths and generally in all grotesque images').

Van Coller's characters are marked by typical grotesque contrasts: Joop for instance is described as big in every way ('Everything about him is big: his head, hands, stomach and estate'—Van Coller 1993:11), except for his small penis. This small penis is central in the grotesque portrayal of him having sex with his wife:

> He hears Lena opening a Vaseline bottle: automatically he holds his middle finger in the air. He gives an enormous yawn. She twists the bottle around his finger, oils it well. He lies with the back of his hand flat on the bed and the middle finger straight up. He feels how Lena moves across him. He helps a little and then he is in. She is practised and knows exactly what to do. Joop thinks of the hunting planned for the

> next weekend on his farm .... He knows when she is close. He wants to shoot a warthog that weekend .... He feels Lena jerking (Van Coller 1993:70).

Vaatjie is the other clearly grotesque character. His name meaning 'wine barrel' evokes associations with wine and fat, and reminds of the character Gross Guillaume or Fat William who according to Bakhtin (1984:297) looked like a wine barrel:

> this body resembled a wine barrel .... Thus his figure was the symbol of bread and wine in bodily form. This two-legged creature representing the abundance of earthly goods was extremely popular.

Van Coller (1993:15) describes Vaatjie as follows:

> Vaatjie is a block of a man; far over six feet. When he stands you could balance a glass on his stomach. It looks as if he doesn't have a neck. His chin rests on his chest. His head cannot really turn.

Vaatjie is especially interesting as the character that has to regulate the orgies and plan the pleasure. He is described as someone who is 'in' with everybody who is important. He is the one who arranges the hunting trips and is already seen as 'nearly a pimp amongst the whores' (Van Coller 1993:16). At the brothel he organises 'like a cricket captain sending in his players to bat' (Van Coller 1993:85). In the carnivalesque everything is inverted: a prostitute infects the enormous Vaatjie with Aids and he changes into a skeleton.

The New South Africa

Vaatjie's Aids is the consequence of the zenith in his sexual escapades. This story-within-a-story is narrated in episode 96 to Loekie who is pre-occupied with a threatening strike and the temperamental 'double codes' (Van Coller 1993:127) of the new South Africa. In this story Vaatjie is chosen by a 'young thing' with the 'most beautiful and soft body and most beautiful blue eyes that you have ever seen' (Van Coller 1993:128) because 'she only kisses special guys like him' (Van Coller 1993:128). Her vagina becomes grotesque: the place of extreme stimulation, repulsion and fantasy:

> And when I was ready, she climbed on top of me. Fuck, Loekie her cunt was tight. Tight but slippery and inside those little hands you always talk about (Van Coller 1993:130).

The 'little hands' refers to Loekie's fantasy and desire to screw a 'coolie maid'

(Van Coller 1993:89) one day, because according to folk tradition they have grotesque vaginas:

> They say the Apache women have something like a small hand in there. Just when you enter with your prick this little hand grabs it with soft fingers folding around the head. They say it can make you insane (Van Coller 1993:89).

Earlier in the same chapter there is reference to the sixth whore 'a dark little one with pitch black flickering eyes' (Van Coller 1993:86). When she introduces herself as Brazilian, Wynand shows his relief with the words 'After all not black' (Van Coller 1993:86). The racist abhorrence, but at the same time attraction to the woman, makes the political part of the grotesque game. Loekie whispers to Vaatjie 'That now is how a Black should look like' (Van Coller 1993:86).

The text plays with the political habits of the small town Afrikaner man within the context of a changing South Africa. Mostly Blacks are portrayed as servants and workers in a near-feudal system. It is best illustrated in the ritual joke where a loyal farm worker has to introduce himself at a party as 'I'm Piet, Boss Joop's kaffir' (Van Coller 1993:18). Joop, who himself enjoys this ritual the most, is described as a nationalist who believes 'that there should be a place for Blacks' (Van Coller 1993:17). A racist way of life and political pragmatics are mixed to create funny situations. The new political situation produces possibilities for interesting inversions. In episode 53 Joop is angered by a white foreman whom he scolds as a 'bad, useless fucking white man' (Van Coller 1993:69) and this is followed by the near carnivalesque and feigned appointment of the black Samson.

Representation

Nietzsche referred to the ordinary man who forced his way onto the stage to find there a petite bourgeois image of himself ('civic mediocrity ... was given a voice'—Nietzsche 1956:77). The word 'civic' evokes an image of the petite bourgeois order that became dominant since the French Revolution in the form of modern democracy based on the ideas of representation and individual freedoms and rights. Since then representation can be quantified in terms of numbers: majorities and minorities. Government is therefore, at least hypothetically, no longer arbitrary and unreasonable (the question, though, remains as to what degree a politician can re-present). Both Apartheid and Anti-Apartheid are products of political rationalisation that has its roots in the sciences and its classifying methodologies.

Democracy is underpinned by the disciplinary institutions of reason: education, the law and values such as morality and sobriety.

Die Bieliebalies (1993) is described by Etienne Britz in a radio review as 'the

most immoral and politically repulsive book that appeared in Afrikaans in many years'. The book can only be considered repulsive if one assumes a representative link between fiction and the social and political reality; the degree of repulsion must be tested against the social reality: the number of readers repulsed. The number of readers of this folk text will therefore be decisive. Apparently from press reports it was a very popular book.

It is especially with reference to the depiction of women that the book is experienced as repugnant (although it describes mainly repugnant male behaviour). The repugnance is defined mainly from an implied moral order founded in feminism: the woman that is depicted as sexual is dehumanised (nature makes the human less human). The woman becomes a victim of a male order.

Charles van Onselen in his historical texts New Nineveh (1982) and New Babylon (1982) showed how prostitution at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century liberated Afrikaner women economically from the hold of the traditional patriarchal order. This is the material from which Totius constructed his nationalist Trekkersweë (1933; first published 1915). In *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) it is the economic power accompanying sexuality which are recurrently foregrounded, and which empowers women rather than making them mere victims. The bickering of the male characters with prostitutes is economically founded, so is the use of the waitresses and secretaries of their bodies to achieve their purposes, as is the housewife's acceptance of her shadowy role.

Traditional feminism postulated a homogeneous view of women (a reductive representation). It did not leave much space for a diversity of women's voices; there is no room for the prostitute reduced to mere victim of the male order, to speak for herself. Shanon Bell (1994) pleads against these types of arguments for a pluralist, post-modern and carnivalesque sexual ethics based on democratic tolerance for sexual diversity. According to her sexual acts should be evaluated in terms of the absence of force and the degree of pleasure it gives (Bell 1994:133). For the woman, in the role of the prostitute, pleasure as an experience of power, and can be addictive. Charlotte Davis Kasl (quoted in Bell 1994:133) writes:

> The addictive part is the ritual of getting dressed, putting on make-up, fantasizing about the hunt, and the moment of capture. 'To know that you could go out there and they would come running. What power! Men would actually pay for sex' .... For women prostitution ... that feeling of power, along with the excitement of living on the edge, is one of the hardest things to give up.

The panting novel (hyg roman)

In a certain sense feminism pleads for the revival of chivalry: the new knight is the man that conforms to feminist prescriptions for male behaviour. The panting novel (a

new genre of soft porn in Afrikaans) with its typical idealisation of the sexual situation from a feminine perspective is an expression of this. *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) mocks this genre in the depiction of the character Ben White and his relationship with the attractive widow Ryke. Unlike the other characters White has a 'body like an athlete' (Van Coller 1993:110). He is described as 'courteous' when he drapes a Karakul coat over her shoulders. They eat by candle light, he opens the car door for her, kisses at the end of the night her fingers. In a very civilised way the sexual is continuously postponed. Their relationship becomes grotesque, because it is so different from all the other relationships in the book. At the end, though, Loekie regularly screws Ryke, newly wed to Ben White, in a hotel room.

Conclusion

Die Bieliebalies (1993) is a hedonist text with important philosophical implications. Its links to Bakhtin and Nietzsche made it clear. The discourse of rights, as feminism becomes more dominant, will come increasingly in conflict with the discourse of freedom (especially the freedom of speech). *Die Bieliebalies* (1993) is a celebration of excessive male freedom, but the women are more than just victims in this celebration. They are empowered in particular ways. Because literature is not reality, but always implies an imaginary and imaginative world, the pleasure it gives does not necessarily have gender differences.

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