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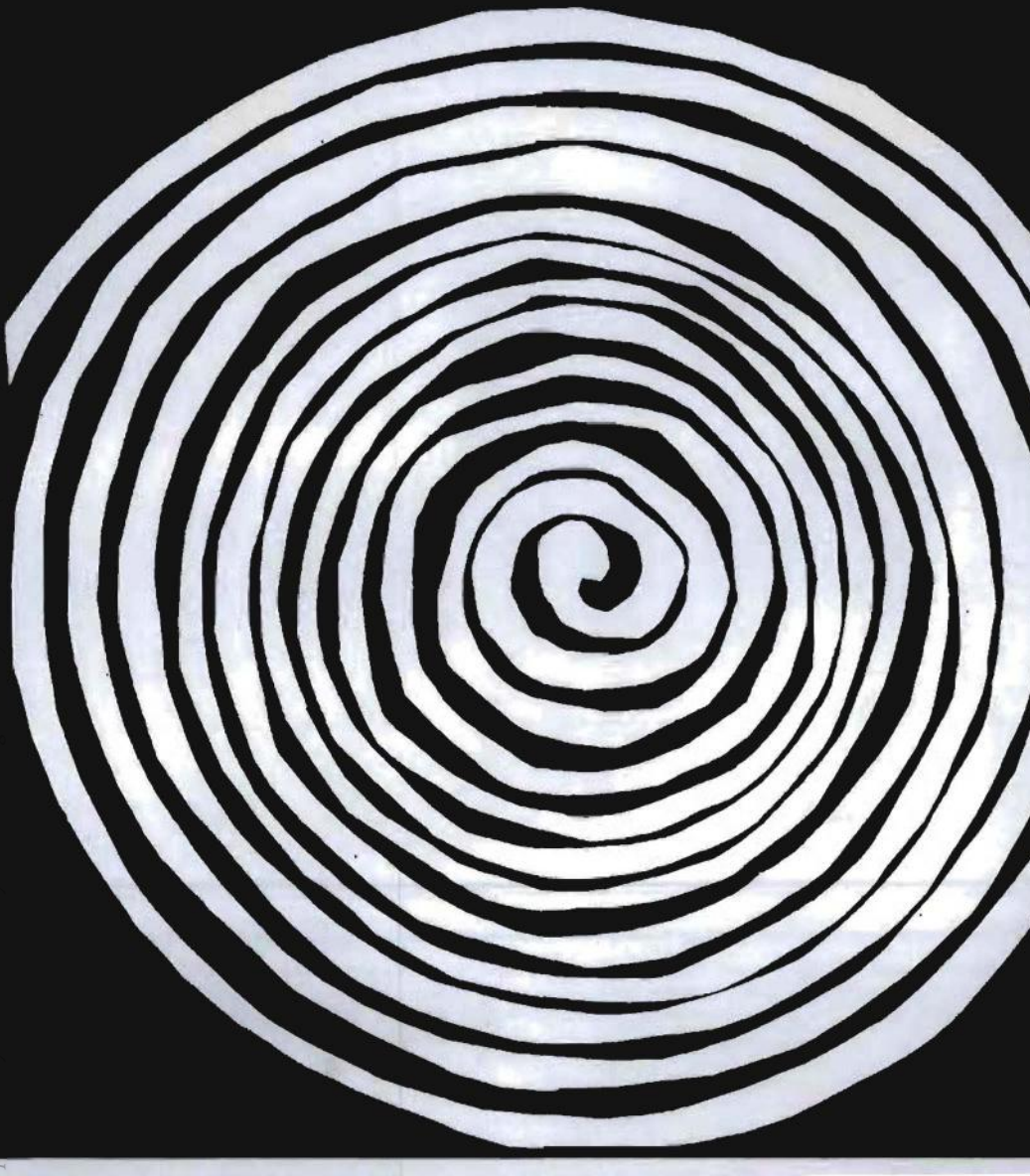

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ARTICLES

REVIEW ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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*Alter*nation

International Journal of the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages

1996

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Durban

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Introduction

Johannes A. Smit

Focusing on three translocal, transformative forms, *candomblé*, *quilombismo* or *marronage* and a sense of journeying to other worlds ('migratory subjectivity'), Carole Boyce Davies traces both the transformative and resistant in Afro-diasporic culture. She articulates the interface between these forms and Western notions of Enlightenment global culture (determined by capitalism) as well as African diasporic notions. As alternative global movement, Afro-diasporic culture's globalisation came from forced migration and the politics of liberation, functions therapeutically reconstructively and promotes human happiness individually and collectively. As cultural expression which expresses an egalitarianism in the areas of gender, politics, justice, economics, race, etc. it offers a different paradigm of democratic political organisation. As such, the internationalising of Africa is not essentialising nor a romantic notion but a series of transformational discourses and re-interpretations of African-based cultures. In these endeavours, activist and intellectual work, creative imaginings and scholarship, are linked.

Recognising that theories function as 'frames of intelligibility', Keshia N. Abraham unthreads the hypostatising of some Black women's discourses (from the U.S.) at the expense of others'. Arguing that connection and relation often minimises differences, different spaces and different experiences, Black women must engage the complexities of theorising their identity at the intersections of race, class, gender, the various histories of organised political struggle and popular cultural expression. The dearth of material on Black women in academia, culture and labour in Britain, Europe and Africa is a challenge to produce it. Such material must meet their own needs and not those of the U.S. consumer. Autobiographically, she asserts women's right to claim identity by articulating her own subject position within the broader, global context of Black feminist discourses, cultures and especially in the context of women from elsewhere's sense of alienation in Africa.

P.T. Mtuze provides a feminist critical analysis of three Xhosa poems, 'Umfazi wokwenene' (Mema 1984), 'Ubufazi' (Ndlazulwana 1986) and

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'Umama ontsundu' (Satyo 1986). He traces the ways in which these poems represent male and female views on the role of women in Xhosa society, articulate older fundamentalist views on women and form part of the current trend, affirming the importance of women's issues in changing the South African male dominated society. Confronting and changing the constraints of male stereotyping of women will importantly expose its restrictive and inaccurate depiction of women, recognise the complexities of women's roles in society, and bring about women's emancipation from their suffering brought about by oppressive social relations and socialising practices.

Tracing the correspondence between gender and the body of writing produced by Afrikaans women writers, Pieter Conradie shows how women as writers are often homogenised and their creative expressions essentialised in contexts of cultural production. Providing a brief outline of the history of women within the literary and textual production of the Afrikaans language, he discusses the role of the body, or its cultural derivative, gender, within textual production.

Pointing out that the canonisation and anthologising of literature, publishing, the academic sphere and the world of literary criticism are usually the prerogative and domains of white middle and/or upper class males, Amanda Lourens argues that this practice views female, ethnic or working-class literature as inferior, marginalising it. It also harbours a judgement that the experiences from which such literature emanates is of secondary importance and not worthy of aesthetic expression. Focusing on Afrikaans poetry, she provides statistical data and qualitative evaluations concerning the inclusion of and references to women's their work in anthologies and literary histories.

Shane Moran critiques Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's importance as a postcolonial theorist committed to a politically engaged deconstructive practice. Articulating the importance of historical positionality, situational constraint and the need to contextualise migratory theory, Moran points out that this view is nevertheless not to be reconciled with her postcolonial theorisings. His argument is worked out in terms she set herself in earlier work on translation, the fact that she does belong, broadly speaking, to a generalising philosophical discourse, the pre-critical nature of *bricolage*, and the various predicaments she remains confronted with in the face of her theorising and her articulation of various voices in the poststructural arena. To contribute to a counter-hegemonic discourse, he argues, deconstructive theory must address questions related to *practice*, *complicity and responsibility* and a strategic alignment with a historicising Marxist analysis aiming at practical intervention.

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With particular reference to a short story by Miriam Tlali and a photo-essay by Santu Mofokeng, David Alvarez critically reviews the implicit protest against dehumanising in South African literary production of the apartheid era. Working with 'trains as tropes', he argues that 'the everyday/the ordinary' helps bring into focus areas of social life and cultural production as 'everyday forms' of resistance. In context, this resistance was against the material and ideological dimensions of railway commuting as well as to aspects of the ideology of apartheid more broadly. Throughout, he explores the ways in which the realm of 'the everyday' is contested terrain and how the texts chosen give evidence of resistance but also of anxiety and contradiction, especially in the realm of gender.

Confronting myth's capacity to legitimate power, Stephan Meyer focuses on the white queen of Sheba who is the purported founder of civilisation in southern Africa. The thesis proposed is that Du Toit invented a myth about the white origin of civilisation in southern Africa. This was used to legitimate cultural as well as economic expansion into Zimbabwe. He follows four steps: after contextualising the publication of *Di Koningin fan Skeba*, he reviews the use of myth as medium of legitimation, shows how it posited the white origin of civilisation in Africa and legitimated the expansion of white Christian capital in southern Africa and points out the inevitable failure of this intention due to the means used.

In the context of the present interest in the Bushmen, Rita Gilfillan focuses on a similar interest in the 1920s in her reminiscence on *Dwaalstories* by Eugène Marais. Reviewing the literary quality of these stories, she provides insights into some of the obscure elements in the historical telling and writing of these stories (told to Marais by an elderly Bushman). Relating the notion 'dwaal' to 'trance', she provides an interpretation of the story, 'Klein Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil' (Little Reed-all-alone-in-the-whirlpool) in the context of the European wondertale and the purposes of the shamanic trance.

Using insights from Nietzsche's chorus of satyrs in tragedy and Freud's discontents who embody an anxiety, a *malaise* or dissatisfaction with civilisation in so far as civilisation implies repression, Johan van Wyk explores the burden of 'civilisation' with reference to the depiction of poor whites in two Afrikaans plays: *Hantie kom huis toe* (Schumann 1933) and *Siener in die suburbs* (du Plessis 1971). Tracing analogies between these two texts, he shows that the major difference is in *Siener in die Suburbs*' pessimism—that sexuality and death underwrite the imaginary world of life.

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Claudia Mitchell and Ann Smith investigates contemporary South African fiction written specifically for the young adult market. Their focus is on the literary, social, and political significance of these texts, the unique role they play in both the South African literary arena and their impact on social change in the country. In locating young adult literature within a literary critical framework, they 'render visible' a literary genre which, like its readership, is interrogative by nature, and which has been marginalised in academic study previously.

Reasoning that language is closely tied to power relationships and that, locally, it continues structures forged under apartheid, Elizabeth de Kadt argues that one of the urgent tasks of a future language policy is to clarify power relationships which are underpinned by language. For her purposes of explicating the changing of power relationships in Afrikaans and German in a multilingual society, she then postulates four critical assumptions. In this context, she then shows how the power of these two minority languages furnished identity, polarised people in 'self' and 'other' formations and refused dialogue.

The review article of Carole Boyce Davies's *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, highlights elements in her argument concerning Black women's 'homelessness', 'unbelongingness' and 'migrancy'. How this provides the possibility for developing her theorising of the 'visitor theory' and 'critical relationality' in postcolonial and postmodernist theorisings is explained and a few critical suggestions made.

In his review article of Leon de Kock's *Civilising Barbarians*, Shane Moran critically reviews his development of the discourse approach to 'cultural exchange' in colonial history. Arguing that its history in southern African academia (especially in the neo-liberal strand) is beset with problems, he points out that critical areas for debate are the discursive strategy to separate colonial discourse from material history, the relations between knowledge as power and the (European) civilising mission, the articulation of hybridity with 'capital, class, and official politics' and claims of metacritical awareness as anaesthetic against (institutional and) ideological complicity. Arguing for the crucial retention of the particularities of counter-hegemonic discourses, Moran closes by importantly problematising the notion of 'exchange' in 'cultural exchange'.

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African Diaspora Literature and the Politics of Transformation[1]

Carole Boyce Davies

Canta para sentar o axé, Io! Io!
Canta para sentar o axé, Io! Io!
Canta homem, e canta mulher
Canta para sentar o axé, Io![2]

Three Afro-diasporic forms will serve as paradigmatic moments through which this discussion will develop. These express for me the translocational, transformational aspects of Afro-diasporic culture. They also speak directly to the issues of the creative imagination and subjectivity articulated against some of the manifestations of late capitalism.

This paper seeks to pursue some of these meanings in three portions. The first part discusses the notion of Afro-diasporic culture, the second con-

[1] This paper was commissioned for the Macalester College International Roundtable on 'Literature, the Creative Imagination and Globalization'. It was prepared in Brazil during my Fulbright semester there. As such, it is informed by my beginning research into Afro-Brazilian culture and my current thinking through some of these questions. No attempt is being made here to claim definitiveness. Still, during my graduate school research in African Studies at Howard University, we were repeatedly told that none of our research into African cultures was fully representative without broadening the knowledge base to include Brazil. I see myself as engaged in that process now but still with much more work to be done.

[2] This chant, used in Afro-Brazilian poetry circles, was created by the literary group Quilhomboje in São Paulo and aims to infuse creativity in the group. *Axé* is roughly 'the power to be' or 'the power to create'. Literally the song says, 'Sing in order to seat the ashe; Sing in order to seat the ashe; Sing man, sing woman'. It is an opening or transitory formula which goes in two directions, towards the Afro-Brazilian belief system and towards literary creativity. The source was the poet Lia Viera, Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro, July 3, 1995. This may be compared with Audre Lorde's (1984:53-59) 'Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power'. She uses the notion of the 'erotic' in much the same way as the force of creativity. According to Nise Malange, a COSATU poet from South Africa, the equivalent is *musho* in Zulu (private discussion in Durban, September, 1995). See also the discussion in Thompson (1984:5-18)

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conceptualises transformational discourses and the third examines some of the ways in which literature and the creative imagination have articulated some of these ideas. Its generating moments are clearly the direction of my work and my own 'migratory subjectivity', as well as contemporary questions of 'global culture' and 'hybridity as a response to multiculturalism'. The larger question of the place of the creative imagination and literature within the context of this globalisation allows me to pursue my own reading of the ways in which Afro-diasporic culture has already lived the transnational because of forced migration and the politics of liberation. Thus, for me there is no uniform 'global culture' except under capitalist dominance. Rather, I see a variety of cultures which have lived/are living their responses to large scale and micro historical processes. These responses have activated/are activating a variety of strategies to deal with the material and psychic terms of their historical and contemporary conditions. Thus, Afro-diasporic culture can be read as the 'other' of globalisation, i.e. an already existing transnational culture which moves sometimes in different directions, with different intent than the contemporary notions of globalisation.

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Candomblé, the Afro-Brazilian socio-cultural, religious, interpretative system, presents an important convergence of the transformational and Afro-diasporic culture as through it are expressed questions of memory and re-elaboration. While in this belief system the individual is always endowed with the energy of a particular *orishá*[3], through preparation and participation, the transformational is intensely manifested in some individuals[4], primarily in the moving of the body and its corporeality 'elsewhere'. It is a movement from the daily circle of life, work, struggle, to another level of possibility, the emotional and spiritual. In my reading, it is also a movement to a level of history, Diaspora memory, return, and reconstruction. Diaspora memory, in this context, recalls Africa as originary source but is also simultaneously

[3] Sometimes spelt *orixa* in Brazilian Portuguese. The author wishes to thank Milson Manuel dos Santos of Salvador-Bahia for his unwavering support and his many discussions on this particular point.

[4] This is an 'Afro-diasporic form' because there are versions of this reinterpretation of African religious practices in a variety of locations in the Americas, ranging from *shango* in Trinidad to *santeria* in Puerto Rico and New York to *lucumi* in Cuba to *winti* in Surinam to *vodun* in Haiti. In each case, the form and symbology is not identical or transferable one to the other, although there would be common elements and traces. It is more in the order of a repetition with difference identified by Benitez-Rojo (1992). The link to Africa is more in the order of memory and more particularly Diaspora memory which aims at recalling the crossing.

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located in the memory of the crossing as well as in the deliberate reinterpretation of 'remembered' cultural forms in a new space and in new conditions. Thus, in *candomblé*, as African *orisha* are recalled to practical existence, they are also given space to move outward, from the past, into a realm of present and future existence.

The significance of manifestation and/or possession lies not singly in the reappearance of an African entity with particular, identifiable characteristics that cross lines of gender, place, corporeality, spatiality and temporality, but that it also allows the individual person to occupy a different location in relation to the community. The individual physically becomes something else, somebody else, momentarily escapes the mundane, the 'real', the normal, and with the sanction of the community, exists in different space and time (and history). The community in its turn, also participates in this process as it witnesses. It is not uncommon for members of the witnessing community to also move to that level of possibility. Thus, I am using 'witnessing' here in the sense in which it is used in Afro-U.S. religiosity. While there is a particular level of spectatorship and performance in place as well, there is a recognisable witnessing, because of the antiphonal, interactive nature of the process, to an alternative way of being, away from practical definitions of limiting existence.

The public version[5] of a *candomblé* ritual begins with drumming and the initiated participants entering and making a circular parade around the centre of the space they are using for that ritual. Progressively through drumming, and the sound of the *agogô*, a sequence of canticles and a variety of other ritual experiences, some participants become other-endowed. Once the *orishá* manifests and that preliminary level is completed, they leave the public space and return endowed with, literally dressed in, the clothing, and ritual accoutrements as well as the behavioural attributes of the entity manifested. The body becomes visibly present but not its original self. One therefore witnesses *Shango* or *Yansan* or *Nana* at the same time that one witnesses the force of transformation in the individual. Importantly, various versions of the same entity often occupy the same space.

A variety of Afro-Brazilian scholars[6] identify *candomblé* as a source of resistance to dominance and the hegemony of European culture in Brazil.

[5] It is a public version because there are numerous rituals in which only the members of the house participate These take place before the outer community is allowed to participate Prof Muniz Sodre is acknowledged for listening to my thoughts on this subject and offering clarifying comments. The conclusions, though, are derived from witnessing a variety of *orishá* manifestations in Trinidad as a child and in Brazil from 1992-1995 (São Paulo, Salvador-Bahia, Rio de Janeiro) and from an interview with Mae Beata of Yemanja, in Novo Iguacu, Rio de Janeiro in June, 1995 and a variety of readings on this subject.

[6] See also Curry and Carneiro (1990:157-179) and the articles by Juana and Descoredes dos Santos (1994:47-55, 56-66).

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Julio Braga (1992:17) states that *candomblé* is a system of preservation, of balance and knowledge which always attains a level of harmony of man with nature through his interaction with the sacred world without losing the sense of confronting its adversaries of life in society as he searches for freedom and social harmony. Interestingly as well, although *candomblé* is specific to Brazil, a variety of other versions of the same thing exist throughout the African Diaspora ranging from *lucumi* in Cuba to *Shango* in Trinidad, *santeria* in Puerto Rico and New York City. All operate both at the level of 'spirit work' and community work.

Quilombismo or *marronage* is the second transformative Afro-diaspora pattern which I am identifying. In 1995, Brazil celebrated the three hundred year anniversary of the existence of *Palmares*. Palmares was the longest surviving *quilombo* (see Andrade 1993) or maroon settlement (until 1695) which existed as an alternative space, and as a space of resistance to slavery. Palmares too was a site of transformation, an elsewhere, a location which demonstrated by its very existence that there is a practical possibility of 'another world' outside of the given definitions of reality at that time. Still, Abdias do Nascimento (1994:23)[7] stresses that Palmares was just one of innumerable black communities living isolated lives that would be identified as *quilombos* today.

> Disconnected from the flux of life of the country, many of them maintained styles and habits of African patterns of life. In some cases, still utilising the original idiom brought from Africa maintained, creolised, yet still existing as an African language maintained and conserved in the form of *quilombismo* in which they lived (my translation)[8,9]

Just as Maroon Nanny of Jamaica resisted, created another world and moved communities incarcerated in her evil present of enslavement, creating Nanny Town, so throughout the Americas would exist these 'other worlds' spatially, emotionally, culturally, the extent of which is still being documented.

Significantly, as well, the use of African and/or Native American religious, medicinal, therapeutic systems would be as central to the maroon

[7] The entire issue is devoted to 300 years of Zumbi, 1695-1995.

[8] Desligados do fluxo da vida do país, muitas delas mantem estilos e hábitos de existência africana, ou quase. Em alguns casos, ainda se utilizando do idioma original trazido da Africa, estropiado, porém assim mesmo uma linguagem africana mantida e conservada na espécie de quilombismo em que vivem.

[9] The author wishes to convey her thanks to graduate students in Brasilia: Cleria Costa for the discussion of the meaning of *estropiado* in this context and for proofing of the translation and Claudia Quiroga for assistance with accentuation.

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communities as would be the very force of resistance and transformation which ran through them. Do Nascimento would identify sixteen principles which are generated from the historical idea of *quilombismo* which can be used to create a different pattern of life for all the community. These offer a different paradigm of democratic political organisation which expresses an egalitarianism in the areas of gender, politics, justice, economics, race, etc. with the effect of promoting human happiness.

The third paradigmatic pattern which I want to identify here is represented in the series of liberatory movements of a Harriet Tubman or Sojourner Truth. These present this deliberate sense of journeying to other worlds, at times occupying the wild space, outside of the most incredible level of oppression and slavery in the Americas. The concept of 'migratory subjectivity' which I identified in *Black Women, Writing and Identity. Migrations of the Subject*[10] allows me to re-articulate it here within the level of contemporary discussions of globalisation. In this case, I offer as paradigm the deliberate and directed migration for liberation to other worlds rather than aimless wandering or containment within dominant discourses. Thus is created another set of movements outside of the terms of the politico-economic systems in place.

For me, then, these alternative worlds and movements exist at the heart of what I see as an alternative global movement—the transformational, the imaginative in Afro-diasporic culture: first, the level of the personal, psychic transformation which also moves within a community and has implications for resistance and the construction of other worlds; secondly the creation of an alternative physical, political space, outside of the terms of the dominant society; thirdly the deliberate journeying outside of the boundaries of restriction and oppression. These patterns for me are related to the spirit of creative and imaginative space, I propose to show, which can sometimes become the creative impetus of the literary imagination.

Thus, I am not saying that all black literature is endowed with the transformational or articulates the transformational, although at some level, all creativity pursues that movement from imagination to actuality. And, clearly, there is a major trajectory of Afro-diaspora literature and culture which pursues the transformational through memory and or through having a vision of alternative worlds, transformed existences, even in the critique of limitations of present or past existences. And this is this paper's concern: the ways through which the creative imagination articulates itself in Afro-diasporic culture, thus presenting an 'other' version of globalisation.

[10] Glissant's (1981, 1990) concept of *errance*—drifting, wandering, the pilgrimage, the search for roots, migration—is related but not identical to my formulation. It is related in the sense that I agree that *errance* is embedded in the history of the Caribbean. See also Robert Aldrich (forthcoming).

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Thus, this discussion rejects concepts of hybridity and syncretism, in favour of repetition and re-memory. To illustrate my position, I offer preliminarily the poem 'Ave Maria' (see Boyce Davies & Ogundipe-Leslie 1995) which for me reaches for that space, those other possibilities, which I articulated above. It is clearly not a poem of syncretism, or hybridity, in the sense that the Virgin is hybridised with another Afro-diaspora cultural form. Rather, it references the fact that 'Ave Maria' becomes the veil almost for what takes place behind, which is actually a series of movements of possession, rebellion and transformation, within the terms of Afro-diaspora Culture:

'Ave Maria'

Spirits dance. Bathed within sanctums Chambers
Souls Our Souls Flying Tangling Spiralling Outward
Powerful possession of Rebellion

Our External Shells Sweating Panting to Drums that
Scream Singing Songs Bitter Sweet Sweat Sweetness:
Sensual Cantations of Struggle Journeys Stories Mine
Yours Her Story of Standing Unified Free

Free from Pain Struggle Break from grappling
Hooks Hands white from above which Scratch with rusty
Nails Tear Her bloody flesh which has been Shed for Us

Beautiful Petals formed richly red Profusion lick away the
shackles from Her Body Freeing Her Spirit once again.
The red Essence leaks from Our Hands Our tool of caress
that soothe longing Dead Roses baptised for Rebellious Realm

Here pure Black swells transcending Here Hear Drum
Never an ephemeral Heart Beat Singing Beating Free Freedom
Within our Heart Dancing with cause for the religion of the
Movement Rounding the tree of burning Bush We Women of
Culture Shake eat drink Swallow its Fruit Feeding our Soul
Richly Raped Roots grown Strong Drum with no skin I have
shed Upon You. The Skin falls I gain my boundaries We
Rest in pain Strength
Tic Toc Tic Lock Confined to Pure Clarity
of Vibrant Shallow Seclusion Crave Fight Silence
Black Bare feet will never tire for Screaming
Drums continue to play.

In my view, therefore, the terms of 'African Diaspora' prefigures/refigures the contemporary notions of the transnational. African Diaspora, in my understanding, refers to the articulation of a relational culture of African

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peoples, in an interactive politico-cultural pattern both within and outside of the terms of the nation states in which they live. It is clearly not the transnationality of the 'global village' which seeks a boundary-less world in order to create more space for capitalist markets and international communication dominated by the west. Rather, since these nation states were unnaturally constructed[11] under the terms of dominance and were the final product of slavery and colonialism, those suppressed communities created other worlds sometimes even without reference to the existence of other similarly created spaces.

The conceptualisation of 'African Diaspora' to redress the dispersal of Africans has been advanced by a number of black scholars. Further, the notion of 'African Diaspora' exists conceptually both outside and inside the terms of globalisation. In other words, Afro-diaspora already presupposes a global or at least an international or trans-national relationship between various communities of dispersed Africans without suggesting that they each share identical frameworks and histories for re-formulating their existences. The work of the Howard group led by Joseph Harris (1993; see also Skinner 1993), has been significant in laying out the terms and contradictions in the articulation of African Diaspora and its global contexts. The more recent collection of Robin Kelley and Sidney Lemelle (1994) takes these discussions further as it presents a variety of debates on Diaspora, Pan-Africanism and nationalism. In the work of activists like Marcus Garvey who articulated a 'Back to Africa' vision and in the terms of the international organisation of his UNIA, the political formulations of African Diaspora found expression. It would also be articulated at the level of state politics of the Pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah, W.E.B. DuBois, Sylvester Williams, George Padmore and others and the work of the various Pan-African congresses. Still, while the terms of Pan-Africanism would seek to articulate an African centre as base, Afro-diasporic culture for me would resist even that type of containment and implied Africa centring. Africa would become invented, imaginative space of creativity, ancestry, knowledge as well as a deliberate place of practical existence to which one may return but which one may also re-create. In the same way, continental African communities would begin to participate in a series of interactions at the level of popular culture, politics, literature, religious and social movements[12].

In my reading then, it is not so much the physicality of a return but the notion that this space of oppression under Euro-American dominance is not

[11] See for example Homi Bhabha's (1994) discussion in 'Anxious Nations, Nervous States'.

[12] See various discussions in Lemelle and Kelley (1994), Joseph Harris (1993) and Alan Gregor Cobley (1992:349-370). The latter also references a previous piece by Martin (1991).

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the desired location aesthetically, religiously, politically, economically or educationally. And it is for this reason I do not find the notion of hybridity as useful as I do the notion of repetition and re-elaboration.

The scholarship of Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Amon Saba Saakana and Kobena Mercer in London, have articulated the nature of Diaspora dialectics in music and popular culture[13]. Paul Gilroy's (1994) *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness* returns deliberately to the question of black music which he had raised in his former work, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987). This time, however, he raises some of the problematics of origin in the music itself, not so much in the sense of an unchanging Diaspora but in the sense of a series of discontinuous movements in a variety of directions:

> This company spreads out in discontinuous, transverse lines of descent that stretch outwards across the Atlantic from Phyllis Wheatley onwards. Its best feature is an anti-hierarchical tradition of thought that probably culminates in C.L.R. James' idea that ordinary people do not need an intellectual vanguard to help them to speak or to tell them what to say. Repeatedly within this expressive culture it is musicians who are presented as living symbols of the value of self activity . (Gilroy 1994:79)

The question of Diaspora from which I operate here, likewise, critiques nationalism, though not national liberation. Neil Lazarus's (1993:69-98) impassioned observation that there still exists, through a version of nationalism, the 'burden of speaking for all humanity', fails to make that subtle distinction between nationalism and national liberation. National liberation fights for the liberation from colonial domination. Nationalism becomes a reified 'nation state' discourse which obscures difference. Contrary to Lazarus then, one does not have to disavow decolonization, Fanon, and or the various movements of national liberation which provided the ideological apparata of self articulation for black peoples. Rather, one can see these movements of national liberation as one link in a chain of interrelated struggles for African peoples transnationally to articulate themselves in the face of a variety of oppressive systems.

Similarly, in the orature of the African Diaspora, there exists a substantial volume of literature on the movement away from the physicality of slave existence to a return to another world. Best articulated in 'The People Could Fly' stories, a series of magical incantations, voicing the will to move from oppression, would direct the body to take off on wings, leaving the slave masters' whips behind. Paule Marshall (1983) in *Praisesong for the Widow* would write into her text the oral narrative of 'Ibo Landing', in

[13] See Paul Gilroy (1987, 1994), Sebastian Clarke (1987) and Stuart Hall (1989:65-81).

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which Africans walked off the ships and walked back over the waters to Africa, and further would use this piece of orature as the structuring frame in which her own narrative would develop.

Diaspora for me then exists in that same sense of repetition that Benitez Rojo (1992) identifies and that re-manifests itself in forms identifiable because of the modes of resistance of African peoples, their search for other systems, other modes of being. Diaspora memory is the ancestral memory as well as the received history of the middle passage, a basic vocabulary often articulated in song, mood, style, orature, dance and the corporeal generally, sometimes much more so than in the literate traditions. It is simultaneously re-elaboration, re-articulation and re-definition. The elements of ancestry—Africa; historical memory—the middle passage, slavery, colonisation; and contemporary realities—racial oppression, re-colonisation become essential elements in movements of re-creation in Afro-diaspora culture. Movement away from limitations to other articulations of identity would also be critical aspects.

I want to move my conceptualisation of the Diaspora through and beyond one of the points that Michael Hanchard (1990) offers that

> if the notion of an African diaspora is anything it is a human necklace strung together by a thread known as the slave trade, a thread which made its way across a path of America with little regard for national boundaries (see Hanchard 1990:31-42 & 1991:83-106)

For me, though, connection through the history of slavery would represent an important element, the notion of re-creation or re-elaboration carries the emphasis I want to give here. I further share Paul Gilroy's emphasis on black music as having that power

> in developing our struggles by communicating information, organising consciousness and testing out, deploying or amplifying the forms of subjectivity which are required by political agency—individual and collective, defensive and transformational—(and which) demands attention to both the formal attributes and its distinctive moral basis[14].

This sense of Afro-diaspora memory becomes real for me, for example, on observing that within the community of Afro-Brazilians Bob Marley becomes an icon of Afro-diaspora culture even to people who do not understand all the words of the language in which he sings. The message and

[14] See Gilroy's (1993:120-145) 'It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at, the dialectics of diaspora identification' and his chapter 'Jewels Brought from Bondage. Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity' (Gilroy 1994:72-110).

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meaning is nevertheless communicated. More contemporaneously, the proliferation of rap, carnival, calypso and reggae and Rastafarian cultures world-wide would be as significant in terms of the internationalising of popular culture as are the repetitions of Afro-diasporic culture. For this reason, Afro-diasporic culture is not a recall of a romanticised or essentialised Africa but a series of transformations and re-interpretations of African-based cultures on an international level.

Thus, in my understanding, it is not only in black music, that one can witness these transformations. One can make the same case for black dance and movement, corporeality and percussive traditions which are as central to *candomblé* or *santeria* as they are to the black festive behaviour, carnival traditions, resistance movements. See for example the movement of the *toyi toyi* from Egypt to South Africa. These are what I would call movements of *re-elaboration*, re-creation, the level of the transformative.

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For African peoples in the Diaspora, a profound dissatisfaction with the conditions under which we were produced as subjects in the wake of European modernism and Enlightenment and the concomitants of slavery, colonialism, capitalism, late capitalism has driven a series of movements ranging from discourses of *quilombismo* or marronage, uprisings and rebellions, abolitionist, civil rights and black power movements, independence and anti-colonialism, decolonisation, labour movements, anti-apartheid struggles, a variety of nationalisms, socialisms, feminisms. As social movements, these have been both oppositional and transformational; have both produced and been produced by historical conditions under which they/we live.

Still, I do not want to suggest that the questioning attitude in these discourses have been put into place singly by African Diaspora peoples. For example, the fundamentals of mainstream, contemporary feminist inquiry put into question the construction of the female as subject, the ways in which discourses of the 'private' can camouflage oppressive practices on women and children, and the necessity to move these to the public sphere.

In addition, a variety of independent theorists and scholars and progressive socialist movements—Marxism in particular—would have as a fundamental impetus the need to create more egalitarian systems, expressing therefore at the level of ideology and economic conditions, at least, a profound concern for the transformational. Perhaps more important is the transformation of the knowledge bases. Foucault (1984:46f) for example, talking on the transformational would say,

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> I prefer the very specific transformations that have proved to be possible in the last twenty years in a certain number of areas that concern our ways of being and thinking, relations to authority, relations between the sexes, the way in which we perceive insanity or illness; I prefer even these partial transformations that have been made in the correlation of historical analysis and the practical attitude, to the programs for a new man that the worst political systems have repeated throughout the twentieth century.

Still, it is the very notion of European Enlightenment which can be subjected to scrutiny as it accompanied simultaneously the subordination and oppression of a variety of people and their knowledges. In his section on 'Slavery and the Enlightenment Project', Paul Gilroy pursues a series of discussions of the conjunction of these two projects, 'slavery' and 'enlightenment' even as the European philosophers (Locke, Descartes, Rousseau and so on) and scholars sought to disavow this conjunction in the modernist project:

> There is a scant sense for example, that the universality and rationality of enlightened Europe and America were used to sustain and relocate rather than eradicate an order of racial difference inherited from the premodern era ... It is hardly surprising that if it is perceived to be relevant at all, the history of slavery is somehow assigned to blacks. It becomes our special property rather than a part of the ethical and intellectual heritage of the West as a whole (Gilroy 1994:49).

But perhaps Gilroy doesn't go far enough. Revisionist students of philosophy would argue as Césaire (1972:15) does, that the fundamentals of domination are central to a great deal of Western humanist philosophy, that it is within the discourses of many European philosophers that reside the philosophical bases for enslavement, oppression, racism.

The space that Marxism, postmodernism, feminism and decolonisation provided for thinking through the gaps in discourse and, more importantly for me, the deconstruction of master narratives of all sorts, including postmodernism itself, allows the articulation of the transformational. Radical transformation of the social bases of our existences, addresses the disproportionate patterns of relations to material, knowledge and happiness that exist, often based on race, gender and class and so on in a variety of situations in the world. Radical transformation has consistently called for the type of alternative spaces which I identified above.

In an earlier work, I identified 'uprising discourses' as those textualities which capture the movement upward and outward from submerged spaces[15]. The question of 'uplift' or equality may, of course, be the most limited aspect of this discourse, as in some streams of African-

[15] See chapter 4, 'From 'Postcoloniality to Uprising Textualities' in Boyce Davies (1994:80-112)

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American and feminist literary and historical discourses, i.e. rising towards an equality with the oppressor only. Thus arises the importance of locating 'transformational discourses' as a necessary accompaniment to any movement to social change. For me, the transformational is an area of linking activist and intellectual work. Transformational discourses then can be assigned to those discourses which both challenge and re-create, which seek to begin anew on different and more humane grounds, which combine intellectual work with both activism and creativity. Transformational discourses then speak as well to curricula transformation as well as transformations in consciousness; the transformation of epistemological and pedagogical bases of those responsible for the futures of countless minds in and outside of academic contexts. Transformational discourses reject in principle the 'discriminatory paradigm' (deployed in many contemporary societies) which operate on the basis that discrimination is a given and that each group must therefore negotiate its way out of discrimination and prove itself worthy of consideration. They resist the variety of oppressive practices in existence in our world and seek to transform them, move us from positions of limitation to positions of action (see Boyce Davies 1994:xvi).

The imperative to transform the bases of knowledge and unsatisfactory existences runs through every piece of black feminist scholarship which I have seen. As early as 1852, at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, Sojourner Truth, black women activists for women's rights and emancipation, asserted that women have the responsibility to transform the world which men had disturbed (see the version in Stetson 1981:24). In 'The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community', Cheryl Clarke (1983) would much later lament that, via particular versions of black nationalism, discriminatory paradigms in this case based on sexuality, were often reinstituted by those who wittingly or 'unwittingly absorbed the homophobia of their patriarchal slavemasters' in Afro-U.S. communities as it is found in the larger homophobic culture in which we live. Thus she concluded that

> ... [H]omophobia is a measure of how far removed we are from the psychological transformation we so desperately need to engender (Clarke 1983:207).

Both Sojourner Truth and Cheryl Clarke were talking in different ways and at different historical moments about the particular psychological transformation that must precede or accompany any genuine social transformation away from oppressive practices. In similarly pursuing a movement for social change away from oppressive paradigms, Audre Lorde (1984:40-44) identifies another set of transformations, this time from silence to language and action.

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Thinking through these questions I have come across numerous versions of the desire for the transformational in the works of other scholars. For example, the very last line of Larry Neal's, 'Some Reflections on the Black Aesthetic', is the word 'Change'. One can therefore identify a series of articulations which include but are not limited to the search for resistance and self-articulatory paradigms in women's cultures outside of the knowledge of imperialism's master discourses. I am referring then to a series of inter-related discourses which examine issues of imperialism and patriarchy and other oppressive practices and instead seek transformed worlds (see also Spivak 1987).

The practical work of social transformation offered in post-apartheid South Africa for me demands a particular mention within this framework. In this paper, though, my concern has been with transformation as a discourse. The practice of transformation in political terms then demands study in much more developed ways in this instance and in other situations where social transformation was undertaken. For example, the new South African RDP *Reconstruction and Development Programme* as well as the interim constitution seem to offer some of the possibilities for social transformation. However, at this point I can say only tentatively that it is much more difficult to develop the practice to match the energy of the theoretics and of the popular mass struggles for social change.

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Poesia de negro e axé	Black poetry is ashe
Poesia de negro e axé	Black poetry is ashe
E axé	It is ashe
Axé babá eu digo	Ashe, baba, I say
Eu digo axé Nagô	I say ashe Nagô
Quando entro nesta roda	When I enter this circle
Incomodo, sim senhor	It is to disturb you, yes sir
Olha o tambo(r)	Listen to the drum
Olha o tambo(r)	Listen to the drum
A poesia negra	Black poetry
Tem a força de um quilombo! [16]	Has the force of a quilombo

(*Nagô is another name for Yoruba culture in Brazil)

[16] Lia Viera, Niteroi, RJ, July 3, 1995. This particular chant is a ring chant created by Quilhomboje, Afro-Brazilian writing collective based in São Paulo, used to invite poetic recitations or declarations, generally with drum accompaniment. The translation is mine, a video version showing the poetry ring is available from ASPECAB Imagems, Niteroi.

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This chant which begins this final section moves the desire to 'seat' *axé* to another level, claiming that black poetry is *axé*, that it therefore is life-force, creative energy, the power to be, and further that it has the force of a *quilombo*, that 'other world' of resistance, existing outside of the terms of Western/global cultures. One can find a related assertion in Edward Said (1990:1f) in which he says that in the processes of decolonisation and reconstruction of national cultures, literature has been crucial to the

> re-imagining and re-figuring of local histories, geographies, communities. As such then, literature not only mobilized active resistance to incursions from outside, but also contributed massively as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within the realm of the colonized.

This concluding portion of this article provides a variety of explorations within the Afro-diaspora tradition, showing how the transformational converges in the diasporic creative context or at least how writers are striving to articulate some of these positions creatively.

Within the literature which accompanied decolonisation, Afro-Diaspora writers from Ngugi wa Thiong'o to Sembene Ousmane, Chinua Achebe to George Lamming, actively produced a literature which identified creatively the bases of colonisation, located as their writing was in that particular historical juncture.

The discourse of decolonisation carries with it the implicit and explicit articulations of transformations at different levels. In other words, the notion of 'decolonising the mind' (see Wa Thiong'o 1986) implies a transformed consciousness, a movement to new societal patterns beyond colonialism's malaise.

Interestingly, research is showing, nevertheless, that the work of women writers, even when participating in those very discourses of decolonisation as say a work like Paule Marshall's (1969) *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, seem to simultaneously occupy another trajectory as the work of Zora Neale Hurston or even further back that of Harriet Wilson reveals. Thus in some cases was produced a poetics which complicated, through issues of gender and location, some of the accepted trajectories of the literature which accompanied decolonisation as it did abolition[17]. It also sought transformation in terms of more egalitarian relationships between men and women, new paths for human existence. The writers, as in the case of African women writers 'become not just artists but also pathfinders for new relations between men, women, and children' (see Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido 1993:311).

[17] This point has been well developed in a variety of works on black women's writing as well as in my work in particular. See bibliographic references in Boyce Davies (1994).

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Among contemporary writers, the works of Ben Okri (Nigeria) and Grace Nichols (Caribbean), Randall Kenan (U.S.A.) are interesting in their assertion of questions which were produced in the epoch after formal independence. In *The Famished Road* (1992), for example, Ben Okri undertakes a series of movements for his child protagonist between worlds. Ever persistent is a deep hunger which remains unfilled and a societal oppression which mandates his frequent departure into spirit worlds. The mediation between worlds which the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka has also undertaken, for example in a text like *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) and which runs through the work of the older writer Amos Tutuola, *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1953) of Nigeria as well, is brought to the fore in this text.

The critique of the failed promises of the new nation states, of the community, of masculinity, of particular forms of parenting, begin to be articulated in some streams of literature, in the epoch of what has been called neo-colonialism or more recently post-colonialism. And for Ben Okri (1992), it is taken to the point when memory, of other existences, other possibilities persist in the spirit child who must often decide whether the world of human existence has the requirements to sustain him.

Diaspora memory, as I suggested earlier, is that desire to recall experience of other worlds as it suggests the desire for other creative and humane possibilities, and elsewheres. This memory is negotiated through language as Grace Nichols would show in her collection *I is a Long-Memoried Woman* (1983). We may here as well cross-reference Marlene Philip who would also articulate similar questions in her introduction and the body of the text of *She Tries Her Tongue. Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989) and at a related conceptual level in Afua Cooper's *Memories Have Tongue* (1992). For Grace Nichols, the long-memory woman is that Afro-diasporic figure who is able to activate memory of Africa, difficult passages, enslavement, new births, pain and joy as she creates new worlds in the landscape of the Americas. This desire to reassemble or (re)member the (dis)membered of the Middle Passage is well articulated creatively in Morrison's (1987) *Beloved* in which (re)memory becomes the central organising principle through which the novel and its characters develop. The critical work of Edouard Glissant (1989), particularly *Caribbean Discourse*, as in some ways does the creative and critical work of Wilson Harris of Guyana, would also speak to the ways in which the Caribbean Creole communities were able to re-assemble through their mythologies, landscape, imaginations.

Diaspora memory, then is that imperative which runs through the mythology, ritual, percussive, corporeal traditions which in their creativity recall other locations, other places, and reconstructs them in the context of contemporary material realities. Witness the Trinidad and Tobago steel band

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tradition, for example, in which the rhythm of the drum, forbidden during slavery, becomes tangibly re-created using discarded steel drums as a base, and reinstituted in dynamic form, parodying some of the organisational principles of European symphonic tradition on top of what in actuality is an African base. Diaspora memory is also a movement to hear those unspoken voices, to read those unreadable texts, to find the word as Kamau Brathwaite would say in *The Arrivants* to fling into the void.

In many ways, the literary traditions struggle with that desire to attain the same level of the transformative. The most respected works in this tradition are the ones which in my view strive towards that level of memory. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison is a work which is successful for me precisely because it engages that struggle for Diaspora re-memory, that active sense of the past, with its pain, translated and re-elaborated in the present. The title story from Randall Kenan's (1992) *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead* in a different way struggles against the boundaries of history and literature, the processes of narrative, the complications of a variety of identities produced in the context of the past: Africa, enslavement, maroonage, fantastic and contemporary realities. It is for this reason, the weight of this struggle, that a number of writers in the African Diaspora tradition would as well consistently seek out creatively for inspiration or new format, the non-print traditions, in some cases the filmic tradition as does Julie Dash, Ousmane Sembene, Frances Anne Solomon and a variety of other writers and filmmakers[18].

If we accept theoretically that literature operates within its own discursive system, particularly at the level of narrative or novel forms, then the individual writer operates already within a predetermined system which she struggles to make her own, particularly at the level of language[19]. This discussion does not propose to retrace the discussions of language in African literatures, but basically suggests that the processes of transformation and Afro-diasporic memory with which I am working are consistently being re-presented in a variety of contexts. Further, I am asserting that all of this pre-figures the contemporary notions of the transnational. The contributions of the discourses surrounding intertextuality and re-inscription similarly

[18] Writers like Okot p'Bitek, for example, would reject as elitist, literature which began with a premise of excluding the majority of the population for participating in the aesthetic process and would seek to work within the context of Acoli orature. Ngugi wa Thiong'o would make the same point in his discussion of language in African literature in *Decolonising the Mind* (1988) as would Micere Mugo in many of her discussions of orature aesthetics.

[19] Marlene Philip in *She Tries Her Tongue* (1989) makes this point well. Edward Brathwaite's (1984) contribution of 'nation language' also aids us in this articulation in *History of the Voice. Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*.

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advance this discussion, particularly in the sense of the intersection of a variety of textualities[20].

The notion of the openness of the text which intertextuality presupposes, along with the imperative of memory already presents an interesting challenge to the notion of individual authorship. Even as we celebrate individual acts of creativity, we recognise the role that memory and traces of other texts play in creation. Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Krik? Krak!* is very clear about the role of the story telling of her grandmother, the role of memory in both her writing and her grandmother's telling and further the role of memory at the level of the reader. Thus she often autographs her book with 'from my memory to yours'. And it is within this intertext, that the question of the individual creative artist's search for Diaspora memory operates for me. The Afro-diasporic author's awareness that the text can be a weaving together of numerous elements, primary among them history and memory, and the role of the writer as translator or medium or articulator of these varied histories, and that of the reader in the making of the text, ameliorates some of the demands of stellar individual creativity, even as it celebrates the successes.

Attempting to identify the very preliminary articulations of the black aesthetic, Larry Neal saw memory as a significant component in his tentative outlining of some categories which needed elaboration (see also Adison Gayle 1972). His work, which I believe has been revisited by many without ascription, was an attempt to identify as many signifying elements as one sees occurring, or possibly occurring throughout Afro-diasporic culture. Without resorting to the essentialist paradigms of black aesthetic which happened in the Black Arts Movement, I can see how his then referencing of 'race memory' is yet another version of Diaspora memory. Many contemporary scholars have attempted to elaborate some of these elements. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. for example would develop in his *The Signifying Monkey. A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988) the significations which reside in Esu-Elegbara and provide the pre-text for the signifying monkey, the New World trickster, in Afro-diaspora context. A similar line of examination can be developed for understanding *anancy*, of Akan origin but who also made the crossing into the Caribbean. For *eshu* resides as well in all the Afro-diasporic systems as the *orishá*, of opening, of fate, of crossings. And *anancy* as that development of trickery under slavery in order to 'make a way' using primarily the intellect and language.

[20] See Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980) and Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983). In fact, Derrida's (1981:26) notion of textuality suggests that each element 'is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or system'. See also the discussion in Heinrich F. Plett (1991).

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Mae Henderson (1989) in 'Speaking in Tongues. Dialogics, Dialectics and the Black Women's Literary Tradition', and Houston Baker (1991) in *Workings of the Spirit. The Poetics of Afro-American Women's Writing* provide an important bridge to my location of the transformative in Afro-Brazilian *candomblé*. For Baker, the 'generative source of style in Afro-America is soul; the impetus for salvation is spirit'. Spirit, then, is associated with non-material modes of production or that which allows us to create, the power to be, or *axé*, which continues through an ever-continuing movement within the community. Henderson would relatedly pursue a Bakhtinian reading of the trope of possession at the level of language. Erna Brodber's work on Jamaican *myalism* or spirit possession in *Myal* (1988) would be a creative approach to this same issue.

The demands of literary creativity and Diaspora memory are not therefore conflicting tendencies, in my view. A series of writers and their works are showing that indeed, these become an important necessity of articulation at the level at which the writer becomes 'the site of transmutation' through which myths, legends, history are reformulated and recirculated. The poetics and politics of audibility and visibility, the rewriting of history and the reconstitution of the dispossessed Afro-diasporic subject, the emphasis on the articulation of the intersections of a variety of discourses, the critique of interlocking systems of oppression, become some of the streams to be pursued. If literature itself is the space of transformation of the imagination, then the *axé* which the Afro-Brazilian writers sing in order to 'seat' is that which through creativity allows resistance and *quilombismo* or *maroonage* to be activated[21].

Speaking intertextually to the notion that black poetry, articulated in the opening chant, carries both *axé* and the force of resistance or *quilombismo*, is a poem by young writer Marcia Douglas, called 'Voice Lesson'[22]. I see it as working through well, some of the questions of Afro-diaspora memory and its creative articulation as it activates the word *maroon* as a site of recreation. I want to end this discussion then by allowing it to articulate some of the questions which have driven this discussion. Here, using language (voice-articulation-the performative) this poem refers to those other worlds outside of Western prescriptive contexts, using memory, history, a variety of languages and variations of a particular form, in order to speak that transformation and resistance.

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[21] See though Luis Camnitzer (1994) who talks about the importance of distinguishing between art as a tool to create culture and achieve independence and art as a globalising commercial enterprise.

[22] In *Claiming Voice*, student poetry booklet compiled by Marcia Douglas for Prof. Carole Boyce Davies, Black Women Writers Course, 1994.

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'Voice Lesson' (Marcia Douglas)

Cimarrón.
Cimarrón.
Remember to roll the r's
(Think of the sound of galloping mustangs on a Nevada plain)

Cimarrón
(or the pound of buffalo hoofs)
Cimarrón
(or your grandma's mules broken loose last year)

Maroon.
Maroon.
Breathe in deep.
say it like a warrior hurling her spear through the air.
Maroon.
(Now think of bloodhounds, armed men at your heels)
Maroon
(or Nanny's boiling cauldron set to catch them)
Maroon
(or women wearing the teeth of white soldiers around their ankles.)

Maroon.
Maroon.
Pronounce the 'a' soft like the 'a' in 'alone'.
That's right,
Marooned
(Imagine dangling from an orange tree blindfolded—
stockings from someone's clothesline noosed around your neck)
Marooned
(or the one dollar to your name,'
the eviction notice taped to the door)
Marooned
(think of a cold, soundproof room)

Maroon.
Maroon
Say it slow like a rich, full thing to the mouth
Maroon.
(Remember yourself six years old,
talking sassy in your mother's dark lipstick)'
Maroon
(or Zora's lips mouthing 'just watch me',
her felt hat tilted to the side of her head)
Maroon
(or all those women's mouths in Ebenezer choir, 'Free at Last,
singing for the fire locked up in their bones.)

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Maroon.
Maroon.
Here's your chance now,
follow the instinct of your tongue
and say it your way,
Maroon.
Put on that hat you wear when you're all stirred up and need to
have a word or two.
Maroon
Hurl your spear if you like,
Or change the accent on the 'a'—
perhaps something wide, free like the 'a' in gallop
Maroon
Maroon
(Hear the call of an old abeng?)
Maroon
Say it
Say it rich
Say it full
(The twitch near your ear is only the remembrance of thunder.)
Maroon
Breathe in deep
Maroon
(This dust kicked up on the plain is sweet as nutmeg!)
Maroon
Say it!
Maroon
(Listen to the feet of summer rain behind you)
Say it strong
Say it now
Break loose speckled horse,
and take yourself back.

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'This is no Time to Gaze'[1]: Black Feminist Discourse and our Politics of (re)Presentation

Keshia N. Abraham

Come share with me sister feminist
Let us dance in the movement
Let my blackness catch your feminism
Let your oppression peek at mine
After all
I ain't the right kind of feminist
I'm just woman

(Cheryl West)

Preface

In: Black Women Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject *(1994), Carole Boyce Davies asks questions which to some extent frame the methodology of this paper, or collection of ideas. If we recognise theories as 'frames of intelligibility' then it seems plausible that these frames can, should and do take on multiple forms. Boyce Davies (1994:35) asks:*

> How do we theorize, who are the theorists and what is theory? Is theory a hegemonic discourse which imposes a new hierarchy? Is it important to pursue the specificity of Black female identity theoretically? What happens to the readership when the language of theory is deployed? .... what about the discussions that surround feminism and deconstruction or feminism and postmodernism? Are they competing, allies, the 'master's tools' ...?

[1] The title derives from Garnett Silk's song, 'Babylon Be Still' (1995).

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Taking up these and other questions surrounding the ways in which we speak to one another across various voids, this text should be seen as attempting to bring together different voices speaking on similar ideas while making room for the differences they speak to.

In this present moment of multinationalism and transnational black movements of resistance amidst various manifestations of transition, there are theories colliding all over the place. Black women are located within multiple discourses which combine as points of critique within Black feminist discussions, very loosely defined. Whether we are discussing the shortcomings of totalising or exclusionary 'feminist' discourses or trying to come up with modes and means of articulating our disparate needs and desires for any type of collectivity, we are faced with possibilities of division, confusion, misnaming, not to mention silencing on multiple level. The difficulties this particular paper addresses concern the ways in which some black women's discourses are made to stand in for the whole of us and have often unwantingly served to name or define our actions, intentions and modes of expression. We talk about our 'blackness' or our 'consciousness' in ways which are necessarily celebratory, however what are we saying when we look at each other across the vast spaces which dis/connect us and don't see the differences our locations necessarily inhabit?[2] We celebrate that which binds us and theorize on those elements which continuously suggest connection, relation, and fortunately, insurgence. I am looking for a way to get at what we get out of the exchange of glances. Are we caught up in a 'gaze', are we rolling our eyes, do we stare? How do we look at each other? Who's looking, back? What happens next? To me, there is a contextual relativity too deeply embedded in our contemporary neo-colonial situations to ignore the politics of gazing.

Before delving too far into the larger questions I would like to think through, I feel I must qualify the terms which have already recurred often enough to be disturbing to me and which may be causing a degree of confusion or uncomfortability which is unintentional. Where I have written 'Black feminist' it is with the intention that these two terms not be taken singularly or as mutually exclusive because one without the other has historically, in a variety of places, stood in for something (someone) which does not apply to the field I am referring to. Naturally I am aware of the problematics of both the terms black and feminist, however hopefully throughout the course of this paper, it will become clear that this problem of naming is one which I am deeply concerned with and as yet cannot seem to

[2] Dis/connect is used here in the sense of its dual meaning in Afra-U S. vernacular—to 'dis', as in to *dis-respect, dis-credit, dis-tort* .

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rectify. For my purposes, the term Black feminist/womanist[3] is used in reference to a theoretical grounding put forth by women of African descent located throughout and within the African diaspora reflecting and 'theorizing'[4] on their existences as women marked in particular ways by race, class, gender and obviously, their intersections. To quote Audre Lorde (1984):

> This is what Black feminism is all about; articulating ourselves, our needs, our resistances as women, and as women within our particular environments. We don't exist in abstract.

Trying to position black feminist/womanist discourses within discussions of subjectivity, I want to get at a way of viewing the positioning of the theories being produced by Black women located in the U.S. *vis a vis* the sites for theory being suggested by women located elsewhere. In many ways this is an attempt to locate myself more firmly within the academic background which has up to this point basically shaped my understanding of Black womanist/feminist literary studies. How is that that which has taken on the name of Black feminist discourse gets positioned by women writing throughout Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Canada? By the same token how are Black women who exist in spaces outside that which has been to some degree defined by Black U.S. women positioned vis a vis black feminist discourses? In the contemporary space many black women are seizing their rights to voice and claiming liberatory, resistant, revolutionary, ways of theorizing our existences. We are coming to a point of acknowledgement and recognition of each other and the politics inherent in how we relate to one another. In fact, in both writing and action we have recognised that 'this is no time to gaze'.

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[3] Various definitions of 'womanist' have been written by scholars such as Alice Walker and Clenora Hudson-Weems. As so many definitions of feminism have been put down internationally, I turn to Ruth Meena (1992:5) who writes: 'Invariably, all scholars engaged in gender/woman studies are committed to changing oppressive gender relations. They are therefore feminists'.

[4] In a variety of ways I am avidly against monolithic or exclusionary uses of the notion of theory while at the same time, the problems I have with the naming of what we are to consider the theoretical are similar to the problems of trying to articulate that which is seen as feminist. Carole Boyce Davies (1994:5) explains that 'the terms that we use to name ourselves ... carry their strings of echoes and inscriptions. Each represents an original misnaming and the simultaneous constant striving of the dispossessed for full representation. Each therefore must be used provisionally; each must be subject to new analyses, new questions and new understandings if we are to unlock some of the narrow terms on the discourses in which we are inscribed'. For now let's consider them as being used under erasure.

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This line, 'this is no time to gaze', from the late Garnett Silk's song, 'Babylon Be Still', sounds to me like a direct call to action. Personally, as a conscious Black woman listening to this call, surrounded by mass discourse on the battles being fought on numerous fronts by Black people variously located, I cannot help but feel the need to find some way of actively placing myself on the line. In addition to recognising the challenge that other African descended women have taken up in the very act of writing their lives in the face of murderous odds, I think about the necessity for black women to find points of connection throughout the world. As a young black woman, born and raised for the most part in the United States, but who has travelled, or migrated to some extent, back and forth to Europe, Southern Africa, and the Caribbean, my concern about the level of activism that exits in the U.S. amongst Black women has escalated in the face of our international contemporary situations. When I look around me, at other women, living/existing in various spaces/countries, I see long histories of organised, political struggle—women acting out with other women.

'THIS IS NO TIME TO GAZE'!: So Why and How Do We Do It?

While there seems to have been a concentration on the feminist scholarship by Black women from the United States, when in the process of defining either Black feminist literature or theory, it has been argued that there are Black women theorizing all over the place (see Boyce Davies 1994). I believe that it is in a variety of discursive modes that black women's creative theory seizes spaces which unite us across our conditions and the particulars of our existences. I want to look at the ways in which Black U.S. women, by being placed in the centre of Black feminist discourse can, re-enact the 'gaze' on each other, whether through classist, cultural, sexist, or imperialist lenses. 'This is no time to gaze'. What are we suggesting we should do instead? 'No time for gazing'. We can no longer afford to spend our time gazing at one another, in awe or confusion, but must instead, find ways of linking up in action. What are the sites of theoretical resistance in this instance?

'This is no time for gazing'. In this highly unstable political moment we are living in all over the place, there must be a recognition of the necessity for shifts to the radical in what, how and why we theorise. Contemporary theory being written by black women placed within and without the U.S. are engaging and working through multiple theoretical locations. What I am wondering is what are the spaces that Black women, globally, are claiming (or not) and how? In the process of trying to find out how we might link up with one another, politically, ideologically, and actively, I think that certain things have generally been taken for granted. We

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know for example, that we connect at least on the grounds of oppressions wielded by colonialism and patriarchy as well as in our resilience and insistence on survival. And while some of us may challenge these constructs in popular discourse, and others in the space that has been claimed as the theoretical, I want to know how and when the line between gazing and acting gets recognised and crossed.

For my own purposes I am trying to work through these issues to better understand my own subject position and the loaded category of Black U.S. feminism that I automatically enter into. My awareness is not enough to combat the associations which for some automatically come with this identity I embody. Naturally I challenge the structures placed on me in an attempt to touch and be touched by Black people throughout the world. I must constantly ask myself, what the problems and significance are of moving throughout the world in pursuit of a higher, more complicated and well balanced understanding of how Black women internationally relate and possibly intersect. This paper should be taken as an attempt at working through some of my reflections and expressions on the subject of international black womanist/feminist discourses, hopefully engaging on a variety of fronts which implicate long standing historical issues. I will deal primarily with late twentieth century manifestations of Black 'womanism'.

on being 'the only' black/woman

1. maybe it was my naiveté that made me think that no one would stare as I went in for the first day of Italian 320. Granted, most of the students connected to the language because of family ties and looking at me they certainly didn't see me as a sister, in that sense. Being black, female, and clearly comfortable with being so, what was I doing there anyway?

2. In Zimbabwe, at the University, there was a frustration lingering in the back of my mind that made being in a classroom seem as foreign to me as sadza, and as uncomfortable as trying to explain why I can't tell you who my people are in the way I want to be able to. This particular frustration which was nourished daily by glimpses of the expressions all over my professor's face and in the eyes of some of my classmates, all Black males, made my voice run away in fear, my tongue bow down and refuse to move, my arm refuse to raise and my chest to pound uncontrollably. Arriving at this place, after having been groomed for three years by the traditions and ideologies of Spelman's cult of true black womanhood I knew that if I wanted to I could force myself to speak as I had before in Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Detroit. The freeze that came over me lasted for as long as it took to cover what was considered the introductory texts named as 'real' Zimbabwean novels. Among the required novels was Doris Lessing's The Grass Is Singing, *which would remain the one consideration of a feminist novel or a woman novelist. Absent of course were any Black women despite the fact the course was entitled: 'Zimbabean Literature', not 'Zimbabawean literature, except that written by Zimbabawean women'. When surprisingly, the professor turned his gaze fully on me for*

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the first time in the term, actually looking me full in the face with a sardonic smile not quite reaching his eyes, I couldn't help wondering what it was he might possibly want me to contribute to the discussion. After weeks of referring to me sarcastically as the 'American -woman-in-the-back-of-the-room', I thought I would have the chance to locate myself as an equal with those who surrounded me in the class. Writing now, after several months of reflection, I have come to terms with the diatribe I gave on why I can't see myself identifying with the European woman protagonist in Lessing's The Grass Is Singing. *Naturally there are degrees of foreignness which are felt differently by each newcomer, but there are also patterns, dare I say systems, of separation that so profoundly shape our views of that which is strange or different to us and that which is naturally familiar, there was nothing I could do at first but pause and take a deep breath when my professor suggested that this was a novel which should appeal to me because the protagonist was an outsider like myself. Before standing up and walking out against the levels of opposition I no longer felt like dealing with, I took my time and looked around to see if I had any support and then proceeded to try and explain the harsh realities of dis/location and dis/connection which constantly smacked me in the face while trying to find ways to articulate my sameness to people who read the 'American' identity first, to people who focused first on my 'femaleness' as if I were not aware of how subtle sexism can be, and to people who were blinded by the incongruous combination of my Blackness factored into these two other identity constructs and my location, in this particular classroom—at the University, in Zimbabwe no less. I tried to make it clear that it was not just being from a different place that separated me from the men in that class or from the male spaces of power coupled with their deeply embedded gender codes, but my particular Black womanness. It was neither arbitrary nor unconditional. The issues at hand were layered on top of each other in such a way that made it impossible for me to forget at any time that for many of my classmates I would remain in their minds as 'the American woman', while I was clear to continuously point out the fact that I was not 'American' but 'African-American', and despite or in lieu of their absence I was also 'the only Black woman' in this class, which unfortunately implied a certain level of silence. The empty spaces where African women should have been, spoke volumes and in their absence I felt so small and so unsure if the battle to give voice that I thought I was fighting out of necessity, was really real. After all, I'm sure some people still believe that by virtue of being from elsewhere I, with my American passport, belong closer to Doris Lessing than to Tsitsi Dangarembga.*

3. Why is it that the rest of the women in the women's discussion group I decided to participate in constantly look towards me whenever topics of race come up or whenever we decide to look at works by women of colour. Granted I am the only Black woman in the group but when did I ever agree to be 'the' spokeswoman for the race?

Coming out of situations where I was left unsure if, when, and how I should speak or allow myself to voice an opinion, I often wondered about the extent to which my views have been shaped by other women. Are we speaking in chorus or individually? By looking into various modes of black feminist discourse, I want to think through ways in which we replicate the gaze with each other. This is not being suggested with the intentions of prescribing a singular, monolithic, construction of what black feminism should look like, but rather, an attempt to think through the ways in which Black

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women engage each other. As variously hued and dramatically textured as we are as a people, I want to suggest ways of recognising our multiplicity through collaboration. Beginning with a discussion on the literary criticism which occupies and to some degree influences the ways in which Black feminist theories are conceptualised, I want to read through a variety of approaches. Looking into materialist based, Marxist and cultural feminisms being written by Black women as well as those texts which deal with gender construction and resistance to representations, my intention is to challenge subjective relationships between Black women and the theory they are writing.

But the obvious question here seems to be how to have the discussion in such a way as not to replicate the gaze or to suggest that all of this is really just an oppositional discourse. Political, yes and certainly oppositional when necessary, the theoretical space of Black feminist discourse is marked as resistant in the sense that the very presence of the writing stands as a challenge to some factors which collectively have sought to keep our words from us and our voices unheard. Invoking the words of Audre Lorde (1984), for 'those of us who were never meant to survive', the act of writing is challenging, but recognising that we share this space of challenge as black and women, the choice is often to write our lives for each other so that we can look into each other, pick up the strands, gather together, and implement some forms of radical change whether that change is manifested only at the level of the conceptual or fully real/ised.

Looking at the literary texts being written by Black U.S. women who take their characters 'back to Africa' from different points West, it seems as if the major commonality is our inability to survive once we have re-crossed the sea. In numerous texts, the Black woman from foreign remains foreign to cultures, to other women and to some extent to herself. Is this part of the politics of migration from which we cannot escape or are we saying that return or communication is riddled with impossibilities? From novel to autobiography most of the texts which come to mind when I think of Black women in the Diaspora writing about trying to live in Africa, have their characters become so isolated, they have no choice but to either become totally marginalised or to re-cross the ocean, stepping back across the void. Caribbean women novelists, Miriam Warner-Vieyra (1987) and Maryse Condé (1982 & 1988) both create characters who in a sense go mad because of their foreignness in Africa and U.S. writers Marita Golden (1990) and Ntozake Shange (1994) also present Black women in conditions of trauma, to some extent influenced by their position as Black women migrating through the diaspora. If this is what we are saying in our creative work, how do we link ourselves with African women in our theory? Do we merely just gaze?

Ama Ata Aidoo's *Dilemma of A Ghost* (1985) picks up similar questions in the relationship and experiences of her African American prota-

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gonist who re/turns to live in Africa with her new African husband. Aidoo also seems to be writing out the tension and difficulty of survival for a Black woman to re/turn to Africa. On this literary strain I do see recent novels by Black women trying to come to grips with the conditions of our Westerness in very radical ways. While I mentioned Shange's *Liliane* as a novel by a Black U.S. woman in which the black female protagonist is dealing with her experiences as a diasporic subject through psychological treatment, Shange's attention to the particulars, the nuances in our existence are presented in a very unique way and suggest new ways of thinking through our identities.

> I found Jean-Rene eating souvlaki at the fast-food place next to the Moulin Rouge. I was flirting with some Brazilians from the Folies Bergeres. I'd just left Lisbon, and Angola was on all our minds.
>
> In my last paintings, before I left New York, I superimposed AK-47s over foetal transparencies under Frelimo banners *La Luta Continua* was the name of the show' (Shange 1994.16)
>
> Liliane insisted, as she had to, she was an intellectual The girl truly believed certain thoughts, even certain gestures, were impossible in certain languages She was driven, by some power I never understood, to learn every language, slave language, any person in the Western Hemisphere ever spoke She felt incomplete in English, a little better in Spanish, totally joyous in French, and pious in Portuguese. When she discovered Gullah and papiamento, she was beside herself. I kept tellin' her wasn't no protection from folks hatin' the way we looked in any slave owner's language but she had to believe there was a way to talk herself outta five hundred years of disdain, five hundred years of dying cause there is no word in any one of those damn languages when we are simply alive and not enveloped by scorn, contempt, or pity. There's no word for us I kept tellin' her. No words, but what we say to each other that nobody can interpret (Shange 1994·66).

Working out similar issues, Erna Brodber's second novel *Myal*, presents an innovative way of critiquing our new world existences, taking into account a variety of African inspired cultural forms which all must necessarily be aligned in order for us to remain whole. Each of these protagonists, Liliane and Brodber's Ellen, must go through psychological traumas involving their inter-diaspora migration in order to return home and get treated. I think that to some extent while Liliane goes through psychological counselling which is not necessarily within the black cultural forms, it is significant that her therapist be able to understand the cultures out of which she speaks. Ellen, Brodber's protagonist in *Myal*, must go through cultural rebirth influenced by her entire community and which has resonances in a variety of cultural locations. Myalism is in this sense a communal experience, shaped in the New World as a way to retain any residuals possible from our realities throughout Africa. Paule Marshall's (1983) protagonist in *Praisesong for the Widow* goes through a similar

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process of trauma, illness, and rebirth via African based cultural manifestations, reshaped and specific to the existence of Black people relocated in the West—United States and the Caribbean.[5] I am looking at these newer literary forms as sites of refiguring the ways African women are viewed and how the processes of re-connection are supported[6]. Turning to the scene of Black feminist theories how do we look at each other?

Checking Ourselves, or, Feelin' the Vibe, Recognising, then Questioning

In her essay, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', Chandra Mohanty (1984) critiques the positioning of 'third world women' within feminist theory and I think that to some degree the questions she raises are applicable to the ways I am looking at the tensions between Black U.S. theory and Black women located elsewhere[7]. She writes:

> What happens when this assumption of 'woman as an oppressed group' is situated in the context of Western feminist writing about third world women? It is

[5] See Abena Busia's (1988) discussion of *Praisesong for the Widow*.

[6] Since this essay was written I have had the privilege of reading Nozipo Maraire's (1996) novel, *Zenzele* which I think takes this discussion in a new and very compelling direction. One of the vignettes in this Zimbabwean novel centres around the young African American woman struggling to locate her father from whom she had been separated for most of her life She travels throughout the African continent, basically from Cairo to the Cape. In each place she goes, she is told great stories of the activist work her father is engaged in although each time, just as she arrives in Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Uganda, Botswana, South Africa, she has just missed him. What I find particularly interesting about this story of 'Sister Africa' is that while carrying out this search, she becomes learned in various African languages and cultures, becomes a forthright political activist in her own right and is unquestionably committed to the liberation of Africa. She is taken in and even the language used to describe the affection the narrator feels for her makes this character seem an example of the reality of a woman of African descent returning to Africa to live a vibrant, significant and meaningful life Further, there is great significance in that this novel is one of very few which portrays a positive African American woman surviving in Africa and working towards positive, community based change. (On this note, see also Bessie Head's (1990) 'The Woman from America' in her collection, *A Woman Alone: Autobiographical Writings*)

[7] I feel I must point out that each time this phrase, 'Black U.S women and Black women located elsewhere' comes up, I cringe I am avidly seeking another way to express this difference in location, but as of yet, I have not found another way of getting this across

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> here that I locate the colonialist move. By contrasting the representation of women in the third world with what I referred to earlier as Western feminisms' self-presentation in the same context, we see how Western feminisms alone become the true 'subjects' of this counterhistory. Third world women, on the other hand, never rise above the debilitating generality of their 'object' status (Mohanty 1984:71).

By quoting Mohanty in this way, I am trying to see how we superimpose 'feminism' on conditions/situations which actually may be addressing that or challenging it to some degree. Several Black women located in a variety of spaces outside of the U.S. have commented on this positioning of white women's feminism and its neo-colonialist relationship to black women and their work.

In addition to criticising the whitewashing of feminism, Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar also offer critique of the versions of Black U.S. feminism acting as stand ins for all Black women's discourses. They use this moment to call Black British women to action—there is no time to gaze. While they do make reference to the tendency for Black U.S. women to concern their writing with documenting individual and collective histories, they continually look to the history of Black women in the U.S. to cite examples for their discussions. If these were the only sources available at the time to factually locate the historical situations of Black women in the West, I have to wonder who is writing the history of Black British women? Black women in the United States have not, if at all rarely, embraced or included the actual differences and particular issues being dealt with by Black British women (or Black women in Europe in general)[8].

Buchi Emecheta writes that she does not consider herself to be a feminist because to her feminism is a white woman's thing. She writes that if she must claim this identity she would use feminism with a small 'f' or under erasure. Additionally, Clenora Hudson-Weems, in her advocating of 'Africana womanism' explains that it is not feminism in the sense of a white women's movement that she is speaking out of, but rather one informed by various West African cultural formations and traditions.

For us 'this is no time to gaze', we are a people with histories of active rebellion and women who have embodied legacies of struggle for generations. So in challenging contemporary struggles, there must be some form of active engagement. Within feminist/black feminist discourse where is that space Black women occupy?

[8] I would also add that very little attention has been paid to Black Canadian women scholars by Black women in the U.S although there has always been fluid migration between these two countries. Similar patterns of re-location apply to Caribbean populations in the U.S. and in Canada

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In recognising 'dis/place, the space in between' (Phillips 1992) literature and criticism or the creative and the theoretical, black women, internationally, are posing challenges to all of the binaries which would allow the possibility of reading, too deeply from the outside. Basically, making the gaze no longer a comfortable position and challenging each other as critiques are launched at our own spectatorship, we appear to be deadlocked in a staring match. Is the aim to see who looks away first? Who's gaze is impenetrable?

Writing theory from the inside out, contemporary Black women are filling up the voids and claiming theory as a creative space and the creative as inherently theoretical. Having shifted or refigured the audience and therefore the centre, several contemporary texts discuss ways of cultural informing from the inside. To me this is the site in which we all enter and can easily contribute to thinking about our connections or ways of sharing our experiences of struggle, celebrations of life, and hope for continued (re)memory.

Taking an approach similar to that used by Tenisa Turner in her critical text *Arise, Ye Mighty People!* (1994), Carolyn Cooper is also concerned with bringing the 'interests of those at the bottom, of black women', to light. Like Turner, Cooper (1995:3) discusses how the interests of women are 'being articulated through a wide range of struggles and are finding expression through virtually all types of media'. Both of these critical writers are concerned with returning the gaze or focus to some extent, in an attempt to call attention to mis(s)read discourses, transgressive methodologies deeply embedded in culture, and the politics of these movements in contemporary popular moments. By claiming the space of writing from the 'bottoms up' a whole host of ways of transgressing are called up. From 'the bottoms' as the folk discourse, yardie livin', to the 'bottoms' of Nanny[9], or that posturing that we embody through the butterfly, the bottoms are sites of transgression in the sense of claiming spaces and postures which were not supposed to be seen. I am speaking here about what Carolyn Cooper (1992) has termed 'slackness politics' in her reading of Jamaican popular culture. What such discourse shouts is that you can go ahead and look if you want to but understand that we are determining how much we let you see and that we on the inside know what really lies within and beyond that which is seen. Our body politics and modes of embodying slackness as culture repositioned testify to our recognition that 'this is no time to gaze'.

[9] There are numerous tales and legends which surround the maroon (grand)mother Nanny. One of the most well known is that of Nanny showing her 'bottom'/back-side to the colonial officers who attempted to shoot her. The bullet lodged itself in her backside and she continued to fight on behalf of the maroons for liberation with the bullet firmly lodged.

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Now, what does all this mean when we search each other out across the voids? 'This is no time to gaze; no time for gazing ...'.

Journal—some bits and pieces

Day 1: I was standing at the door afraid to go in. It wasn't that I was actually afraid of anything or anyone in there, I think it was just the fear of trying to figure out how I would be seen when I walked in. After the long plane ride during which I flipped through the photo album my mother made for me, I thought about how my new family would look, would they look like people back home, would we be able to communicate easily. Remembering my first days of living with the Dossetto's in Italy, another country I had decided to live in before knowing the language well, I was worried that my interpretations of the written Shona phrases in the introductory language books would be way off the right pronunciation. Cautiously and a bit nervously I adjusted the waistband of my ankle-length skirt and put on a smile as I opened the door and walked into the room of Zimbabwean host parents on cue. For the next eight weeks I was to be their daughter. We greeted each other and as I carefully knelt in front of my new parents and crossed my hands in salutation, I wondered if they knew before hand that their new daughter, unlike previous years as host parents, would be a black woman.

Day 5: Each morning before my walk to school I wake up around 5:30 to the sounds of everyone else getting their day underway. While amai is in the fields, and her water is on the fire for the second round of baths and breakfasts I leap out of bed and sweep the house and the front yard. On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, I am careful to remember to polish the floors when I've finished. After I finally bathe I go to the kitchen to join amai for tea, by which time she has gathered firewood for the morning, seen all of the children off to school, prepared Baba's mid-morning meal that he takes with him, drawn water, checked on the maize and separated the laundry, careful to make sure to remind her eldest son to bring home some bread at the end of the day. We sip our tea and in our broken Shonlgish way of speaking to each other talk about what my mother in the States does for a living. Walking to school I think to myself that I know next to nothing about what being a woman really means.

Day 10: I talked to my mother in the States today. She's been worried because on the news she saw some mention of the increasing rate of Aids spreading though Nigeria. I try to calm her down by explaining the enormous size of Africa, but it is to no avail Although I think I should tell her how unlikely it is that I will 'catch the Aids' any quicker here than if I were at home going to school or working, I bite my tongue and tell her that I'll write again soon. I know she's just worried about her baby being so far away, but sometimes I feel caught in a conundrum of expectations for which I'm never too sure I am equipped. Each brief conversation with my mother reminds me that for her to reach a point where she will no longer worry will no doubt take twice as much time as my convincing her that I am really all right and can take care of myself. When she asks how my host mother is I don't know how to respond because while amai is fine I want to tell my mother how much my hands hurt because

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I tried to help amai hand wash the clothes, how my feet don't feel like mine after I tried to walk on the hot ground without my shoes as she sometimes does, and how my back hurts from trying to make sadza, and doing it wrong.

Day 26: The time is drawing nearer to when I will have to leave. I have been trying to find a way of writing about all that I've seen and learned here. Writing seems to be the way I need to process all of this, but how do I write about pieces of my life filtered through the realities of people I now consider family?

Day 45: I have been living in Kwekwe, in a high density township for three days now and life here is so different from what I had gotten accustomed to on the rural lands. The same basic cultural rules apply but the difference in the effects of the economy are forcing me to look at the ways in which Black women have to negotiate their identities in order to claim any kind of authority within the narrow spaces that have been allocated. One of the women I live with asked me to come to her shop today because she wanted to have the chance for us to talk, away from her kids and her husband. We sat on milk crates and between sips of Coke and the occasional customer come for a loaf of bread or maybe a pattie, she told me her story, without interruption. She said in a conversational tone as matter of fact as counting out change[10]*:*

> that man we live with, my husband, raped me when I was thirteen years old and my mother had sent me to him because she knew he owned several stores and might have a job for me. I told no one at first because he was such a big man, already at twenty-seven, and as I was unattached they would have said I asked him to. When I fell pregnant during the sixth week of his repeated assaults on my body, I knew it was best that I married him. I don't regret it now because then, at my age, a girl of thirteen with a baby, I would have been known as a prostitute and it (I) would have killed my mother who had hoped I would make enough money to be able to take care of myself. How could I willingly be like a prostitute or knowingly kill my own mother?

As a Black woman trying to find ways of engaging the work being done by African women writers, I think that some of the difficulty lies in the availability and accessibility of those texts which are being put forth by Black women variously located in relation to academia, culture, labour. The effects of not having access to the material cannot be taken as spaces unclaimed. From any of the sites we exist in this seems to be a difficult problem to negotiate. Whether located in the States or in various places in Africa, England or the Caribbean, there is a chain of information which links up in particular ways to further the lack of access to and by particular women vis a vis their locations. Basically, Black women located in the States lament not having access to many Black women writers from Africa without

[10] This is the story as she told it to me. I am still waiting to hear from her to know if I have her full approval to cite her as the author of this narrative.

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necessarily critiquing the politics of publishing which effect how and what we read that which we can[11].

This is no time to gaze. Black women's theory has often spoken as a call to action. Awa Thiam (1986:14) asks in *Black Sisters, Speak Out*:

> What is the use of writing about Black women, if in doing so we do not learn what they are in reality? It is up to these women themselves to set the record straight

Challenging what has been referred to as 'feminist' issues, she lays out the methodology of her book clearly from the very beginning.

> Anyone who is expecting a feminist diatribe should not read on. Black women from Africa are talking here. They express themselves simply as they reveal their problems (Thiam 1986:15)

Many critiques have been launched at white feminism and its movements as being detached from the life realities of black women, variously placed. As mentioned earlier, the seizing of the discourse and to some extent naming of it as well, as a position occupyable only by white, middle-class women has made some black women theorists leery of allying themselves with the term or category (see also Carby 1982). When Thiam (1986) separates her project from that of 'feminists', with the recognition that 'feminism is on trial', what are the implications or possibilities for connecting with Black women who have (re)claimed that space?

In her essay, 'Feminism: a Transformational Politic', bell hooks raises the issue that there is great significance in understanding that domination is something we are all capable of and insists that we recognise that we must all resist the oppressor within. Her focus is on shaping feminism in such a way as to instil a sense of positivity and a complication of our existences as being more than just women, but women with various races, ethnicities, classes, and sexualities. What I want to know is if in our differences she is accounting for the differences in our geographical and therefore cultural

[11] A few Black U S women have touched on this recently. These would include Carole Boyce Davies (1994) and Barbara Christian (1987) I think that this is something which must be actively challenged and reformed. Several feminist presses and magazines are sought to address these issues but at the same time, it is not just ensuring that the work is published but where and for whom? Then once distributed, who has access to the materials or even access to the knowledge that they exist. This is all a simplified argument because to really get into the politics of publishing, I think I'd have to go all the way back to the level of defining that which we consider texts. Do the same politics apply to the manufacturing and distribution of music or graphic arts for example?

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locations in that her prescription for what feminism needs to consider may not speak to the needs of all women, particularly Black women. On the grounds that for some Black women, the category of feminism is dubious at best, hooks' insistence that we all embrace it and her belief that we must all share a common understanding of what feminism is, scares me. Her recognition that 'if women do not share a "common oppression"', that which joins us can become elusive, reminds me of Alice Walker's definition of 'womanist'.

I keep trying to detach my present day reading of Alice Walker's (1993) definition and way of looking at Black women in relation to feminism from the project she undertakes in *Warrior Marks* but in that text I feel her gestures towards African women are missionary, paternalistic, and neo-colonial. In the same way that her definition of womanism makes little space for women, specifically Black women, who find themselves, elsewhere doing other work, her encounter with cliterodectomy as an effort to bring forth the existences of African women without consulting them suggests objectification and as such oppression. If the category of feminism does not fit Black women for all of the reasons these theorists have described, and given the various critiques launched at Alice Walker's positioning of Black women in relation to feminism as merely a deeper shade of the same thing, how and on what grounds can we actually come together?

In another essay, 'Feminist Theory: a Radical Agenda', bell hooks points again to the exclusion of the thoughts and works by women of colour within feminist discourses, and the elitism of feminism. She closes the doors on radical theorizing and in doing so I have to wonder if she is not separating herself from other forms of discourse in which Black women are engaging or thinking through our realities. As I read some of the contemporary theory there is an effort to rethink what we are referring to when we speak of 'Black feminist theory' and as I mentioned earlier this shift to active modes of communicating, writing and testifying on active spaces of discourse repositions us and our words. To that extent, it is the spaces of activism which are bursting at the seams with the insurgent voices, 'noises', of Black women, globally. When in action, who has time to gaze?

> This is no time to gaze,
> no, no, no
> no time to gaze
> play Rasta songs all the day long
> and you'll be strong
> to carry on (Garnet Silk 1995)

Having sighted up Rastafari, re/turned the gaze of white mainstream feminisms, and in effect moved beyond monolithic constructions surrounding

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how we speak to each other, contemporary Black woman theorists are shattering the panoptic lens which has tried to ensnare us throughout his/story. As an example of Black feminist thought which attempts to embrace Black women, however dispersed, several texts have recently been published which look to Rastafari as a site of (feminist!) transgression. In addition to Makeda Silvera's 'Open Letter to the Daughters of Rastafari', Terisa Turner's collection, *Arise, Ye Mighty People* seems to mark the opening of a discursive space previously existing, however virtually unrecognised.

Open Letter to Terisa Turner

Dear Sistren,

Reading this collection of essays was like watching something seemingly elusive, come to fruition. For a long time I had been in search of an easily accessible, contemporarily written, text on Rastafari which complicates women's roles and participation from within. While excited and anxious about reading, discussing and working with this text, I am also nervous and slightly uncomfortable because it involves so much for me. The silencing that has kept a book like this one from coming to popular attention earlier, has influenced the way that I think about trying to have a conversation on certain issues in certain spaces. I have come to see discussions about Rastafari as moments of insurrection. Private, not in manifestation, but in how we think together about ourselves. It was a shock to my system to be looking through a friend's bookshelf and get caught up in the power of the red, gold, and green. I stood there mesmerised and transfixed by what looked, on the outside like what I have been searching for, at least on some level. When I opened the book, I think it took me a solid twenty minutes to process my shock, amazement and happiness over seeing chapter after chapter on Rastafari and other popular struggles, but realising the concentration on women made me put the book down, grab the phone and place an order for it.

> what [does] it mean to be African-American as opposed to African, what [does] it mean to be Africans in the United States as opposed to Africans at home, what [does] it mean to be Africans who had been to Africa and for whom Africa was the field of study What ha[s] been our various experiences? (Busia & James 1993:287)

Abena Busia (1993:287) writes in this section entitled, 'After/words ...' 'and this is what we've decided to tell you after everything we've shared...', that 'we have different forms of identity'. Which is to say that as we speak out of a variety of locations which connect us to each other and to ourselves, we must in celebrating our ability to come together, acknowledge that which sets us apart from each other.

Without contextualising our existences and in some way qualifying the possibilities of differences in what is being struggled against and how, can we really say it's not still a question of gazing? The recognition of the

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perilous politics of the gaze have been written about or alluded to, so now, how is it that this acknowledgement of our lack of political or revolutionary 'time to gaze', is manifested? Quoting Amos and Parmar (1984:16) again: 'The choice to demonstrate "peacefully" or take non-direct action has never been available to us'. Further,

> we have to look at the crucial question of how we organize in order that we address ourselves to the totality of our oppression. For us there is no choice (Amos & Parmar 1984:18).

At First We May Gaze Back, But Then There Is Action

> The notion of resistance, however, is itself not unambiguous. It too can mean and has meant historically—rather diverse things, translating into different practices and strategies that must be developed each in its concrete sociohistorical situation Resistance has been armed or unarmed, for instance (though never disarmed, if it was really resistance) It can be socially organized in group action or lived subjectively as a personal commitment, and often it is both. But by the very nature of power and of the mechanisms that harness power to institutions, rather than individuals, resistance tends to be cast as op-position, tends to be seen as locked in an opposite position, or what the media calls our 'opposing view-point' (de Lauretis 1986:3).

Mary DeShazer's *A Poetics of Resistance* makes use of much of the discourse on resistance. She links

> Third World resistance discourse, which has often omitted women and/or eschewed feminism as a relevant area of inquiry, with U.S. feminist theory, which could benefit from closer attention to cross-cultural perspectives and of a poetics of resistance (DeShazer 1994:6).

She cites the work of South African theorist Zoe Wicomb who is thinking through the ways in which

> progressive—and I would add, of feminist—political discourse is to recognize that race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation can best be seen in dialectical rather than hierarchical relationship with one another (DeShazer 1994 4).

Thus, DeShazer's methodology is clear in her comparative approach to looking at literary texts written by South African, El Salvadoran, and African American women writers. By making use of such a comparison through which to theoretically locate this discourse of the poetics of resistance, I believe that DeShazer's analyses of the relationships between these variously placed women opens up spaces not just for comparisons of existences and

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how they write themselves, but also for thinking through ways of seeing poetics in spaces of transgression. She presents women who, in the very act of writing are claiming their right to that identity we were taught to despise, attesting to their survival, and are locating those noises—hearing them loudly, making them heard, and allowing them to reverberate.

In 'What's Home Got to Do With It', Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty discuss the challenge women of colour have made to the category of feminism and their placement within it. They question the possibility of finding a 'home' within feminism 'based on absolute divisions between various sexual, racial or ethnic identities'. Some critics, they write, 'situate themselves on the fence, in relation to tensions between feminism, racism and anti-semitism'. In their discussion of the tension felt surrounding the reality of 'not being home' they write of the

> realization that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and *resistance*, the repression of differences even within oneself (Martin & Mohanty 1986)

Claiming these repressed histories, or I would argue, these herstories, as the spaces of insurgence, the 'noises' are loud, rebellious, and clearly unsilenceable.

Carolyn Cooper (1992:x) distinguishes what she calls the 'noises in the blood' as

> the non-verbal elements of production and performance melody, rhythm, the body in dance and the dance-hall itself as a space of spectacle and display

Using Jamaican folk culture/popular discourses, she offers '(mis)readings of Culture' (Cooper 1992:16) in such a way as to shift the spaces, texts and forms of theorizing, rebelling or acting out. To some degree the factors which influenced Martin and Mohanty's positioning of theses spaces which are inherently transgressive as repressed within our homes, are also factors for how Cooper reads the tense relationship between C/culture and Slackness. The problem I have here is the oppositional relationship she draws between folk/oral cultures, or what we call culture in the yardie sense and that which is written or which speaks out of more (conservative) ideologies. If the political manifestations of culture are coming through the spaces which are already coded as marginal or separate from the oral, 'formal' modes of discourse, are we not merely turning the gaze, our gaze, back on an/other mode of signification?

Cooper does position slackness politics as not being concerned with

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those gazing at us in the sense of her allusion to the self-contained pleasures involved in wainin' by self. But even there, in those moments of full absorption in the dance-hall, when the music is pulsating through your body so intensely that you can't help but close your eyes and let your body move, you eventually feel the vibe of men drawing nearer, eyes penetrating your energy from around the room as your sensuality is seized from you, unwillingly. There is always a politics of gazing or being seen which can usurp our moments of personal gratification, whether in the dance-hall, hanging on the stoop or engaging with other Black women at a conference.

Himmani Banjeri (1993:xxix) writes in her introduction to the Canadian critical anthology, *Returning the Gaze*, an acknowledgement that

> we [women of colour] are engaged in politics, linking theories with practices, examining ideologies through our lives, and our lives through revolutionary ideas. We are not going shopping in the market of cultural differences and relative freedoms.

This statement reflects the agency that is part of the acknowledgement that this is not the time for simply idealising or accepting distorted levels of access to recognition and any thing less will not be stood for. Paule Marshall says in an interview with Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, 'we are in the process of re-creating ourselves all over the world and it's a fascinating task' (Boyce Davies 1995:22). Additionally, in the introduction to *Moving Beyond Boundaries: Black Women's Diasporas, Vol 2*, Carole Boyce Davies (1995:13) writes that her text

> sees black women's experiences as existing in a variety of dispersed locations, all engaged in the process of re-creating our worlds as they write new and positively transformed worlds into existance

There is great excitement in hearing women celebrating this process of insurgent, resistant, re-creation as part of something that Black women have been doing all along. As a student just beginning to attempt to work through ways of reading our lives, engaging with other Black women and their texts, I feel like there are these intonations which once sounded to me like whispers, but now are heard all around me in the conversational tone of the heated kitchen talk with my mother, or the exuberant voices of my girls around the table on a night of playin' Spades. They come to me in many languages, sometimes all at once, some of them immediately recognisable, others heard just as loudly but in languages which challenge me to make the effort to understand reality in their terms. These are the sounds of women challenging the ways they have been gazed at, looked back, talked back, acted out.

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This paper has been an attempt at rowdiness
it was supposed to be loud
full of voices
making noise
hailing each other up
embracing
moving through
with force
too occupied with resistance
to be worried about
what we look like
but rather
how we are
looking
and what we see
when we look
out into the blackness
NO
this is certainly
no time to gaze.

Conclusion: or a Forward Migration

Drawing on the words of a few women from around the globe who have come before me, I have tried to put together some critical thoughts and questions on various issues within contemporary 'Black Feminist' theories with the hopes of seeing a way forward. Since the first (second and third) revision of this text, I have been fortunate to have had access to several texts which clarify, alter and expand many of the questions and ideas engaged here. In addition to several texts on the subjectivity of the author, new directions in feminist theorising in southern Africa as well as several dated pieces which contextualise feminisms in an African frame, these ideas have been affected (positively) by grassroots struggle and community activism.

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Looking at Women: Feminist Perspectives and Concerns in Three Xhosa Poems[1]

P.T. Mtuze

Introduction

Feminist scholars are agreed that feminism has various strands and emphases, depending on what is focused on at a particular moment. Janet Radcliffe Richards (1984:13) says in this regard about 'feminism':

> The word seems to have no precise and generally recognised meaning, but it has picked up a good many connotations of late, and an unexplained statement of support for feminism may therefore easily be misunderstood, and taken to imply commitment to more than is intended

Elaborating, however, on her argument that there is nevertheless a 'strong fundamental case' for feminism, she says the basic reason is 'that women *suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex*'. Despite the many forms of feminism, there is one recurrent motif that runs through virtually all feminisms to confront various forms of patriarchy. Greene and Kahn (1985:2) state:

> Feminists do . . find themselves confronting one universal—that whatever power or status may be accorded to women in a given culture, they are still, in comparison to men, devalued as 'the second sex'. Feminist scholars study diverse social constructions of femaleness and maleness in order to understand the universal phenomenon of male dominance

[1] This article is a reworked component of my doctoral research, *A Feminist Critique of the Image of Woman in the Prose Works of Selected Xhosa Writers (1909-1980)* (see Mtuze 1980).

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There have been divergent views on feminism in African society. Of course the debate is complicated by a large measure of self-interest in some cases, e.g. the affirmation of the dichotomy between male and female, between givers and takers and between the emancipated and the oppressors for the benefit of either males or females. In Africa, women have also suffered under 'male dominance' and from 'systematic social injustice because of their sex'. However, as in other parts of the world, the developing feminisms in Africa have not supported feminisms from abroad uncritically. Arianna Stassinopoulos (1974:160) expresses similar sentiments on the efficacy of some of the tenets of feminism in the 1970s.

> I have sought to show that both common and uncommon sense demand emancipation but deny the tenets of Women's Lib We are different from men—different but equal. The roles which we can play in society are not artificially restricted by some eternal international conspiracy in which all men since the Stone Age have joined. There is no Palaeolithic plot to hold us back The female woman will assert her right to be free but she will refuse to allow the Libbers to force her to become an *erzats mann*. The frenetic extremism of Women's Lib seeks not to emancipate women, but to destroy society. The hand that refuses to rock the cradle is all too eager to overturn the world. The female woman wants to live as an equal in the world, not to destroy it in the vain search for an instant millennium. Her search for emancipation will improve and reform; Women's Lib will deface and destroy

The most impressive development in this context has certainly been that of 'womanism' in the African American community. First used by Alice Walker (1983), both the womanness of the woman and Afrocentricity are emphasised. A 'womanist' is then someone committed to the development of equal interaction between male and female and the survival of a whole people. In its more developed sense it focuses on the richness, complexity as well as the uniqueness and struggles of women's experiences in societies hostile to their womanhood and to them being black.

In confronting the universal of male dominance in all its complexity at a particular moment, feminism has to account for the stereotyping of male and female. This is also true of African feminism or womanism. The main argument in this article is that women's emancipation from their suffering brought about by oppressive relations in society, must confront and change the stereotypical views about men and women. One of the most important stereotypes is that a woman should be silent in society.

The Breaking of Silence: Confronting the Stereotype

The kind of debate and agitation that thunders around the country and the world over, including China, Beijing, more recently, proves Sheila

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Rowbotham (1983:29) was not off the mark when she remarked about the deceptive silence at the time, a silence which many mistook for acquiescence and contentment with the status quo:

> The oppressed without hope are mysteriously quiet. When the conception of change is beyond the limits of the possible, there are no words to articulate discontent so it is sometimes held not to exist. The mistaken belief arises because we can only grasp silence in the moment in which it is breaking. The sound of silence breaking makes us understand what we could not hear before. But the fact that we could not hear does not prove that no pain existed The revolutionary must listen very carefully to the language of silence. This is particularly important for women because we come from such a long silence.

Whereas the silence of women has been brought about by stereotypical relations in society, the breaking of silence means that the stereotypes, especially on the silence of women, must be confronted and changed. Irrespective of whether the stereotype represents truths concerning realities of a person or group, people in society must recognise that these stereotypes are all just roles into which they have been socialised. It is because of such socialisation that they accept these stereotypical representations about people as true and that their behaviour and interaction are determined by such socialisation. Sheila Ruth (1980:18) says in this regard:

> *Stereotype* is a concept related to role, yet distinct. Defined by one author as a 'picture in our heads', stereotype is a composite image of traits and expectations pertaining to some group (such as teachers, police officers, Jews, hippies, or women)—an image that is persistent in the social mind though it is somehow off-centre or inaccurate. Typically, the stereotype is an overgeneralisation of characteristics that may or may not have been observed in fact Often containing a kernel of truth that is partial and misleading, the stereotype need not be self-consistent, and it has a remarkable resistance to change by new information

Commenting on the undesirable constraining effects of stereotyping on a person, De Klerk (1989:5) relates stereotyping to 'perception' or looking and says:

> Stereotypes are abstractions, simplifying what otherwise might have overwhelmingly diverse meaning The expectations stereotypes generate can have undesirable constraining effects on person-perception, and have behavioural consequences. Any pervasive, widely shared expectation about people in a social category inevitably exerts subtle pressure on its members to display behaviours, traits and attitudes consistent with it Sex-role stereotypes are tenaciously held, well-defined concepts that prescribe how each sex ought to perform. Such sex-role stereotypes generate sex-role standards (i.e expectations about how each sex ought to act) and the stereotypes and standards reinforce each other

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The mutual reinforcing of sex-role standards and stereotypes bring about perceptions and behaviour into which people are continuously socialised. In terms of the views expressed, woman is a social construct. She is what the male dominated society wants her to be. Anything to the contrary is deviant and is strongly frowned upon. Where these socialisations cause women suffering and pain, women have been breaking the silence. Three recent Xhosa poems which focus on women provide an opportunity to look at how women are either viewed stereotypically or how the stereotype is confronted.

Mema's Poem

The best and most up to date example of male stereotypic but highly idealistic view of the woman comes from a poem by a very talented and highly educated poet, Mema (1984:30) whose poem reflects current male stereotypical views of women:

Umfazi Wokwenene (S.S.M. Mema)	**The True Woman (S.S.M. Mema)**
Yiperil' enqabileyo umfazi onesidima,	She is a rare pearl, the dignified woman,
Yasolok' inomkhitha eyakhe indima.	Her role is ever attractive to society
Akonwab' ezimbuthweni zokucukucez' uluntu,	She never finds happiness in gossip groups,
Uyonwab' akhululeke kwakwenzelwana ubuntu.	She is very happy when generosity is shown
Ukutheth' ukuvinjiwe ubalasele ngezenzo;	She is reticent but gifted as far as actions;
Akuhlala rhuth' ingxowa aqalise ukuluka.	When she sits she opens her bag and knits.
Bufika nje ubusika selumfumamfum' usapho;	By the breaking of Winter her family is cosy;
Akoyik' ukulwalatha—lulibhongo neqhayiya.	Not shy to point them out—they're her pride.
Wakungen' endlwini yakhe kuthi gungqu bubushushu;	When you enter her house it is nice and warm,
Kubasiwe kuphekiwe, nawe mhambi ulindiwe	There's fire, food and the visitor is welcome.
Ukuncum' akazenzisi kutsh' uzive usekhaya,	Her smile is genuine, it makes you feel at home;
Uyay'qond' intsikelelo yokubuk' abasemzini	She realises the blessing of being kind to strangers
Kwindod' akhe ngumlingane akafilo ipolisa;	To her husband she's a friend, not a policeman,
Kwakuqaleka umlilo akagaleli malahle.	When trouble starts she does not fan it all.
Akayongwe kubantwana bayamthanda bemhlonele;	No tiger to the children, they love and respect her
Bangalwa babe majaja khe kwagxekw' umama wabo.	They would fight like mad if mama is disparaged.
Kwimibutho yokuhlala ulilungu lokuqala,	She's the first member of social associations,
Ungumakhi wempucuko engancwasanga luzuko.	The builder of culture who does not seek glory.
Uyazazi iimbedlenge wanyisa iintsizana;	She knows the needy and feeds the destitute;

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Ungunina kwiinkedama kuy' inimba ayikhethi.	The mother of the orphans who treats all alike.
Awunethi umzi wakhe kub' usebenza ngokwakhe,	Her house is solid as she works herself;
Uyalima ahlakule, ze kungasweleki ukutya.	Tills and cultivates so that there's always food
Xa esiya kukh' amanzi akalindani namfazi;	When fetching water, she waits for no womanfriend;
Akukho umenza mvaba, engathuthelwa zindaba	She's not drawn to say things or brought any gossip
Lingaphezu kwegolide elakhe ixabiso;	Her value is certainly more than gold;
Ayinakuqikelelwa bani eyakhe intengiso.	She is priceless, no one can state her value
Uvunywa sisizwe sonke ngendili nangentobeko;	The whole nation confirms her dignity and loyalty;
Liyamngqina nalw' izulu ngokholo nangemfezeko.	Even heavens confirm her faith and her flawlessness

Spatial and temporal limitations do not permit a detailed analysis of the poem, however, it is evident that this poem confirms many stereotypical views about women. One issue that women are becoming more and more impatient about is that they are being showered with praises by men who idealise them with the sole purpose of keeping them in inferior positions and statuses. Women become ever more critical of men's idealisation of women and react against male dominance.

Mema views women in their 'traditional' role as determined by Christian tradition amongst others. He idealises women in terms of men's and societal expectations. To achieve this, he uses powerful metaphorical images such as 'she is a rare pearl' and 'her worth is more than that of gold'. This serves to inculcate in women a sense of complacency and satisfaction. He describes the woman's 'attractive' role with the same purpose in mind. Women are, therefore, exhorted to keep this idealistic role.

Mema also invokes the stereotype of the woman as a gossip, as well as the Great Mother. He stresses that the woman is homebound as she is expected to give solace to the distressed, succour to the destitute, and to show hospitality to strangers. Her humility is borne by the fact that she should be a partner and not a policeman to her husband. This means that she should not poke her nose into her husband's affairs for as long as he keeps them away from her.

Mema also clearly highlights the woman's role in social and civic matters. His poem relates intertextually to Proverbs 31:10-31, which brings it in line with a very old stereotype, one that spans centuries and many cultures. People's relationships with and towards women in line with this stereotype ensure that they hold beliefs concerning the stereotype and not concerning the realities of women, how they see themselves and how they write about themselves. This could be attested by the fact that there is a wide chasm between the woman in the stereotype and the woman in the real life

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situation. This reality comes out very strongly in Ndlazulwana's poem discussed below. Both the woman's voice and her point of view come out strongly in the latter poem and the dissonance with the male voice cannot be mistaken.

The male bias is unmistakably present in the terms and notions related to womanhood in Mema's poem. To be dignified is an attribute that should function for both men and women. It should not be manipulated for personal gain by men with a view to subjugate women.

Mema clearly limits the role of woman to those things that she should do. Firstly, she should be a perfect mother of all. This stereotype shows the woman as hospitable, caring and homebound. Tong (1993:155) explains this stereotype as follows:

> We expect mothers to be perfect, to strike a golden mean between too little mothering on the one hand and too much mothering on the other hand; and we attribute all manner and fashion of evils to imperfect mothers who mother too little or too much.

It is also evident that Mema believes in having different gender roles for men and women. The woman's role is limited to domestic chores. The only other role that could be assigned to women, in terms of Mema's views, is membership of local community organisations and tilling the soil in order to produce food. This is all in line with the stereotype that women should be confined to the private sphere as pointed out by Tong (1993:152):

> Dinnerstein observed that the final characteristic of gender arrangements is the tacit agreement between men and women that men should go out into the public world and that women should stay behind, within the private sphere.

There is incontrovertible evidence that women's aspirations and realities point to the fact that women are entering domains that were conventionally monopolised by men. They are out in the armies, on the roads as drivers and some even piloting aeroplanes. A large number of women hold executive positions in industry and big business. While these realities spell progress, in society they are not attractive because men feel threatened and the power of convention especially in a stratified patriarchal society such as the African society, militates against such inroads onto what used to be considered as male preserves.

The bottomline in this kind of stereotyping is that 'women ought to remain in the household' (Garlick, Dixon & Allen 1992:6). Society deliberately creates a public/private paradigm to keep women in subservience as attested by Garlick, Dixon and Allen (1992:6):

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> The paradigm prevents the actions of women from being considered according to the same criteria as those of males. Their deeds may be identical, but the interpretative act takes these identical endeavours and assess them according to the public/private paradigm.

The oppressive nature of this paradigm is further evident in the comment that:

> When the women do enter the world of the public action, their status in the public world cannot match that of the males because, according to the paradigm, they do not belong there, striding elegantly in the world of the mind and masculine creativity (Garlick, Dixon & Allen 1992.6).

Some of the stereotypes thrive on vague generalisations. Women are associated with gossip whereas men also gossip. Generosity is associated with 'good', 'kind', or 'true' women (to use Mema's words) whereas men also need to be generous. One can only conclude that even the generosity that women need to show is devoid of power and authority. In short, they are not fully empowered to go out and work and take proactive steps to show generosity themselves.

One of those restrictive generalisations is that a true woman is of necessity reticent. Why should men not be reticent? Surely this is some kind of muzzling, or, to put it conversely, reticence is equal to passivity.

The perfect mother stereotype holds that a woman should knit to keep her family warm in winter. It ignores the fact that thousands of women are keeping societies together with their work in various areas and domains - from factories, industry, 'domestic work', to executive jobs including the public sector. Women would definitely not like to be limited to just being 'bashful' and just to be actively engaged in knitting, in the same way that husbands also have responsibilities concerning a 'cosy' family in winter.

Women reject the 'good wife' stereotype in spite of its pseudoflattery. As can be seen from the following comments by Simone de Beauvoir (1987:207) it has far reaching implications for womanhood:

> Deprived of her magic weapons by the marriage rites and subordinated economically and socially to her husband, the 'good wife' is man's most precious treasure. She belongs to him so profoundly that he is responsible for her. He calls her his 'better half'. He takes pride in his wife as he does in his house, his lands, his flocks, his wealth, and sometimes even more; through her he displays his power before the world: she is his measure and his earthly portion.

It is obvious that stereotyping is driving a wedge between the woman and the man's role. Who is responsible for the 'nice and warm' house as well as the 'fire, food' and to let the visitor feel welcome? Does a husband not have an

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equal responsibility to set up a house, to see that there is fire and food? The smile that welcomes people and make them feel at home, surely is also the husband's responsibility in the same way that he must also show kindness to strangers.

The remarks about women not being policemen to their husbands and their participation in social organisations raise many questions and could have far reaching implications. Why is she not a policeman to her husband? Can he still sleep around as he likes? What about the trust between husband and wife? These are only some of the questions that are begged by the abovementioned assertion.

Men should also have the same concerns for food. They need not fetch it, but in our industrial age, they can see that the municipal services provide water for all. One can only agree with Garlick, Dixon and Allen (1992:67) that

> the public/private paradigm with its gender component sets values on our expressions and the paradigm does not simply articulate a boundary between two spheres, but it places a positive normative value on that division.

Ndlazulwana's Poem

Mema's idealism, contrasts radically with the attitude of one of the most modern women poets, Nobantu Ndlazulwana (1986:27) whose poem, 'Ubufazi' (Womanhood) reflects female protest against male domination more overtly than the female novelists have done so far:

Ubufazi (Nobantu Ndlazulwana)	***Womanhood (Nobantu Ndlazulwana)***
Mandibe sisichenge phezu kweliwa na; Mandibe yindawo yengqushu na; Mandibe lidini lenkohlakalo na; Kuba kusithiwa ndinkene-nkene ndingumfazi?	Should I hang precariously over a cliff, Should I be the trampling ground: Should I be the sacrifice of wickedness, Just because they say I am weak, I am a woman?
Ndiyayizam' imizam' iphumelele, Ndiyayifezekis' imnqwen' izalukeke, Kodw' amalungel' andinawo Kuba kuthiwa ndibuthathaka ndingumfazi.	I do achieve success in my efforts, I do realise some of my wishes, But I am deprived of all the rights Just because they say I am weak, I am a woman
Asingabo bonk' abafaz' abacudiselekileyo, Ayisithi sonk' abant' ababandezelekileyo, Asingomzi wabafazi wonk' ohluphekileyo. Kwilizwe labafazi kulapho ndivela khona.	Not all the women are oppressed, Not all of us are deprived, Not all the womenfolk are destitute, I come from the world of the women.

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Amalinge am awa phantsi,	All my efforts are in vain,
Imiyalelo yam ayinamzalisekisi,	My injunctions none will fulfil,
Imizabalazo yam ayinanzwa bani	My struggles none will take heed of
Kuba kuthiwa andinamandla ndingumfazi	Just because they say I am weak, I am a woman

Ndlazulwana vehemently challenges the treatment meted out to women. She sees the women as being exploited, abused, and sacrificed as the weaker sex. Her indignation at this stereotype of the woman as the weaker sex is confirmed by the refrain at the end of every stanza: 'Kuba kusithiwa ndinkenenkene ndingumfazi' (Just because they say I am weak, I am a woman).

Similar ironic use of the affirmation of womanhood (against both white male and white female) is present in Sojourner Truth's speech in the United States of America in Akron, Ohio, in 1852 when she argued for the equal rights of Black women (see bell hooks 1981:160):

> .... Well, children, whar dar is so much racket dar must be something out o' kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of the Souf and de women at de Norf all a talkin 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin 'bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best places . . and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! .... I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ain't I a woman? I could work as much as any man (when I could get it), and bear the lash as well—and ain't I a woman? I have borne five children and I seen 'em mos all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus hear—and ain't I a woman?

The refrain in Ndlazulwana's poem (as in Sojourner Truth's expression, 'ain't I a woman?') indicates that this statement is used to keep women out of certain activities in society as well as to subject them to various kinds of subjugation. They are not allowed to hold certain positions wherein they could take decisions on their life and fate. Instead they have to rely on men and endure untold wickedness from them. Male dominance ensures that women are relegated to and kept in inferior roles in society. Because they cannot be productively engaged in society, women experience themselves as 'hanging precariously over a cliff, being the trampling ground and being the sacrifice'.

There is something else in the refrain that cries out for comment. This is the statement 'they say that I am weak...'. Firstly, Ndlazulwana clearly shows that she does not support the stereotype that women are the weaker sex. While she rejects the imputation by others, especially because the attribute 'weak' implies both physical and intellectual weakness, her statement proves beyond doubt that she has been subjected to all these stereotypes through socialisation. In her own culture but on a more universal level, Erika Coetzee (1990:33) articulates this as follows:

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> Approaches to stereotypes as tools of socialization have stressed the social construction of role models and the ways these are internalized by children as part of 'growing up'.

Ndlazulwana also uses several images to indicate women's denigration: 'the trampling ground' and 'the sacrifice of wickedness'. In the whole poem, she depicts women as fulfilling their role as adequately as men but, notwithstanding, the women are discriminated against.

More importantly, Ndlazulwana describes this experience as 'wickedness' which is perpetrated against women. This is a serious accusation against men. The notion of wickedness in African society involves cruelty to others, something which is strongly condemned. Ndlazulwana deliberately uses a word that sharply attacks the kind of treatment meted out to women.

Efforts and wishes can not be realized because women do not enjoy the same 'rights' as men. Obviously, a rights culture will advance the equality (not the sameness) of people; equality in various settings in society, work, pay and relationship. Women need equality in the eyes of the law, equality in religious matters and equality in all matters affecting their well-being.

Ndlazulwana's cryptic remark that all women are not oppressed seems to refer to women who have liberated themselves from oppressive stereotypical exploitation as well as to being discriminated against as a black person.

The final lament is a lament in which the powerlessness of the woman is expressed and the content of the refrain functions as a boundary which is not to be crossed. That this boundary can in fact be crossed is indicated in the penultimate stanza where the poetess points out some women who have escaped subjugation.

It is obvious from Ndlazulwana's poem that black women suffer a double oppression. They are oppressed as women and also as blacks. Bias and prejudice in stereotyping always go against the outgroup as pointed out by the report of the East European Area Audience and Opinion Research (1980:4):

> The employment of this research tool is based on the observation that, as a rule, people ascribe more flattering characteristics to their own social, religious, national etc. group than to other groups. Consequently, characteristics projected to Jews, Blacks and Gypsies were expected to show the amount of prejudice that exists towards these groups in Europe.

From Ndlazulwana's poem it is clear that her autostereotype or self-image is positive. She does everything to show that she is a full human being but she meets opposition against all her laudable efforts. Despite this positive self-image, women are projected as weak and deviant from the norms of maleness. What Gerwel (1987:91) says about racial stereotypes concerning Coloureds, can equally be applied to women.

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> There is in these works a consistent representation of coloureds as a different social category characterised by deviant social behavioral patterns, a comical and pathetic falling short in the living of imitating cultural patterns, emotional bankruptcy or childishness and in general, an unfaithfulness to the fullness of humanness[2]

In male dominated society, women's 'efforts' and 'success', the realisation of their 'wishes', their 'injunctions' and 'struggles', often cause them to be viewed 'as a different social category'. To them are ascribed 'social behavioral patterns' deviating from male norms. Often this also causes them as stereotype, to be the objects of male jesting, to be viewed as people falling short of living according to male determined 'cultural patterns', not to be able to express their emotions, to act childisly or not to be fully human. Ndlazulwana's protests beg the question why women remain in their subjugated positions (in home and larger society) and, as she herself says, why no-one takes heed of women's struggles, injunctions and efforts. They rather stay on at their married homes and put up with denigration in spite of the harsh treatment. Why don't they decide to break ties with the abusive husbands, protest against oppression and exploitation and lead independent lives? The reasons why they stay on in these relations are multiple. One of the main ones is socio-economic reasons and not masochism. Ronelle Pretorius (1987:102) convincingly argues that:

> Psychoanalysis attributes the behaviour of women who stay in an abusing relation to masochism, and thus reinforces the stereotype of women 'coming back for more'. Socio-economic reasons for staying on are ignored and the theory promotes an attitude of blame-the-victim

The culturally oppressive stereotype must be rejected and the real reasons identified and dealt with. Another strategy would be for women to develop different categories which would account for their own behaviour, wishes, efforts and struggles. Duckitt holds this view and says that women should 'try to present themselves as category inconsistent in some other important respects'. He points out that, 'followers' needs can be satisfied more effectively by new social categorisation, intergroup norms, or behaviours' (Duckitt 1991:129).

Tong (1993:30) advocates 'androgyny' as a solution to the problems besetting the relations between men and women:

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[2] Daar is in die betrokke werke 'n konsekwente voorstelling van gekleurdes as 'n onderskeie sosiale kategorie gekenmerk deur afwykende sosiale gedragspatrone, 'n komieklike en patetiese tekortskieting in die uitlewing van nagebootsde kulturele patrone, emosionele bankrotskap of kinderlikheid en in die algemeen 'n afvalligheid van die volheid van menswees.

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> But recently, some liberal feminists have provided us with another approach. This last is a conceptual approach that counteracts the inclination to think less of a person on account of the person's gender. The concept I refer to here is that of the androgynous person (from the Greek words for male [andro] and female [gyn] respectively). If we think the issue through, one fundamental way to ensure that no person will be discriminated against on account of his or her gender is to guide persons to exhibit both masculine and feminine gender traits and behaviors.

For Ndlazulwana, however, the poem can also be read as not closing with a hopeless lament. The foregrounding of injunctions and struggles suggests the answer: women should free themselves from their oppressed situation.

Satyo's Poem

Among the male writers who have said anything about the Xhosa woman, Satyo (in Mtuze & Satyo, 1986:48) is certainly the most outstanding as far as articulating the woman's dilemma especially in the past political set-up when children had been detained, killed or sentenced to death for politically-related crimes.

Umama oNtsundu (S.C. Satyo)	**The Black Mother (S.C. Satyo)**
Uthando olusithonga	The thunderous love
Lukamama—	Of a mother
Umama oNtsundu.	The Black mother.
Intliziy' isemafini,	The heart is in the clouds,
Ezinkwenkwezini phaya,	There in yonder stars,
Nangona phof' ebhajisiwe	Although she is hoist
Ziinzingo zobulawulwa	By miseries of subjection
Intliziy' umnqwen' ifun'	The heart's desire burning
Ukubhabhel' empumelelweni—	To fly up to success—
Ewe, intliziyo, ingqondo,	Yes, the heart, the mind,
Ubuntu bale ndlezana	This kind woman's humanity
Buyankcunkca ..	Running at a steady pace
Nokub' umnyeph' uyamxinzelela	Even when the white man oppresses
Umama, ... umam' oNtsundu.	The woman, ... the Black woman,
Konke ngenxa yeyakh'	All because of her own
Imvana.	Lamb.
Le nyibib' umama nangona	This lily the mother even though
Ilalisw' uqweqwe kukuqhotswa,	Her skin is fried to crust,
Kuqhotsek' ukhoko olo kuphela.	Only the crust is fried
Yon' intliziyo nomphefumlo	The heart and the soul
Zikhwapheke khu.	Enjoy total protection.

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Akuzala lo mamandin'	When she gives birth, this woman
Ukhokhotyiswayo,	Who is abused and battered,
Ukhusa ngapha ukhokhotyiso,	She wards off this side the abuses.
Akhuse ngapha ukhobokiso,	And wards off the other enslavement,
Ze lowo uzelweyo angaqali	So that the newly born at first
Abon' ubuntlini-ntlini	Should not see the misery
Bentlalo. esenofokotho	In his life when still so young
Lo mam' umama ayifundis' imveku yakhe	This true mother teaches her baby
Ukumemeth' ithemba—	To hold on to whatever hope—
Inkxaso-mphefumlo	Sustainer of the soul
Yongonyanyelweyo.	Of the victimized
Amfundis' ukuthana	And teach it to
Ntsho-o-o-	Stare without flinching—
Nenkwenkwezi ukuz'	At the star so that
Umphefuml' u-u	The soul may
Phuncuncu	Be released
Kudaka abekwe kulo	From the mire it's dumped in
Ngabom umam' emama.	Wilfully, this true mother.
Ithole lomam' ontsika,	The child of mother steadfast
Lisungula mayana nje	Will start slowly subtly
Ukuxatyangelwa kolonwab'	As steadily the gaps are filled
Olumagqagqa.	Amidst that scanty joy

Satyo is neither idealistic nor overtly condemnatory with regard to the role of women. Instead, he, in a calm and collected manner, shows how women had to cope with the vicissitudes of life especially in the past political context. As pointed out earlier, the political pressures of the time were always a source of great frustration to all concerned. The hurt felt by black women is even greater than that of men, given that their children had bitter experiences since the start of the political upheavals in the country. Women were responsible for supporting their dehumanised husbands throughout the years. Then they were charged with the further responsibility of nurturing their children in a strife-torn country, in the same way that they had to stand by their husbands during the colonial times and during the ensuing resistance to white domination. The youth are the leaders of the future, therefore, the mothers must cushion them from the hard knocks of life and teach them hope, love, and equanimity. This whole exercise, as pointed out by Satyo, had not left the Black woman unscathed: 'Her skin is fried to crust'.

One can see from Satyo's poem that the black woman has been entrusted with a fresh responsibility of bringing up and giving direction to an offspring that is riddled to the marrow by the destructive blows of present day life. She must nurture them and cushion them from the merciless onslaught until they can find some meaning and enjoyment in their lives.

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Total sacrifice is still part of the contemporary woman but this is now for a cause greater than washing pots and sweeping floors occasionally interspersed with idle gossip and cringing to eke out some existence. No doubt, Satyo is trying to influence the way we look at women by constructing other models and images of womanhood.

The mother's love is, metaphorically speaking, 'thunderous' because it occasionally explodes into loud bursts in order to make its presence felt in what could be regarded as a sea of lovelessness. It is situated in the clouds, high above any elements of restraint and bondage that are caused by the miseries of subjugation. She is hoisted and enshackled but her love towers freely in the open skies. This is an indication that despite the thunders of subjection which she experiences, she can still hoist and uplift her love to be overwhelming, of belittling of transcending subjection.

The stanza beginning with 'the heart's desire ...' is an indication of how this thunderous love can transcend and even eradicate miseries, because of her 'heart's burning desire ... success ... in both heart (passion) and mind (cognition).

The stanza beginning with the words 'Even when the white man oppresses ...' clearly focuses on the ravages of dual oppression on black men and women but since only 'The woman, ... the Black Woman' is mentioned, her oppression is foregrounded. The juxtapositioning of the white oppressor on the one side and the oppressed black woman on the other is used as a conscious gap-making which has whole stories of content and experiences of Black South African women. Between the oppression of white women experienced at the hands of white patriarchy and that of Black women lies an area fertile with denigration, dehumanisation and dominance which white women have certainly never been exposed to.

The notion of the Lamb (note the capital letter) is dual in connotation. While the sacrificial Lamb, Christ, is implied as the epitome of all suffering, the primary consideration of the poet is to refer to the woman's children who have to be sacrificed on a daily basis on the altar of injustice. Paradoxically enough, the mother is also leading a sacrificial life of suffering and dehumanisation as attested by such images as 'frying' and 'warding off the blows' and various other abuses alluded to in the poem.

Reference to the total protection and the freedom of the heart and soul in this poem stresses the power of hope in despair. The woman experiences external pain against which she is bound to protest, but she also takes courage from the fact that her faith keeps her intact. This does not imply that one must be content with having one's heart and soul protected and not provide opportunities for one's 'heart and soul' to realise themselves in society and to counter male dominance. Woman's plight, as can be seen from the images constructed, is beyond hope but she is sustained by faith alone as she keeps hoping against hope.

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As said above, Satyo is re-presenting and re-interpreting the woman's role and in this way creates new models for us, in line with what Garlick, Dixon and Allen (1992:6) say:

> All description of human action by artists, scholars, news media, or the gossip over the back fence entails interpretation In order to interpret we empty paradigms, models of how the world functions so that we can organise the vast variety of human experience ... The process of organizing the experiences so as to be able to re-present them, though, entails working with particular perceptual frameworks on the part of both the re-presenter and the one to whom the events are re-presented

The new images and models challenge the status quo and compel the oppressor to face the historical reality, an act that 'leads to a meditation on the experience of dispossession and dislocation'—psychic and social—as pointed out by Williams and Chrisman (1994:122).

It is obvious that abuse, battering, and all the negative attitudes that women have to endure, demand positive counter measures. The poet does not advocate violence but holds out fortitude as the best form of resistance when all else had failed. This is the model that Satyo presents to the world.

It is remarkable to note that Satyo is bent on eliminating revenge and vindictiveness and avoids the tendency to pass on one's hatred of one's adversaries to one's off-spring.

Beyond the hope as sustenance for the freedom of the soul, the poet clearly criticises the conditions under which women must live. 'Staring at the star' signifies someone steadfastly holding onto the hope of imminent salvation through God's mediation. An allusion to Bethlehem's star of freedom cannot be denied here.

It is clear that the woman in Satyo's poem has shifted from the predetermined roles assigned to her by social norms and expectations as manifested in Mema's poem. Shifting contrasts radically with the fixing that goes with stereotyping as evidenced by Homi Bhabha (1994:66):

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation, it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition

The advocacy of a 'free spirit' cannot be equated with cowing down and capitulation. The history of the liberation struggle is full of women who proactively took up cudgels against the system with a view to discarding oppression. These women have gone against the grain of the narrow code

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and defied the stereotypical expectations of their societies in order to impress their own stamp of authority on what they consider right and wrong.

Satyo's poem takes cognisance of this role but goes beyond the state of war to depict the women as resolutely epitomising active resistance, to put it paradoxically. It is through this resoluteness and active resistance that the gaps in the lives of the new-borns could be filled with therapeutic joy.

Conclusion

The three poems have clearly indicated that we have gone a long way from merely idealising women to realising aspirations, struggles and the pain and suffering they have gone through as they fought side by side with the men who appear to be, sometimes, quite reluctant to grant them full equality in a non-sexist and democratic new South Africa. It is evident that those who are sympathetic or empathetic to the cause of black women are greatly concerned about their exploitation and oppression. The main problem is that society functions with stereotypes which, if they are not changed, will continue as cultural patterns into which people are socialised and which will continue the vicious circle of denigration and exploitation. In the context of the stereotype, we can now identify this to be due to both sexism and sex-roles.

Sexism, Lisa Tuttle (1987:292) argues, is

> .. constructed by analogy with racism, first used around 1968 in America within the Women's Liberation Movement, now in widespread, popular use. It may be defined as the system and practice of discriminating against a person on the grounds of sex. Specifically, it refers to unfair prejudice against women (sex-roles), the defining of women in regard to their sexual availability and attractiveness to men (objectification), and all the conscious and unconscious assumptions which cause women to be treated as not fully human, while men are identified as the norm.

From the above definition, it is evident that stereotyping is the labelling agency of sexism which is the implementation agency. Some of the discriminatory practices manifest themselves in the various sex-roles which Lisa Tuttle (1987:293) explains as follows:

> The concept of sex-roles (which might more appropriately be called gender-roles) was developed by sociologists as a way of describing the appropriate social functions filled by men and women. Behind the term was the assumption that there were certain traits and qualities which were naturally masculine or feminine, and which explained why women were best suited to the 'role' of wife and mother and supportive companion, whereas men were suited to a much wider range of roles as an individual in the world.

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Stereotyping is to be rejected precisely because it is as restrictive as it is an inaccurate reflection of those concerned, since 'actual behaviour is likely to be more varied than is suggested by social myths or stereotypes' (Gayle Greene & Coppelia Kahn 1985:18).

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Redefining Identity: A Survey of Afrikaans Women Writers

Pieter Conradie

Introduction

The title of my paper implies a certain correspondence between gender and the body of writing produced by Afrikaans women writers. Such an undertaking homogenises women as writers, and establishes an essentialistic approach to the subject or creator and cultural production. In lieu of generalisations I prefer to give a brief outline of the history of women within the literary and textual production of the Afrikaans language. Having done this I will return to the role of the body, or its cultural derivative gender, within textual production.

Historical Background

Afrikanerdom as an ideology resulted out of a particular ethnic-religious nationalism which propagated its own brand of Christian life-style and abhorred miscegenation. The Afrikaner- or Boervrou was regarded as the pillar of the nation. She was a metaphor for purity, the sacrificial lamb, who would safeguard the nation, its culture and civilisation. She would remind the husband of his duties towards the fatherland and inspire him by her braveness, sense of freedom and spiritual support. The reproductive powers of the Boerwoman became pivotal within the Christian-national ideology as she was held up as the mother of the nation.

During the first half of our century Afrikaner professionals, and especially the middle class, strived to uplift the poor whites who were in the majority. Afrikaners were mobilised by the portrayal of a heroic past in which the Afrikaner fought against English imperialism and indigenous tribes. The Afrikaner's belief in being God's chosen people; the binding force of a mother tongue Afrikaans and cultural and economical empowerment, all these went into the vindication of the nation's right to existence.

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Within the Afrikaner history characterised by wars, strife and survival males seem to be the sole actors. Authors of history and educators—teachers—were mostly male so that the ideology of Christian-national education in fact paid homage to the male warrior cum pioneer. Whenever women were involved their supportive role was exemplified. Their contribution was amplified within the context of the role of motherhood as inferred from the Bible. The role of women in the early Dutch and Afrikaner history became legendary. Afrikaner women supported their men and each other in the wars against the British. Women like Mrs J.H. Neethling, Mrs Brandt (nee Van Warmeloo), E. Murray and others wrote books, memoirs and poems on these wars. Before them South African Dutch women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Catharina van Lier, Matilda Smith and Susanna Smit) wrote diaries in which their particular brand of religious pietism came to the fore. Recent studies of these women's texts suggest that the personal guilt expressed by these women, and which is intrinsic to pietism, 'reflects their restricted role in their religious and social culture' (Landman 1992:198). A cookbook was published by a Miss Dijkstra in the previous century and again its field of specialisation is attributed to social circumstances. The mere fact that many of the above-mentioned authors were wives or daughters of religious ministers supports the view that women played an equally important role in securing an Afrikaner identity. The role of Afrikaner women in resistance politics is well-known. At times they vehemently rejected the submissive behaviour of their men when agreements with the British were negotiated. The British themselves documented the obstinacy of these women in their war-memoirs. Recent research confirms the cultural and political importance of the role Afrikaner women played on the platteland in their Christian organisations (Butler 1989:55-81). These women fought tenaciously for the upliftment of the poor, the uneducated and the unemployed. By undertaking welfare duties they fostered ethnic and racial consciousness without openly participating in party political policy. Some of the prominent women in the Afrikaans Christian Women's Movement (ACVV) came from well-to-do backgrounds and represented a bourgeois element. The economic incentive underlying their contribution, as well as the conflict amongst well-to-do families, do not lead to easy class debate. It is nevertheless clear that women's contribution towards cultural and material empowerment enhanced the explicit philosophic-political program of their men in attaining nationhood.

Historical reflection on the emergence of Afrikaans as an official language in 1925, as well as of a literary aesthetic consciousness in the thirties, i.e. the consciousness of a craft and of the prophetic impulses of the poet, requires caution where gender is concerned. It has been noted that women did contribute in writing on social and religious experiences, and like

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Afrikaner men wrote poetry on the war, even in English (Stockenström 1921:268-269). A Boerwoman, Johanna van Warmelo (nee Brandt), also wrote on life in the concentration camps and on spying during the war (Stockenström 1921:269-271). Most of these texts were broadly read whilst others with a more personal religious tone were distributed for private use. The same criticism that befell some of the women's work, e.g. that a poem had no significant literary value (Stockenström 1921:269) was also levelled at the prominent male poets of the time whose work represents the beginning of an Afrikaans poetic genre (Kannemeyer 1978:113). It may be argued that anthologies on the work of men were published whilst women's contributions did not represent an oeuvre or genre as such. In addition the poems written by women were regarded as personal writings with no incentive for publication. Another explanation may point to the explicit attempts by male poets in the first decade of this century, after the Anglo-Boer war, to create artistic expression in a language yearning for official recognition. These considerations bring one closer to the concept of the aesthetic proper and may cast more light on sexual textual production.

Deconstructing the literary concept allows for a reading of these earlier texts by women as the direct result of women's commitment to struggle. In doing so their writings can be viewed as expressions of 'feminine experience and perception' (Bovenschen 1985:44) which determine the form of their work. Such an acknowledgement is closer to the viewpoint of Elaine Showalter who places women writers within a dominant male culture, but recognises another specifically female tradition and suggests that women participate in both cultures simultaneously (Showalter 1985:264) The application of such an approach implies a specific feminist aesthetic which regards writing as a process (Ecker 1985:18). An inherent value judgement is hereby implied.

Canonisation of Women's Writing

Elisabeth Eybers, the daughter of a clergyman, was the first poet to be included within the canon of Afrikaans literature in spite of the lack of universal perspectives on humanity according to a male literary historian (Kannemeyer 1978:460). Besides poetry on exile and the craft itself she wrote poems on the bond between the sexes, marriage, womanhood and motherhood. The theme of motherhood in particular established a distinct link between anatomy and female identity, whilst reproductive power placed women on the side of nature foreign to man. In her own words 'my father was the clergyman/ my mother flesh and blood' (Eybers 1968:22). The emphasis on male logic and independence versus female sensitivity and attachment however bears traces of irony so that the balance between aggression and empathy in her verse remains subtle.

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The assimilation of Eybers within the canon calls for circumspection. Factual evidence on the construction of the canon through influences of Dutch and European concepts of literature, as well as male dominance in institutions of learning and moral instruction is abundant. Her debut coincides with the turn to individualism and concern for the aesthetic form which can be regarded as the beginning of modernism in Afrikaans. Learned and professional women made several contributions to social and cultural debates as the title of a book *Vrou en Feminist - of lets oor die Vroue-vraagstuk* by Marié du Toit in 1921 proved. The input of Du Toit and Eybers and its supposed criticism levelled at the male reflected the view of a small petty bourgeoisie. Further investigation into the texts of the canon, especially those of women, seems imperative rather than describing a canon *ad nauseam* (Easthope 1991:46-47). Such an undertaking will have to decide on the definition of literariness which in turn would lead to the descriptive and functionalistic application of texts, but to no inherent proof of the literariness in question. The short stories or novels of Maria Rothmann, which were written partly for newspapers or magazines during the twenties up to the forties, would provide an interesting case history.[1] Rothmann's pioneering work into poor white conditions made her a guardian of her nation. Her stories were commended for their detail and descriptive power, the character studies and dialogue, but the male literary guardian still complained of a limited vision and lack of dramatic power in her art (Kannemeyer 1983:14).

The class position of women writers in Afrikaans literature is of overriding importance. Attempts at artistic writings by working class women in the thirties were brushed aside as sloganeering because these women belonged to a class which threatened Afrikaner unity. The omission of their work from the canon, the latter being modernistic in nature, can be attributed to this fact. Women like Johanna Cornelius, Hester Cornelius, Nellie Raubenheimer and many other working class members blamed capitalism and not the British for their poverty. Although these women fought racial discrimination they simultaneously pledged loyalty to their Boer-heritage. The latter with its strict adherence to male supremacy nevertheless placed women at a disadvantage in the public sphere.

As the Afrikaner gained political and economic power, especially from 1948 onwards, women writers shared in the leisure time and accompanying privileges of the ruling class. In a survey of Afrikaans women between the ages of 25 - 50 most of them remembered not their mothers but rather their grandmothers as 'the driving force in their families' (Green 1990:60). This is mainly due to the surplus time available to the mothers, and what is even

[1] The foremost woman critic on Afrikaans prose, Elize Botha (1980:502), regards Rothmann as the first and probably greatest woman-intellectual in Afrikaans.

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more evident is that the daughters remembered the domestic nanny as the other most important woman in their lives (Green 1990:64).

Afrikaans women writers responded to the new-found leisure time and competed with the leading male writers of the sixties and seventies.[2] While some preferred an essayistic style, the works of others showed journalistic influences whilst authors like Henriette Grové, Berta Smit, Elsa Joubert and Anna M. Louw produced work which matched the experiments with form, content and world-perspective propagated especially by André P. Brink. The women's contribution continued throughout the next decades. Themes in their work portray difficulties in adaptation to the African continent, problems of identity, especially of a sexual nature, and the awareness of competing with African women (Joubert), the affirmation of the power of the husband as the head of the family (Anna M. Louw) and the discomfort with family life because of imbalances of duties performed (Grové) (Willemse & Stander 1992:13). These writings remind one of the Parisian analyst Joyce McDougall's remark on pioneer woman, i.e. that the new countries depended on

> the narcissistic investment in the daughters as the guardians of the future generations and their importance for survival of these new countries (Baruch 1988:70)

Like the Boervrou of the earlier years these women indirectly secured the political and economic unity of the nation. Whilst Afrikaner women of the women's movement in the forties received no material reward but rather cultural and indirect political support for their attempts at upliftment (Butler 1989:75), the Afrikaner women writers of the decades since the fifties and sixties enjoyed reasonable material benefits. They formed part of an elite who had cultural influence. However, they became politically inactive in party politics and were women who enriched the culture which in turn protected their identity. The apartheid Afrikaner government never really accepted their *avante garde* writers—especially the male contingent—for their 'immoral' anti-racist and sexual-erotic expressiveness. As Afrikaner 'volkskapitalisme' (capitalism of the people) gradually gave way to capitalism by a white elite in the second half of our century the use-value of Afrikaner culture and literature became less important as a party political tool.

In the eighties, women writers—Wilma Stockenström, Lettie Viljoen, Jeanne Goosen, Antjie Krog, Reza de Wet, Joan Hambidge etc.—took cognisance either of racial, gender or class conflict but their representations thereof are highly personalised. Since the late seventies male writers and

[2] Anthologies of short stories by women like *Kwartet* in 1957 and *Die Dammetjie e.a. Sketse en Essays* in 1960 confirms women's capabilities and talent

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some female authors had used documented realism in relaying the social upheaval and war mentality that swept the country. Women writers in the eighties showed an awareness of patriarchal oppression, but their female characters remained caught up in negative self-reflection and guilt. The struggle for individual survival was immensely traumatised and this narcissistic trend is indicative of a sex marginalised.

In the work of women authors of the nineties—Welma Odendaal, Riana Scheepers, Rachelle Greeff, Emma Huismans, M. van der Vyfer etc.—the African and specifically South African space is traversed. Physical and structural conflict finds its way into hetero- and homosexual relationships; opposition to patriarchal oppression is aired; an awareness of the female body is superimposed on the lived experience and lastly dissatisfaction with the prescriptiveness of the male canon is openly voiced. Postmodernist tendencies are rife and break down barriers created by patriarchal sexual/textual division. Underlying the playfulness and schizophrenic behaviour of postmodernist texts however is selfassertion (Waugh 1989:79-80).

The publication of an anthology of erotic short stories *Lyfspel bodyplay* in 1994 accounts for the increasing awareness of the politicisation of the body in the writings of Afrikaner women. In the foreword to the anthology the compiler refers to the need for women to express themselves on sexual matters, especially those coming from a Calvinistic background. A commitment to redress the image of women as sexual objects as portrayed by men is undertaken. In summarising the erotic the editor indirectly emphasises the need for transcending the body through bodily experiences. The contributions of the individual authors range from melancholic reminiscences, the discovery of sensuality, the intellectual manipulation of texts (metatexts), an assortment of sexual preferences and mostly a romanticised vision of bodily transcendence.

The number of texts dealing with Christian metaphors and images or themes analogous to the religious is remarkable. The exultation of the erotic experience is interspersed with guilt or revelations of the dichotomy of mind and body. The re-emergence of the erotic and the religious reverberates with the debate around censorship that characterised Afrikaans literature since the sixties and seventies. Back then the State claimed the moral high-ground and attempted to silence especially male authors. Once again in the nineties literature has become a space for confession and turmoil as bodies strive to redefine themselves. This contribution by women writers can be regarded as a reaction to the disproportionate sexualisation of society. The forthrightness of expression regarding sexual matters has led to the ingenious marketing of women's literature. The end result is somewhat disturbing as sexual identity becomes a handy label in the commodification of the body.

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Conclusion: Cultural Ethics and the Aesthetic

The participation of women in Afrikaans culture as caretakers, pioneering agents, writers or cultural vindicators is not to be underestimated. Evaluating women's contribution requires consideration of the struggle for national independence, the disparity in class-education and the material progress brought about by capitalism. The Boervrou symbolises the founding of the nation and becomes the yardstick for future performance. As material conditions improved women's participation in literature increased. While explicit images of motherhood and birth prevail, the struggle for personal identity—i.e. in a private or public sphere—abounds in literary themes regardless of space and time. Increasingly textual techniques and the act of writing as bodily experience erase the boundaries between the aesthetic-cultural or moral-political.

The tendency to categorise women's writing as of a narcissistic or semiotic nature, i.e. presenting a primordial energy akin to the life-giving forces presiding in the female body, may prove liberating. This type of essentialism is to be found in the works of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva although their later works have proposed the opening up of gender categories. In terms of Afrikaans women writers one detects a gradual resistance to prescriptive gender-roles as realised within patriarchal structures. The image of the self which has been culturally constructed, i.e. of motherhood, remains restrictive. Afrikaans women have through their writing been relatively successful in criticising the deliberate separation of the private and public spheres. The occupation of writer has led to an aesthetisation and integration of the private and social, and promises deliverance from discriminatory features inherent to gender-roles.

The ambiguity displayed in several texts by Afrikaans women nevertheless registers an identity crisis. The feelings of guilt, of insufficiency and narcissism portrayed are indicative of intrapsychic turmoil. The emphasis on the body and the realisation of the self in private or social spheres, has the maternal body as its subconscious metaphor. The anatomy of being somehow seems to strike a discord. Although the maternal bond aligns women with a specific female experience, the very notion of sexual difference appears decisive. The images of breasts and vagina which aspire to liberation and identity are the images that affirm sexual difference. Irigaray regarded this kind of female narcissism as an interconnection between the sexes, not as a contesting singularity as proposed in her earlier work (Connor 1992:178). Connor (1992:182) however questions this erotic opening up of the gendering of society in a manner that still forecloses the collective other as it prioritises the private space of love. In a Kristevan sense primary narcissism involves the abject, i.e. the mother's body—that which lies at the border of the body and which defines the body—that which

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is loved and dreaded at the same time (Kristeva 1982). In order to break away from the suffocating imprint of this borderlessness women must escape and create an own identity. Judith Butler (1993:316-318) counters the heterosexual discourse of psychoanalytic identification by proposing the 'permanent incapacity of that "self" to achieve self-identity' due to the desire for that which is not itself. In doing so she views gender as a continuous playing out of psychic representation within the signifying process in which the body is implicated. Elizabeth Grosz (1994:208) recently propagated the opening up of bodies which although culturally identified promise liberation exactly because of sexual difference which itself is a volatile construct. Since alterity is the basis for embodiment the construction of sexual difference as a process allows for countless forms of sexual identities.

Afrikaans women writers subconsciously acknowledge the Boervrou as their precursor on a psychosexual plane. From a Foucauldian point of view the body became sexualised within the Christian-nationalistic discourse. Lauding the specific female properties of women's writing may paradoxically incarnate the discourse which prolongs gender discrimination. At the same time the notion of cultural servitude elicits aggression. The symptoms of guilt, loss and reparation are a re-enactment of the self as process, as flow and a continuous struggle to redefine an identity. The literature of these Afrikaner women contain the fingerprints of a cultural residue which are the result of the interaction of bodies on an imaginary and symbolic level. The peculiar intrapsychical struggle for identity is the experience of the malleability of the imaginary and the body, and lays the foundation for re-presentation.

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The Revisionary Struggle: A Feminist Perspective on the Canon of Afrikaans Poetry

Amanda Lourens

> Is the unproductiveness of woman in the field of the arts to blame on an inherent characteristic of her nature, or is it one of the results of the historical evolution of our patriarchal society? (Eybers 1936)

1 Introduction

For oppressed or marginalised communities, the essence of the canonical problem is that it is only the experiences and aesthetic expression of white middle and/or upper class males which are canonised, anthologised, prescribed and in effect used as normative touchstone for the continuation and/or development of tradition. The result is that any literature originating in contexts other than those of the canonised literature are viewed as deviating from the norm and are judged as non-literary or inferior. In effect, such an attitude signifies a judgement that female, ethnic or working-class literature (see Moi 1985:78) is not only inferior when compared to 'great literature' but it also regards the experiences from which such literature emanates as being of secondary importance and not worthy of aesthetic expression.

The demand for a thorough-going revision of the canonisation is slowly gaining momentum[1].

[1] In literature, a canon refers to works which are judged as being of lasting value on the basis of cumulative agreement of authoritative critics and researchers, including the influence they exercise on later authors. Such works are often and in detail reviewed by literary critics and historians and are included in anthologies

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Because men continue to hold sway in publishing houses, the academic sphere and the world of literary criticism, only texts which comply with their norms become part of the canon (Sherry 1988:28). Texts by female authors which do indeed find their way into the canon generally conform (Ruthven 1984:11). Thus few texts written by women take their rightful place in the authoritative records of 'great' works.

The statement above made by Eybers in 1936 gives rise to the question of where the female predecessors in Afrikaans poetry are. Where are the female names which should be recorded alongside those of men such as Totius, Marais, Leipoldt, Langenhoven, Van Wyk Louw and Opperman who enjoy a strong position in the canon?

According to Sherry (1988:27), it is common practice for groups who are attempting to obtain greater political power to revise earlier cultural products and achievements.

According to Michie (1989:16), this implies that feminist revision of the canon would involve a search for predecessors that have been forgotten, because ignored or forgotten female texts deserve revision just as much as those by men which are regarded as the 'standard'.

What are the reasons for this state of affairs? How can one set about revising the Afrikaans canon?

To determine the ranking of authors in the canon, quantitative and qualitative measures can be used. Literary histories and anthologies are the appropriate means of determining the status of authors within the canon. This can be determined statistically. Judgements, such as those made in literary histories, reviews etc. provide qualitative assessment of status. This sort of evaluation would include awards.

Redetermining the status of authors, demands tracking down authors that may have been forgotten or lost. Apart from literary histories, older editions of magazines and journals are used to determine the literary productivity of women in earlier times.

For the purposes of this article, the area has been limited to the field of Afrikaans poetry: a number of female poets were selected to determine their canonical status. One of the determinants for selection was the extent to which their texts exemplified female texts (in terms of criteria suggested by female theoreticians).

This selection was done in order to review the spectrum of female poetry between the thirties and nineties. The following women authors were selected: Elisabeth Eybers, Olga Kirsch, Ina Rousseau, Antjie Krog, Rosa Keet, Rika Celliers, Lina Spies, Joan Hambidge, Beverley Jansen, Valda Jansen and Jennifer Joseph. The last three mentioned made their debut in journals during the eighties.

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2 Quantitative Analysis

The data for this analysis were drawn from literary histories and anthologies. Different editions were also compared with each other in order to explore the changes or otherwise with regard to the canonising of female authors.

The following literary histories were selected: *Digters van Dertig* (DJ Opperman 1962), *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* (G. Dekker 1941; 1947; 1960; 1966); *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van Aanvang tot Hede* (R. Antonissen 1955; 1960); *Perspektief en Profiel* (P.J. Nienaber ed. 1951; 1974; 1982); *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur I and II* (J.C. Kannemeyer 1978; 1984); *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur 1652-1987* (J.C. Kannemeyer 1988); *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur Sedert Sestig* (T.T. Cloete ed. 1980); *Inleiding tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* (E. Lindenberg ed. 1987).

A count was made of the number of pages which were devoted to each of the selected female poets in these literary histories and this total was then expressed as the percentage of the total number of pages in the particular source[2].

The following anthologies were researched: *Groot Verseboek* (D.J. Opperman ed. 1973; 1974; 1978; 1980; 1983); *Digters en Digkuns* (P.J. Nienaber ed. 1962; 1981; 1987). In each of the respective sources, the number of poems by each of the selected female poets was determined as well as the number of pages which were apportioned to each of these poets as a percentage of the total number of pages in the anthology. The number of pages in subsequent editions could vary because of the page format/typesetting and could confuse the picture. Merely determining the number of pages could still be misleading because quite a number of short texts were printed on some pages—what was actually an indication of a high level of canonisation—could appear to be a low level, and vice versa. Thus, the number of texts appeared to be the most reliable measure, but the number of pages was used as a checking mechanism and also provided a means of making comparisons.

2.1 According to the statistics, Elisabeth Eybers appeared to be the most canonised Afrikaans female poet, representing a total of 17,7% of the selected literary histories. Lina Spies was second (3,4%), third, Ina Rousseau (2,59%), fourth, Antjie Krog (2,4%), followed by Joan Hambidge (0,6%),

[2] N.P van Wyk Louw, as apparently the most canonised Afrikaans poet, was used as a male control. If there had been space, a male contemporary could have been placed alongside each of the female poets. In order to calculate a percentage, the two parts of Kannemeyer's history of Afrikaans literature were seen as one unit. In the case of *Perspektief en Profiel* only the 'profiel' (profile) part of the text was used for the purposes of calculation.

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Olga Kirsh (0,54%), Rosa Keet (0,3%) and Rika Celliers (0,28%). Krog's relatively low status is explained by the fact that *Lady Anne* which largely established her reputation, was published later than most of the literary histories and anthologies. By the same token, only Kannemeyer (1988) has taken note of Hambidge's young oeuvre. Eybers's long career gives her an advantage, but set against Louw's 39,1% it would seem that Afrikaans's most eminent female poet has enjoyed very limited acknowledgement. It is significant that there are no profiles of prominent female poets like Rousseau, Krog and Spies in *Perspektief en Profiel*.

2.2 It appears from this that the percentage of pages devoted to women poets in subsequent issues has decreased rather than increased.

2.3 The black female poets V. Jansen, B. Jansen and Joseph were completely ignored by these sources.

2.4 The hierarchical ordering of the percentage of pages in the *latest editions* is as follows: Eybers (7,6%), Spies (5,3%), Krog (5,3%), Rousseau (2,5%), Kirsch (1,8%), Cilliers (0,8%). The percentage for Van Wyk Louw is 9,9%.

2.5 There is a correlation between canonisation in the literary histories and the anthologies in the comparison of these results.

3 Qualitative Evaluation

Opperman (1962:351) makes the well-intentioned, but contentious remark that Elisabeth Eybers is the 'feminine *complement* in our literature' (my italics). This comment set the trend in literary histories and anthologies: there are more references to Eybers as a *poetess* than as a *poet*. The issue is: does this typology represent the beginning of a female canon or tradition or does it arise purely from literary sexism?

There has gradually been a measure of greater acknowledgement as can be seen from the honour that has been accorded Eybers to date. And since Eybers pioneered the way for women in Afrikaans poetic tradition, female poets who were white have gained prominence—since Kirsch and Rousseau, across the decades: Krog, Spies, Cussons, Stockenstrom—to Hambidge and others. But this still represents a white tradition.

4. Female Poetry in Magazines

The revision of literary canonisation offers an important, largely unexplored field of research: that of 'absent' female poets in Afrikaans. Women have

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well and truly become part of the literary scene (for reasons which could cast light on social patterns). Louw (1939:45) puts it thus: 'Up till recently there has been a large gap in our poetry: women have not made their voices heard'. To test this statement, issues of *Die Huisgenoot* (1930-37), *Die Brandwag* (1937-40), *Die Nuwe Brandwag* (1929-33), *Die Moderne Vrou* (1936-37) and *Klerewerker* (1929-45) were researched.

4.1 There was a tally of nineteen female poets in *Die Huisgenoot*, who were not referred to in literary histories and the majority have therefore been forgotten.

4.2 Since only 3 poems appeared in *Die Nuwe Brandwag*, it seems that women did not choose to publish in this magazine at that time (see Lourens 1992:246f). But how does this square with the large number published in *Die Huisgenoot*? Did women not submit their poetry to *Die Nuwe Brandwag* or were their texts not accepted for publication? Is there anyone who remembers what really happened?

4.3 The poems published in *Klerewerker* are good examples of 'lost' female Afrikaans texts. Lourens (1992:248f) refers to the work of six women poets who do not appear in literary histories. The question is whether the ideological orientation of this paper played a role in their omission (particularly at a time of Afrikaner nationalism). It is also possible that these poets seemed insignificant when compared to the illustrious *Dertigers*. Their direct reflection of the experiences of povery and oppression of the Afrikaner as minority group makes these texts particularly significant. In this sense, the poems have a value within the Afrikaans, but more particularly the female tradition. As Krog (1989) points out, these women portray the reality of a battle for survival, while Eybers, for instance, is engrossed in personal experiences.

4.4 In 1992, when this research was finished, there was as yet little evidence of Afrikaans poetry among black[3] female authors. The collection *Aankoms uit die skemer* (1988) includes only one woman poet (M.C. Maclier) as opposed to six male poets. *IQabane Labantu* (1989) includes poems in Afrikaans and English by 37 black poets, only 8 of whom are women.

Jansen (1985:79-80) highlights the barriers which a strong patriarchal tradition presents for women (see also Krog 1989:4). For all that, like the clothing workers' poetry, this poetry addresses social issues. Since these are

[3] 'Black' is used to denote the political and not the literal meaning of the word

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the first voices of black women poets in Afrikaans, this poetry should merit a mention in a new canon. If literary standards are the only deciding factor, then the earlier *Klerewerker* poems would not be viewed as part of the Afrikaans tradition. The criteria should be expanded to include social meaning and the attempt at political realisation in individual experience (the personal which is politically embedded).

5. Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation reveal that certain Afrikaans female poets enjoy high status within the canon. However, there are obvious gaps in the canonisation of women in minority groupings, especially poetry by the clothing workers from the past and the poetry of black female poets. There could have been racial or class prejudice, along with prejudice against women in general. Intensive research into literary historiography is essential in order to establish a theoretical basis for the revision of the canon of Afrikaans literature.

In order to rectify the imbalances in the canonisation of female poets, the prevalence of similar trends in the canonisation of poetry in other southern African languages will have to be researched.

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Prefacing Spivak

Shane Moran

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's importance as a postcolonial theorist committed to a politically engaged deconstructive practice was indicated on the occasion of the New Nation Writers Conference held in Johannesburg, 1991, where she was the only delegate invited as a scholar and not a writer. Spivak is seen by some as a theorist who effectively shuttles between the margins and the centre stressing the relation between race and capitalism, and the role of academics in the business of ideological production. From her own position teaching within the bosom of a superpower she claims to challenge the universalizing pretensions of the dehistoricising academy, and to foreground the production of philosophical writing and teaching. Her work is not primarily focused on colonial discourse but rather on the contemporary cultural politics of neocolonialism in the U.S. For Spivak Derrida is the intellectual *par excellence* who questions his own disciplinary production.

The reception of theory and theorists in South Africa raises many questions, some of which Spivak notes: the problem of 'institutional elitism', and the situation of the academic in 'mechanisms of certification, validation, and marketing' (De Kock 1992:39). In interview Spivak asserts that '[d]econstructive imperatives always come out of situations; it's not situationally relative but they always come out of situations' (De Kock 1992:39-40), and circumspectly acknowledges the importance of historical positionality and the need to contextualise migratory theory. When invited to comment on the South African situation she fastidiously reiterates 'that imperatives are situational' (De Kock 1992:41). The imperative of contextual constraint is again emphasised in the extended text of the thirteenth annual T.B. Davie Memorial lecture at the University of Cape Town, 1992, on the subject of 'Academic Freedom':

> I have no taste for inspirational prose And it is my habit to fit suggestions, as far as I can, to the limited contexts that I inhabit (Spivak 1995.126).

In what follows I shall argue that this declaration of responsibility to historical particularity sits uneasily alongside the theoretical insistence 'on

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this general structural characteristic of postcoloniality' (Spivak 1995:127). There is a tension between theory and historical particularity.

In the Davies lecture Spivak tries to put some distance between her own work and Derrida's, in footnotes that are still 'indebted to Derrida' to be sure, but which also register a difference of 'emphasis', particularly regarding 'Derrida's words on ideology' (Spivak 1995:149, notes 6 & 10). Ironically Spivak (1995:146) ends up defending Derrida against Paul Taylor's

> superficial knowledge of the Saussure section of *Of Grammatology*, a book written nearly thirty years ago, and of a polemical exchange with John Searle that took place a decade later.

Taylor (1995:158), who has read Derrida with about as much attention as Spivak appears to have read the South African academic-discursive situation, enlists the canonical philosophical authorities of Plato, Hume, and Wittgenstein to argue that 'deconstruction is not an appropriate basis for social criticism or for commentary on practical issues'. Spivak's rebuttal involves her adopting the position of epigone to Derrida the grand master theorist, despite her resistance to certain aspects of Derridean deconstruction, principally the aura of sequestered theoreticism that Taylor objects to. She has stated that she is not particularly interested in defending Derrida as a master figure on the grounds that any political program based on deconstruction quickly comes to resemble pluralism. Curiously, the text that Taylor clearly hasn't read, *Of Grammatology*, and Spivak's famous preface to that text, presents a good starting point for considering the questions of intellectual filiation and the potential of deconstruction for intervening in practical issues. The work of critically situating theory involves tracing the legitimating authority of texts in a way that demystifies them. After all, the opportunity to read texts is an important component of academic freedom, one which perhaps has precedence over the right to polemicise. Reviewing the texts is an obvious if unspectacular step towards uncovering the complex relationship between discursive institutions of authorization and the role of theory.

Introductions

The 1976 John Hopkins Paperbacks Edition of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (*De la Grammatologie*, Copyright Les Editions de Minuit, 1967) has an eighty-seven page Translator's Preface in which Spivak assumes the formidable task of introducing Derrida to an Anglo-American

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audience[1]. The blurb on the back cover tells me of the importance of the Translator's Preface for putting the work of Derrida into a philosophical perspective, and for the benefit of an 'American' audience Derrida's deconstructive technique is mistakenly compared to Kant's critique as part of the 'most clear-sighted European intellectual tradition'.

The Acknowledgements thank J.Hillis Miller 'for having introduced me to Derrida himself' and expresses gratitude to *Of Grammatology* itself: 'I am grateful to *Grammatology* for having brought me the friendship of Marguerite and Jacques Derrida' (*G* vii). *Of Grammatology* is familiarised to *Grammatology*, the formality of the genetive indicating a discourse *on* its subject, a learned disquisition, is also the epistolary medium *of* friendship. Five years of work from July 1970 to October 1975 in Iowa City, (New Delhi-Dacca-Calcutta), Boston, Nice Providence, Iowa City overcome formality. The Translator's Preface continues this collegiate theme of the diaspora intellectual; Derrida has travelled from Algiers to America:

> He has an affection for some of the intellectual centres of the Eastern seaboard—Cambridge, New York, Baltimore—in his vocabulary, 'America'. And it seems that at first these places and now more and more of the intellectual centres all over the United States are returning his affection' (*G* ix).

However, the colloquial warmth between translator and subject will not remain constant in the pages that follow.

Within these gestures of academic corporatism the translator notes that 'Derrida's first book was a translation of Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry", with a long critical introduction' (*G* ix). Derrida is himself a translator. Spivak's Preface serves as 'a long critical introduction' to the 'method' embodied in these texts since 'Jacques Derrida is also this collection of texts' (*G* ix). Texts that were a medium of introduction are now constitutive of 'Jacques Derrida' as a sort of articulated corpus or corporate, institutionalised entity. Translation is an extension of the corpus, of the property of the corporate entity of the author, and Spivak wants to be more than a passive mediator, giving authority to Derrida. The problem with this goal of transformative translation is that Derrida has been there before—his translation of Husserl is, as Spivak remarks, exemplary from this point of view—and the Preface is torn between parricide and homage.

[1] Compare the preface with David B Allison's too helpful 1972 introduction to *Speech and Phenomena*, Alan Bass's 1977 business-like and informative Translator's Introduction to *Writing and Difference*, the irascible and self-effacing introduction to their 1987 translation of *La Verite en Peinture* by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, and Alan Bass's ephemeral 1982 Translator's Note to *Margins of Philosophy*

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As interpreter Spivak attempts to master Derrida's text. This is the mastery that Derrida appears to have as the author of *Of Grammatology* and translator of Husserl, but which he says is part of the common desire for a stable centre that must be resisted. Spivak both accedes to and at the same time resists his injunction not to posit another centre, and so resists the recovery of the Preface father-text who then, ironically, justifies it. You the reader are implicated in this dilemma: 'Why must we worry over so simple a thing as preface making?' (*G* xiii). Confronted with the authority of a father-text who declares 'Disobey me' even when we disobey we are obeying, etc. Confronted with this *aporia*, dilemma, predicament, Spivak again resorts to quotation, this time a quite unnecessary one from Hegel on common sense. Will the anxiety with Derrida's strategies of mastery always be covered over and deflected by recourse to the authoritative words from the circuit of philosophical authorities? Quoting Derrida, Spivak considers the options of the sad, negative, guilty nostalgia of Rousseau for lost origins and the joyous affirmation of Nietzsche (*G* xii). Despite the rhetoric of affirmation, Spivak's unease at Derrida's pre-emption of her critical manoeuvres does not lead to Nietzschean affirmation, and stays firmly on the side of the negative. Perhaps this resistance to Derrida marks the problematic place from which to begin to assess the pedagogical scene of deconstructive practice.

Philosophical Families

The anxiety of influence in the Preface leads to a certain deeply serious humour, as when Spivak continually defers to Derrida to say that there is no origin. Quoting herself disclaiming that the origin of the preface is the father-text, Spivak defers her predicament to Derrida's philosophical elaboration of this dilemma: 'My predicament is an analogue for a certain philosophical exigency that drives Derrida to writing' (*G* xiv). In effect, her predicament is sublimated to the authority of philosophical discourse. The dilemma of homage-parricide is deferred to Derrida's response to philosophical exigency to which the predicament of the Preface stands in a relation of analogue or family resemblance. Analogue, while it implies resemblance and difference, also involves hierarchy and the philosophical problematic will always have the upper hand over 'My predicament'.

Philosophy will always have the last word over subjective predicaments, even when one's predicament is grounded in suspicion of philosophy's universalising imperialism. The origin that is never questioned but is rather deferred to throughout in paraphrase and quotation is the philosophical origin of this exigency: the one stable origin of the question of origin is the Western, or more precisely German, philosophical canon. Spivak simply erases the historical contexts of Hegel's, Nietzsche's, and Heidegger's

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responses to their own predicaments, their own anxieties of influence, and their differences are amalgamated into a kind of Philosophy Inc., a limited company of mandarin philosophical directors with executive power to incorporate all predicaments. Derrida is then the legitimate, if parvenu, son/seed and heir to this Germano-European philosophical empire that recovers and justifies him. In this genealogy one wonders about the absence of other venerable European males; Kant and Aristotle, ur-precursors against which the modern philosophical masters struggled for their own space, and of course Marx too in his relationship with Hegel, perhaps the most obvious and promising analogue of Spivak's relation to Derrida.

Heidegger is the problem in this philosophical company and always Nietzsche is made to precede Heidegger, which is at most chronologically valid. But for Derrida Nietzsche is always read *through* Heidegger in accordance with a different take on chronological exigency. For Spivak 'Heidegger suggests, as does, of course, Nietzsche before him' (*G* xv), and this supercedence will be the motif of the Preface's reading of Heidegger. Heidegger, like Hegel, is caught in nostalgia for origin, a trap which Nietzsche escapes. Nostalgic, reactionary 'Heideggerian hope' (*G* xvi) is sidelined in favour of a future-oriented Nietzschean hope. The context or situation of Heidegger's 'misreading' of Nietzsche is ignored. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche arose from a series of lectures delivered between 1936 and 1940, and some treatises written between 1940 and 1946. Heidegger wrote parts of the text in the context of a Nietzsche appropriated, via Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche, by the Nazi ideologues. This was the text's decisive moment[2]. Heidegger's distortion and misreading of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician can be (generously) read as the rejection of the ideology that had appropriated Nietzsche, Nazism, as itself metaphysical. So Heidegger is concerned both to jamb this appropriation (Nietzsche was no naive biologist or voluntarist), and to criticise what in Nietzsche is susceptible to this appropriation (the subjectivism of the will to power). Derrida will later point out, in *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (1989), that what is worrying about Nietzsche's thought—and, one might add, Heidegger's too—is that it does not rule out such an ideological appropriation. It isn't philosophical Nazism, but then neither does it rule out such use. Heidegger will continue to disrupt the philosophical genealogy

[2] In the 1988 "Can the Subaltern Speak?" the valuation of Heidegger is more positive: 'the most privileged discourse of modern Western philosophy Heidegger's meditation on Being' (Spivak 1988:305). Again the historical context of Heidegger's text is omited. Spivak's note refers to Heidegger's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, published in 1953 and delivered as lectures in 1935. This text and its subsequent editing have been the cause of bitter, if cloistered, dispute among Heideggerians, specifically regarding Heidegger's statements regarding his allegiance at this date to the possibilities of National Socialism.

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throughout Spivak's Preface, possibly because with Heidegger the practical imperative of ethico-political questions, the ideological infiltration of philosophy and its historicity, press on the margins of the determinately philosophical Preface. Perhaps the relative absence of Derrida's direct dealing with such questions in *Of Grammatology*, their always looming presence, is a source of Spivak's 'predicament'. Rather than an analogue of philosophical exigency, could this predicament signal a suspicion of philosophy's abstraction from always already situated practical realities, from the exigencies of ethical-political choices?

Having evoked the gravitas of philosophical exigency there follows a confession or aside, a glimpse of the face of the prefacer; 'there also seems, I must admit, something ritually satisfying about beginning with the trace' (*G* xvi). *Ritual* is the right word here, and Spivak's commencing with Derrida's disruption of the notion of unitary origin remains within the conventionality of deferring to the authority of his philosophical engagement. She has earlier remarked upon 'Humankind's common desire for a stable centre, and for the assurance of mastery through knowing or possessing', and we can see the philosophical company of the masters of Western philosophy as satisfying that desire. The great patriarchal knowers and possessors of the philosophical exigency are inscribed into a hierarchy with a beginning, a middle, and an end: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Derrida form a chronological teleology conveniently awarding the vantage point to the present. Analogy crops up again: 'Following an argument analogical to the argument on the sign, Derrida puts the word "experience" under erasure' (*G* xvii). Does Spivak's recourse to 'philosophical exigency' and the philosophical discourse also risk putting her own historically specific experience of (post)colonial predicament under erasure?

Bricolage and Agency

According to Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* the *bricoleur* makes do with things that were intended for other ends, patches things together in a makeshift fashion with no overall design in mind, abandons all reference to a centre of mastery, an origin, a subject, and this is the model of the discourse of anthropology. The *bricoleur*, unlike the engineer, assumes no pose of mastery. The Preface's discussion of *bricolage* takes place within the shadow of Derrida's argument against the separation of the activity of the *bricoleur* and the engineer; they both posture control and mastery, despite Levi-Strauss's privileging of *bricolage* as the non-totalising. Referring to this argument Spivak concludes:

> One can now begin to understand a rather cryptic sentence in the *Grammatology*. 'Without that track [of writing under erasure], ... the ultra-transcendental text

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> [*bricolage* under erasure] will so closely resemble the pre-critical text [*bricolage* plain and simple] as to be indistinguishable from it' (*G* xx).

I'm not sure how far Spivak's understanding here succeeds in decrypting Derrida's gnomic sentence. The cited statement from Derrida in fact comes from a discussion not of *bricolage* or Levi-Strauss, but from a critique of the linguistics, particularly the Hjelmslevian type, of the Copenhagen School. The cryptic sentence is part of the following sequence in Derrida's text:

> Without that [the question of the transcendental origin of the system itself], the decisive progress accomplished by a formalism respectful of the originality of its object, of 'the immanent system of its objects', is plagued by a scientificist objectivism, that is to say by another unperceived or unconfessed metaphysics. This is often noticeable in the works of the Copenhagen School. It is to escape falling back into this naive objectivism that I refer here to a transcendentality that I have elsewhere put into question. It is because I believe that there is a short-of and a beyond of transcendental criticism. To see to it that the beyond does not return to the within is to recognize in the contortion the necessity of a pathway [*parcours*]. That pathway must leave a track in the text. Without that track, abandoned to the simple content of its conclusions, the ultra-transcendental text will so closely resemble the precritical text as to be indistinguishable from it. We must now form and meditate upon the law of this resemblance (*G* 61).

This is certainly a key passage elaborating the deconstructive strategy of 'sewing' the border between the short-of and the beyond of transcendental criticism, aiming to avoid the idealist dogmatism of both particularity and generality. These strategies aim at avoiding the ritual installation of new transcendentals (trace, differance, etc.) in the place of the old transcendentals (truth, reason, God, etc.). But in the passage Derrida is warning against falling back into naive pre-critical objectivism, and clearly makes no mention of *bricolage*. What might explain Spivak's decontextualization of this passage and the invasive insertions, and what track does this intrusive interpretive pathway leave in the Preface?

The point of the Preface's digression into *bricolage* is to substantiate the claim that

> [t]here is some similarity between this strategy [Derrida's letting go of each concept at the very moment he uses it] and what Levi-Strauss calls *bricolage* (*G* xviii).

The essay 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in *Writing and Difference* is cited as the authority for this comparison of strategy. But in that essay Derrida sees *bricolage* as part of Levi-Strauss's 'structural ethnography' aiming at 'a new humanism'; 'even if one yields to the necessity of what Levi-Strauss has done, one cannot ignore its risks':

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'ethnographic *bricolage* deliberately assumes its mythopoetic function' (Derrida 1982:287f). *Bricolage* aims at a unified, totalising structure of reintegration for a universal science of man. For Derrida structuralist mythopoetics tends towards the universalism associated with naive objectivism, or else limits itself to a positivistic anthropologism. As ethnographic and mythopoetic *bricolage* is not a trans-philosophical concept but rather intra-philosophical, determined through and through by the traditional exigencies of metaphysics. Derrida is certainly concerned with the value of *bricolage* as a critical procedure in contrast to other types of critique, but he opposes *bricolage* to the following type of critique:

> To concern oneself with the founding concepts of the entire history of philosophy, to deconstitute them, is not to undertake the work of the philologist or of the classic historian of philosophy. Despite appearances, it is probably the most daring way of making the beginning of a step outside philosophy (Derrida 1982:284).

This, of course, is Derrida's historicising route which involves the historicisation of the concept of history itself. The other option is the route of Levi-Strauss:

> The other choice (which I believe corresponds more closely to Levi-Strauss's manner), in order to avoid the possibly sterilizing effects of the first one, consists in conserving all these old concepts within the domain of empirical discovery while here and there denouncing their limits, treating them as tools which can still be used (Derrida 1982:284).

Why is *bricolage* for Derrida not 'the most daring way of making the beginning of a step outside of philosophy'? Because '[t]his is how the language of the social sciences criticizes *itself*' (Derrida 1982:284). This self-criticism of the social sciences remains *within* the historically constituted and conceptually regulated parameters of those sciences which seek to redraw or reconstitute, but not to 'step outside', the discourse of the human sciences. Such a discourse remains anthropocentric, and anthropology criticises but does not radically challenge this supervising centre. In short, *bricolage* under erasure and *bricolage* pure and simple are alike precritical; both fascinated by the transcendental figure of universal man and confined within the matrix of empiricism that governs the discourse of the human sciences, and certainly not ultra-transcendental. Attempting to salvage the role of the *bricoleur*, Spivak tries to make Derrida's deconstruction of it a methodological analogue:

> This undoing yet preserving of the opposition between *bricolage* and engineering is an analogue for Derrida's attitude toward all oppositions—an attitude that

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> 'erases' (in a special sense) all oppositions. I shall come back to this gesture again and again in this Preface (*G* xx)

Spivak wants the opposition—undone by Derrida's criticisms—between *bricolage* and engineer to leave a track in her text, and to preserve what Derrida is content to let the discourse of the human sciences keep to '*itself*'. For his translator the role of the creative interpreter and the technically specialised and competent translator must be preserved. *Bricolage* resembles Spivak's own strategy in the Preface; the taking of bits of Derrida and others, 'making do with things that were perhaps meant for other ends', admitting to the impossibility of mastering the whole field of theory while at the same time attempting to totalise it. Clearly in trying to preserve the role of *bricoleur* as translator Spivak is in tension if not outright opposition to Derrida's deconstruction of *bricolage*. Derrida is awarded the role of arch-*bricoleur* (under erasure), and the Preface peserves a residual humanism, the 'need for power through anthropomorphic defining' (*G* xxiii), even if such a reading contradicts the anti-anthropomorphic argument of *Of Grammatology*. That is, the notion of agency necessary for critique to situate its object and assure the independence of the act of interpretation is bound up with the figure of the *bricoleur*.

Spivak argues that the strategy of *bricolage* facilitates a 'simple *bricoleur*'s take on the word [metaphysics] that permits Derrida to allow the possibility of a "Marxist" or "structuralist" metaphysics"' (*G* xxi). Later we learn that this consists in 'using a signifier not as a transcendental key that will unlock the way to truth but as a *bricoleur*'s or tinker's tool' (*G* lxxv). This whole phenomenological rhetoric of the *present*-to-hand as tool is the subject of Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time* (1927). In both "The Ends of Man" (1972) and *Of Spirit* Derrida has expressed reservations that Heidegger is not critical enough of this powerful motif than in turn manipulates Heidegger's own analysis. But Spivak still wants to see Derrida as the skilled modernist artisan *using* his language as tool. This anthropologism is a strategy for keeping Derrida at the distance necessary for getting a perspective on his work since like the translator-interpreter-*bricoleur* he just uses what is ready to hand like the rest of us. The rather desperate claims to having invented the notion of 'sous rature', writing under erasure, will attempt to keep the translated at bay. Thus there is more to the following apologetic protocol than the usual rhetorical nicety:

> I have lingered on the 'question of the preface' and the pervasive Derridean practice of the 'sous rature' to slip into the atmosphere of Derrida's thought (*G* xxi).

If anything, the atmosphere between translator and translated seems decided-

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ly strained. The pedagogical itinerary of philosophical genealogy follows, an attempt to ease the atmosphere: 'Now I shall speak of his acknowledged "precursors"—Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Husserl' (*G* xxi). This genealogical approach offers the pleasure, as we read in *Writing and Difference*, of allowing 'these destroyers to destroy each other reciprocally' (Derrida 1982:281). Of which Derrida (1982:282) remarks laconically: 'today no exercise is more widespread'. But, as I have noted, Heidegger creates problems in this family scene and he is shuffled and side-lined for never stated reasons. He is the awkward and embarrassing relative at the philosophical family gathering, very old fashioned in a quaint sort of way, let's just hope he doesn't mention politics .... Uncle Heidegger will be offered a threatening apology, a rain-check, as if both to assuage and to get rid of him: 'I reserve the occasion for a more thoroughgoing critique of the Heideggerian text on Nietzsche' (*G* xxiv).

Predicaments

Spivak's predicament is a question of authorisation and legitimation, an iconoclastic impulse accompanied by the need to authorise that impulse. Derrida is consistently cited as the authority for the claim that there is no final authority, and is characterised in the following ways: the super-clever Derrida:

> Derrida's reading of Descartes on folly is an elegant bit of deconstruction; he spots the moment of the forgetting of the trace in Descartes's text (*G* lx),

the intriguing Derrida: 'He practices his caution in an unemphatic way' (*G* lxxi); the nimble Derrida: 'Those acts of controlled acrobatics are difficult to match ... impressive' (*G* lxxviii); the poignant Derrida: 'a simple and moving exposition of the method of deconstruction as understood by the early Derrida' (*G* lxxxv); the precocious Derrida: 'the taste of a rather special early Derrida, the young scholar transforming the ground rules of scholarship' (*G* lxxxv). Inscrutable agility makes the multiplying Derridas difficult to pin-down:

> On page xlv I bring the charge of 'prudence' against Derrida. The new Derrida shows us that this 'prudence' is also the greatest 'danger', the will to knowledge and the will to ignorance and vice versa (*G* lxxviii).

But Spivak does want to criticise Derrida without his pre-emptive sanction, and Foucault's incisive objections to Derrida's procedure pinpoint both the pedagogical attraction of Derrida, and his danger. She quotes the second

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edition of the *History of Madness* where Foucault, responding to Derrida's critique in 'Cogito and the History of Madness', indicts

> [a] pedagogy that conversely gives to the voice of the teacher that unlimited sovereignty which permits them to read the text indefinitely (quoted *G* lx).

She sides with Derrida—Foucault 'does not seem to have fully attended' to the 'sous rature'—and remarks the 'hostility' of Foucault's rebuttal. But is it too much to read tacit sympathy for Foucault into Spivak's solidarity with the ever victorious Derrida?

Towards the conclusion of the Preface Spivak's reservations begin to accumulate and these last pages are both the most interesting and the most useful. Derrida comes 'suspiciously' close to valorising writing in the narrow sense:

> But he quietly drops the idea of being the authorized grammatological historian in the narrow sense ... In the *Grammatology*, then, we are at a specific and precarious moment in Derrida's career (*G* lxxx).

Spivak notes 'the changes and interpolations made in the text of the review articles as they were transformed into the book' (*G* lxxx). This is important historico-bibliographic information that undermines the pose of mastery created by the finished book as we glimpse Derrida's predicaments, decisions, and hesitations; the strategic, situational choices. Spivak is impatient with Derrida's prophetic tone, 'a slightly embarrassing messianic promise' (*G* lxxxi), the book is 'formally awkward' (*G* lxxxiii), and incredulous with his argument for historical necessity. But these salient criticisms that promise to deprive Derrida of omniscient mastery are again bundled away into another deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*); 'This again is an undertaking for a future deconstructor' (*G* lxxxii). Then, finally, we get Spivak's real criticism of Derrida:

> There is also the shadow of a geographical pattern that falls upon the first part of the book. The relationship between logocentrism and ethnocentrism is indirectly invoked in the very first sentence of the 'Exergue'. Yet, paradoxically, and almost by a reverse ethnocentrism, Derrida insists that logocentrism is a property of the *West*. He does this so frequently that a quotation would be superfluous. Although something of the Chinese prejudice of the West is discussed in Part I, the *East* is never seriously studied or deconstructed in the Derridean text. Why then must it remain, recalling Hegel and Nietzsche in their most cartological humors, as the name of the limits of the text's knowledge? (*G* lxxxii)

Derrida deconstructs the centre and Derridean discourse remains within this decentring. This is not to succumb to a spatial metaphor, but rather to note in

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deconstruction a proximity of concern and idiom that strategically de-centres at the point of greatest leverage: the Euro-philosophical centre of the West's hegemony. Spivak decisively and significantly registers that the texts Derrida discusses, and the philosophical vocabulary of his discourse, work within the philosophical and literary canon of the West.

But even here the criticism is attenuated since its object becomes the 'early' Derrida, and the mature Derrida is still deferred to as the authority for 'ever-sustained word against all gestures of surrender to precursors' (*G* xlviii). Despite recognising beneath Derrida's invocations of radicality an undercurrent of conservatism in his work—'the rather endearing conservatism of Chapter 3, Section 1' (*G* lxxxv), and, one might add, 'The Violence of the Letter', Chapter 1, Section 2—such criticisms are simply noted rather than pursued. The role of the translator is that of 'informing my readers'(*G* lxxxvi), and this role seems to involve the suppression of criticism of the translated in favour of proselytising 'Derrida's master-concept' (*G* xliii): 'To repeat our catechism' (*G* lxv). Recognising that this procedure raises questions about translation itself, Spivak writes: 'I shall not launch my philosophy of translation here' (*G* lxxxvii). Such deferrals echo Derrida's omissions—usually the historical, political and economic dimensions of his deconstructions—that leave a lacunae in his itinery. Perhaps this gap is to be welcomed as room for a future deconstructor but it is nonetheless troubling since this is the dimension he *chooses* to elide, and methodological caution can look like evasiveness. Despite a commitment to a deconstructive practice that must take place within an historical context, Spivak also mutes or elides the question of historical context in favour of a philosophical treatment of Derrida. This dehistoricising impulse ensures the installation of the authority of both the 'master-concept' and the European masters of the philosophical 'master-concept'.

Denied Spivak's philosophy of translation, an alternative is proposed: 'Instead I give you a glimpse of Derrida's' (*G* lxxxvii). We know from the first page of the Preface that the arch translator is none other than Derrida himself: 'Derrida's first book was a translation of Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry", with a long critical introduction' (*G* ix). This hominem to Derrida the translator is far from the 'customary ... battles' (*G* lxxxv) of the translator, which normally focus on semantic incompatibility. Here it involves positing an ideal reader who happens to be the translator/translated himself, Jacques Derrida as the translator of 'the many nuanced Heideggerian German words': 'And all said and done, that is the sort of reader I would hope for' (*G* lxxxvii). Spivak's interpersonal *Grammatology*, the medium of her friendship with Jacques and Madeleine Derrida, returns via *Of Grammatology* to its authorising patronymic source, Jacques Derrida. The anthropocentric path is complete, the detour between origins is the act of

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translative interpretation that 'assures the proximity to itself of the fixed and central being for which this circular reappropriation is produced': 'The name of man has always been inscribed in metaphysics between these two ends' (Derrida 1982a:121,123). '[T]he proper name and proper (literal) meaning, the proper in general' (*G* lxxxiv) remains secure: pedagogy works within and conserves the proper name and the politics of the signature.

Restance and De Man

The 1980 *Diacritics* essay 'Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model: Derrida's *Limited Inc*' makes Spivak's disagreement with Derrida explicit. Here she is more wary of the academic context of her own discourse, and seems more attuned to the authorising institutional context of the U.S. reception of Derrida.

Referring to the 1977 dispute between Searle and Derrida, Spivak declares 'Derrida cancels Searle's objections' (Spivak 1980:29). Derrida the undisputed victor is seen to be involved in 'what I should call an ideology-critique (although Derrida would object to that phrase and call his critique ethico-political)' (Spivak 1980:30). Spivak (1980:39) suggests transferring deconstructive reading practices to 'the social text'. Part of Derrida's challenge to disciplinary codes is seen to be his non-seriousness (in *Limited Inc.*) even if some of his jokes are 'rather belaboured and elaborate' (Spivak 1980:46). Such an introduction of the marginalised non-serious forms part of a 'practically fractured yet persistent critique of the hidden agenda of ethico-political exclusion':

> Thus it is (not) merely impertinent to acknowledge what generally remains tacit: that the academic game is played according to rules that might not pertain altogether to the disinterested intellect (Spivak 1980:46)

Although 'he is himself caught up in an international academic lifestyle, Derrida can behave as a non-serious marginal' (Spivak 1980:44). This sense of humour is a serious business: 'Where Derrida is strikingly different to Heidegger is in his entertainment of the "non-serious"' (Spivak 1980:44). (One recalls Derrida's aside, I think in *Of Spirit*, that he has come across only one attempt at a rather poor joke in Heidegger.) The treatment of Heidegger is again deferred:

> What follows makes no pretense at figuring out the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida. It is simply yet another summary or checklist of certain moments in Heidegger that bring *Limited Inc.* to mind, followed by a few suggestions as to how Derrida might be different. To interpret the possibility of a metaphysical-oedipal disclaimer would call for a different strategy (Spivak 1980:40).

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In this text some four years after the *Of Grammatology* Preface Heidegger still has to be put into his place aided by Nietzsche's hammer, and is distinguished by a 'pattern of a deconstructive insight recuperated by an idealist blindness' (Spivak 1980:42). Derrida is still the self-effacing authority for the claim that there is no unified origin of authorisation:

> So much said, let me once again tabulate .... I should add, of course, that I cannot guarantee Derridean authorization for any of these meanings (Spivak 1980:46).

The conclusion to 'Revolutions' takes the form of a detour through Benjamin quoting Brecht on the citational quality of dramatic performance, and Spivak clearly wants to include Derrida in the company of Benjamin and Brecht. To do this she criticises Paul de Man as a practitioner of Romantic irony which lacks didactic purpose and is irresponsible with regard to the social text; exactly the charge Taylor levels at her. This is the same de Man referred to earlier with approval—'the permanent parabasis that Paul de Man calls "allegory"' (Spivak 1980:31)—and implicitly invoked in the reading of the 'social text':

> Clear-cut oppositions between so-called material and ideological formations would be challenged as those between literal and allegorical uses of language (Spivak 1980:39f).

Now de Man is presented as the pied-piper of skepticism: 'Indeed, the genius of American deconstructivism finds in its Romanticism its privileged model' (Spivak 1980:48). This version of deconstruction leads 'critics from the left and the right ... to see in deconstruction nothing but this itinerary of skepticism' (Spivak 1980:48). If Heidegger is bedevilled by Romantic nostalgia, then de Man is the ironic romanticist unable to connect with reality. This characterisation of Romanticism is, of course, straight from Hegel's attack on the neo-Kantianism of Fichte and Schelling—an attack that both Heidegger and de Man subscribe to and engage with.

The source for the quote from de Man that justifies this defensive aggression is *Allegories of Reading* where the possibility of a history of Romanticism is being questioned. De Man is claiming that Romanticism undermines the geneticism of historiography, the kind of chronological geneticism that marks Spivak's Preface and is still in place four years later in 'Revolutions'. More precisely, de Man is discussing his privileging of Nietzsche; 'his work participates in the radical rejection of the genetic teleology associated with Romantic idealism' (De Man 1979:82). De Man, with Nietzsche as his guide, is writing about just those problems of a priori historicist genealogy as linear teleological succession that are part of

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Spivak's predicament. Such an historical teleology is an invaluable means of putting Derrida into historical context, yet deconstruction continually questions the soundness of such a procedure. Seen in the light of de Man's suspicion of geneticism, Spivak's genetic approach to modern philosophy remains itself susceptible to deconstruction. The pedagogical need to historically contextualise rests uneasily with the deconstructive historicisation of history. I would suggest that this is the general predicament of deconstructive theorists that wish to engage politically.

A New Humanism?

In 'Revolutions that as Yet Have no Model' Spivak's moment of predicament is clarified when she refuses to relinquish anthropologism. If Derrida is seen to have cancelled Searle's objections, then Spivak wishes to salvage anthropologism from this cancellation and so conserve the rubric of humanism that calls for revolution in the name of liberating humanity. This is an anthropologism that exceeds the strategies of Althusserian subject positionality, and lays claim to a liberatory teleology. It is not anthropologism under erasure, but rather the anthropologism proper to the 'old language' of metaphysics. Despite Derrida's (1982a) critique of Heidegger's residual humanism in *The Letter on Humanism* (1947)—Derrida thinks Heidegger's humanism contributed to his political 'error'—Spivak will retain anthropologism. The anthropologism that contorts the 1976 Preface becomes decisive in the 1980 'Revolutions'. The metaphysical integuments of anthropologism are not to be placed under erasure, 'souse rature', since the *telos* of revolution is an end for a subject (humanity) that, in its Marxist form, is enabled by intersubjective class solidarity and the universalisation of the proletariat as subject:

> Although I am attempting to show that Derridean practice would question 'the name of man as *Dasein*', my reading of Derrida might also seem anthropologistic I think I must insist that a deconstructivist position cannot reduce out anthropologism *fully* Like the paradox of minimal idealization the trace of anthropologism obstinately clings as *resistance* to the practice of deconstruction (Spivak 1980.40)

The *practice* of deconstruction cannot avoid anthropologism if the world is to be changed and not just interpreted. Anthropologism resists deconstruction, and deconstruction in the cause of resistance to hegemony clings to anthropologism. This despite the fact that, to put the argument of *Of Grammatology* bluntly, anthropocentrism is part of the logocentric catechism of the West. This is the driving thesis of *Of Grammatology*. I think such resistant intransigence on Spivak's part raises at least two crucial questions

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for the potential of deconstructive theory to contribute to a counter-hegemonic discourse.

a) The question of *practice*. Spivak claims for the pedagogics of deconstructive practice the efficacy of inserting the marginalised into the academic institutional context. But this practice is liable to appropriation and containment by the liberal pluralism of the institution it aims to challenge. We have seen how in the Preface the practice of pedagogy secures the legitimating authority of the philosophical discourse, the proper name and the corpus. Deconstructive practice works within the broader juridico-legal system of property rights associated with possessive individualism. Anthropologism is interwoven with these socio-political realities and their particular histories. The academic institutional context of the university as the locus of ideological production is part of this wider systemic, and the *universitas* of the university is embedded within this historicisable nexus.

The problem with the practical decision to retain anthropologism is not simply that it stays within the terrain of humanism, since any outside is equally illusory, but rather that it risks working inadvertently to revive and restore an anthropocentrism that has always privileged *Western* man. This same privilege countersigns the *we* of Western philosophers and theorists. There is in the retention of anthropologism a complicity and a danger that is irreducible:

> Whatever the breaks marked by this Hegelian-Husserlian-Heideggerian anthropology as concerns the classical anthropologies, there is an uninterrupted metaphysical familiarity with that which, so naturally, links the *we* of the philosopher to 'we men', to the *we* in the horizon of humanity (Derrida 1982a:116).

There is a linkage between the philosopher's *we* attempting to speak for humanity, and the *we* of collective action and political solidarity that Spivak wishes in some sense to retain, even as she attacks its Western, phallogocentric constitution. The price of this *restance* is that it is amenable to the logocentrism of the West. But without the anthropologistic residue, without the metaphysical familiarity of *humanitas*, how can deconstruction hope to engage in historical situations?

b) The question of *complicity and responsibility*. Spivak sees a use for deconstruction as part of '[a] practically fractured yet persistent critique of the hidden agenda of political exclusion', a critique that looks forward via 'political practice, pedagogy, or feminism—simply to mention *my* regional commitments', to 'revolutions with as yet no name' (Spivak 1980:46f).

> These are enabling principles for more than a constant cleaning-up (or messing-up) of the languages of philosophy, although the importance of this latter is not to be underestimated (Spivak 1980:47).

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But far from modifying or challenging the languages of philosophy, Spivak defers to their authority and objectivity, and looks to philosophers for guidance in messing-up other philosophers. I want to suggest that this deference to philosophy, and the reluctance to historicise it, limits the usefulness of deconstructive theory for the construction of a counter-hegemonic discourse.

The philosophical idiom does not transparently translate predicaments since the philosophical exigency places its own demands, in its own terms, and it operates out of historicisable institutional situations. Hegel used the term *Bildung* to describe the philosophical training of the mind that attempts to elevate to universality what is merely immediate and particular. The fact that one of the meanings of *Bildung* is education is not incidental. Derrida's deconstructions alert us to the universalization of Western interests by theory, but his analyses still work within the universalizing discourse of philosophy, its institutional and geopolitical setting. Part of the force of the demand to articulate rationally in the form of philosophical discourse is tied, *de facto* and *de jure*, to the dominance of the West that makes Western-European philosophical discourse the arbiter of reason. This dominance is not purely disinterested but is complicit with the economic, political, and cultural means of imposing Western superiority. The philosophical exigency that requires discourse in the language of philosophy achieves the appropriation of other discourses to itself. Noting 'those places—cultural, linguistic, political, etc.', Derrida is careful to point out that the *we* of the philosopher is formed within 'a certain group of languages and cultures ... certain societies':

> Beyond these borders ... If I recall this obvious fact, it is [to draw attention to] the enclosure of Western colfocution. The latter doubtless makes an effort to interiorize this difference, to master it, if we may put it thus, by affecting itself with it. The interest in the universality of the anthropos is doubtless sign of this effort (Derrida 1982a:112,113).

Such 'enclosure' is tied to the economic and ideological 'evil complicities' (Derrida 1982a:114) of the West which call for the kind of vigilance that Spivak displays in attacking the 'de-historicizing academy' (Spivak 1980:48). Derrida's response, on the other hand, is to simply note that 'political concepts [are] drawn from the metaphysical reserve' (Derrida 1982a:112), which is doubtless true but is it enough simply to note this obvious complicity? Isn't there some responsibility on the intellectual to do more than note in passing? Spivak clearly thinks it isn't enough, and her response to the practical imperative of producing a counter-hegemonic discourse is to retain anthropologism despite its complicity with logocentrism. Yet if we take the Translator's Preface as unable or unwilling

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to escape anthropologism, then it is clear that anthropologism simply means replacing one authority with another (better) authority, leaving the institutional structure and geopolitical site in place and untroubled. In the Preface the early Derrida is replaced with a wiser later Derrida in the manner of a philosophical *Bildung*. Not only does this gradualism jar with Derrida's claims for deconstruction's radical solicitation of Western metaphysics, it also bolsters the same historical and material centre that, via institutional prestige (Editions de Minuit, John Hopkins University Press) and economic prowess (Paris, Cambridge, Baltimore, New York), universalises its concerns and essentially conserves its own centrality[3]. Because of the pedagogical need for a centre and an authority there is perhaps always going to be a privileged authority, and for Spivak this privilege goes to Derrida; the privilege of Western philosophy is assured, and the disruptive force of any catachrestic writing-back is diffused. Thus a declaredly counter-hegemonic postcolonial deconstruction risks amounting to no more than a renewal of the conventional hierarchy.

Conclusion

Spivak's failure to live up to the inspiring ideal of intellectual engagement in her Cape Town lecture raises questions beyond her inability to orientate herself to the particularities of the South African context, surely a necessary preliminary to aligning herself and/or antagonising the various ideological positions of her hosts. It opens for discussion an ideal of critical practice that aims to negotiate the tension between an intellectual filiation with a generalising philosophical discourse tied to the dehistoricising institutional role of theory, and a strategic alignment with a historicising Marxist analysis aiming at practical intervention. And it also highlights the contexts in which debates about academic freedom take place: what about the hierarchies of authority and credibility specific to the protocols of the South African academic context? What about the apparently profitable exchange between academics who want to be seen to move between the margins and the centre, and the value extracted in terms of institutional legitimation and certification by South African academics marketing super-star intellectuals? In short, what of the occluded role of the South African knowledge class in the

[3] Derrida explicitly attempts, I think unsuccessfully, to unsettle this institutional and geopolitical centre in 'The Principle of Reason the University in the Eyes of Its Pupils', *Diacritics* 13, 3 (1983), and *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (1992). John Guillory gives an incisive critique of the U.S. institutional and pedagogical function of deconstruction in his *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

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business of ideological production: whose particular interests are being generalised here under the label 'theory'?

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Train-congregants and Train-friends: Representations of Railway Culture and Everyday Forms of Resistance in Two South African Texts

David Alvarez

Introduction: Railways, Resistance, and Representation

> The Political, like the purloined letter, is hidden in the everyday, exactly where it is most obvious: in the contradictions of lived experience, in the most banal and repetitive gestures of everyday life—the commute, the errand, the appointment. It is in the midst of the utterly ordinary, in the space where the dominant relations of production are tirelessly and relentlessly reproduced, that we must look for utopian and political relations to crystallize (Kaplan & Ross 1987:3).

> ... a way of using imposed systems constitutes the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations. A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneouvers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference (De Certeau 1984.18)

> .. the ordinary daily lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the *very content* of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions (Ndebele 1986:156).

'Trains as tropes' pervade South African literary production of the apartheid era as surely as railways formed part of the daily fabric of the lives of

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millions of black South Africans[1]. In this article, I propose to examine two brief texts—a short story by Miriam Tlali and a photo-essay by Santu Mofokeng—which represent black South Africans commuting by train between their homes in peri-urban townships or rural towns and their workplaces in urban areas set aside for whites. In Tlali's 'Fud-u-u-a!' (1985) and in Mofokeng's 'Train Churches' (1987), black railway commuters are represented as engaging in forms of implicit protest against the dehumanising environment and processes in which they are embedded. Both texts encode one of the most 'banal and repetitive gestures' of everyday black South African urban life: that of the railway commute to and from the white areas. Following Kaplan and Ross, I attempt to show how in these texts it is in 'the midst of the utterly ordinary' that relations of everyday resistance crystallize.

In the context of South African literary studies, evocation of 'the ordinary' cannot but bring to mind Njabulo Ndebele's critique of anti-apartheid protest writing and of the spectacular ethos of protest cultural production in South Africa more broadly (Ndebele 1984; 1986; 1989; 1990). Paralleling, albeit independently and from a South African perspective, arguments on the category of 'the everyday' by French cultural theorists Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, Ndebele's 'rediscovery of the ordinary' helps bring into focus whole areas of social life and cultural production which often inhabit a blurred and marginal space in the analytical and political purview of Left critics.

Both Njabulo Ndebele and Michel de Certeau produced their essays on 'the everyday/the ordinary' in the 1980s, a decade which saw a trans-disciplinary and trans-national rethinking of resistance. Broadly, critiques of orthodox understandings of resistance have tended to argue that the category should be broadened to include not just struggles involving the state, formal organisations, open protest and national issues, but also what James C. Scott (1985) terms 'everyday forms' of resistance.

Referring to the resistance to coercion of black miners in what was then Southern Rhodesia, historian Charles Van Onselen (1976:239) notes

[1] I borrow the phrase 'trains as tropes' from Michael Wade, whose article 'Trains as Tropes: The Role of the Railway in Some South African Texts', examines a variety of inscriptions of the railway in South African literature by both white and black writers. In black writing, such inscriptions are found in texts which collectively span the apartheid years, from the 1950s *Drum* stories of Can Themba, through the 1960s protest writing of James Matthews, to the Black Consciousness and post-protest stories of writers such as Mtutuzeli Matshoba and Bheki Maseko in the 1970s and 1980s respectively. That the leading black cultural journal to emerge after the 1976 Soweto uprising should be named *Staffrider* (after the young daredevil commuters who rode at an angle to the trains and to authority) suggests something of the power of the train as cultural symbol in urban black South African life.

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that the miner's defiance was waged largely in 'the nooks and crannies of the day-to-day situation'. It is among just such 'nooks and crannies' that I locate encodings of everyday resistance. From the perspective of modes of social inquiry which confine their assessment of historical practices to the clear-cut operations of explicit domination and manifest resistance, I locate these encodings in unlikely places and among implausible candidates; viz. in representations of mostly middle-aged and female train-congregants and train-friends. As will become apparent, my analysis of the texts by Tlali and Mofokeng owes much to the work of historical anthropologist Jean Comaroff and of political scientist and ethnographer James C. Scott, as well as to the insights of Ndebele and De Certeau.

My overall aim in this article is to explain how the cultural texts that I examine represent forms of everyday resistance to the material and ideological dimensions of railway commuting as well as to aspects of the ideology of apartheid more broadly. An attendant objective is to show how the realm of 'the everyday' is contested terrain that does not yield pristine narratives of resistance which can be pitted against some putatively monolithic narrative of domination. While the texts which I analyse give evidence of resistance, they also reveal anxiety and contradiction, especially in the realm of gender. The ore of resistance can be mined from the seams of quotidian life, but like any mineral it is studded with impurities.

I

White Writing, Black Writing, and 'the Web of Steel'

A potent material component of the processes of colonisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation in Southern Africa, the railway has become, as Michael Wade (1994:76) notes, 'a powerful and multivalent symbol of the processes themselves'[2]. Wade examines the various roles which the trope of the railway has played in literary inscriptions of the social processes spawned in South Africa by capitalism under colonial rule, segregation, and apartheid. After considering the ways in which the railway trope has been deployed to different ends in a selection of texts by white writers, Wade (1994:87) provides a useful summary of its uses in black writing:

> The convention of black inscriptions regards trains as venues for violence, as social microcosms of the larger black situation heterogeneous, vulnerable,

[2] See *An Atlas of African Affairs* by Ieuan Griffiths and the same author's 'The Web of Steel' for concise, critical accounts of the genesis, development, and political economy of South(ern) Africa's railway system.

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> overcrowded, unprotected, transitional people, at the mercy of predators. In black inscriptions the train encapsulates the fragmentation of black experience in the firing-line of state capitalism, the alienation of urban black societies, the transfer of state violence to the black community via its own delinquents. In black inscriptions the train is a symbol of the devastation of black experience under apartheid; it is a symbol of the *destructiveness* of white industrial power.

Wade's temporal purview is almost the entire twentieth century: his analysis encompasses the period between the publication of Perceval Gibbon's novel, *Margaret Harding*, in 1911, and that of Bheki Maseko's short story, 'The Prophets', in 1989. The scope of this article is narrower and its emphasis is different. Unlike Wade, I focus on two texts from the 1980s in which the train is not simply a figure of 'the destructiveness of white industrial power' (although the menace of that destructiveness hovers around them both). Rather, the train here functions as a polysemic site that assembles microcosmic communities which reveal the complex responses of blacks to conditions of systemic oppression.

Although the inventory of inscriptions which Wade catalogues does not exhaust the range of textual representations of trains by black writers, even a cursory survey of literary production from the 1950s through the 1970s attests to the overall validity of his argument. Two texts from the 1950s by the Sophiatown writer Can Themba, a short story entitled 'The Dube Train' and a report called 'Terror in the Trains', narrate the callous depredations of tsotsis on innocent commuters. A couple of decades later, in the turbulent wake of the Soweto uprising, the vicious tsotsis of Themba's text reappear in Mbulelo Mzamane's 'Dube Train Revisited'. Another two stories from the late 1970s, Berung Setuke's docu-fictional 'Dumani' and Michael Siluma's 'The Naledi Train', also thematise the intimidation, robbery, and assault of commuters by disaffected and violent urban youth. Nevertheless, as I will argue momentarily, and as Wade himself acknowledges towards the end of his essay, such texts tell only part of the story of black inscriptions of railway cultures.

Like the Barolong boo Ratshidi people of the South Africa-Botswana border whom anthropologist Jean Comaroff (1985:1) writes about in *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, the characters in the texts which I examine in this paper are represented as:

> human beings who, in their everyday production of goods and meanings, acquiesce yet protest, reproduce yet seek to transform their predicament

What is 'the predicament' in which the characters in the short story and the commuters captured in the photo-essay are mired? Beyond the personal details of their individual lives, they are all reluctant conscripts in a labour-

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force whose overarching function is to reproduce the socio-economic order of South African capitalism and apartheid. In what follows, I will first sketch out the function of urban rail transport in the political economy of the South African nation-state under apartheid and then proceed to interpret the texts by Tlali and Mofokeng as cultural artefacts which encode informal attempts to undercut this economy's rationale and effects, thereby exposing the limits of apartheid oppression[3].

II
'The Hours to Hell and Back': Urban Rail Travel Under Apartheid

> As it pulls away some hang on outside.
> Inside, people are like sardines
> The only air is carbon dioxide
> Most are standing, and there is no empty seat for any
> pregnant women.
>
> While the train moves, voices shout 'Foduwa'.
> Angels mourn when no human judge feels mercy.
> These are the hours to hell and back,
> When the black transport is on the move.
> (Molusi 1981:53)

Under apartheid, all the major urban areas depended on the labour of blacks who lived in townships situated on the periphery of the cities and in the so-called homelands[4]. In the mornings, black workers would flock to their

[3] Legal de-segregation of trains and railway facilities began tentatively in the Witwatersrand in 1979, took another hesitant step in 1985, was pursued in the Cape Peninsula in 1988 and disappeared de facto everywhere in June of that same year. De jure racial separation, exclusion, and discrimination in trains, taxis, and buses were abolished by government decree in October 1990 with the repeal of the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 (Pirie 1992:180).

[4] Despite the strenuous efforts by apartheid planners to keep the designated white areas of South African cities 'white by night', blacks continued to live there and to create informal social networks which secured their presence. As sociologist Eleanor Preston-Whyte noted (1982:164), 'Blacks not only work, but also live, in many of the white suburbs of South African cities. They constitute a largely ignored category of "non-people" whose presence is tolerated because of the services they offer to whites but whose existence is socially ignored both in planning and in the day-to-day community of these "white areas". Blacks who work and live within "white" cities have, however, created a distinct sub-culture which serves and expresses those particular needs which stem from the geography of residential separation'.

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workplaces in the white zones by overcrowded bus, taxi, and train. In the evenings, having expended their labour in areas where they were considered to be, in apartheid bureaucratese, mere 'temporary sojourners', workers would be required to return to their homes away from the white areas[5]. More often than not, this daily commuting was exhausting, nerve-wracking, and dangerous (Kiernan 1977). Amenities for blacks at railway stations were segregated and usually sub-standard. Trains ran on infrequent and unpredictable schedules, were impossibly overcrowded and unsafe, and were plagued by criminal violence[6]. The daily grind of segregated travel formed an integral part of the everyday life of city-dwelling Africans and constantly reminded them of the inequity under which they lived and laboured:

> For decades the state-operated trains and the subsidized buses were a daily reminder to Black people of their exclusion from white residential areas. They also measured the pulse of industrial life, reminding people of their inferior utilitarian status in urban South Africa. Public transport symbolized oppression and subservience (Pirie 1992:177).

Yet as Pirie (1992:172) further notes, black commuters were never merely a passive human cargo:

> ... even the social engineers could not surmount the fact that Black commuters were not just units of unconscious freight. To its users, public transport is more than just uniform and passive mobility.

Pirie's description of black commuters as purposive actors in the everyday drama of social reproduction underpins the argument of this article. Elabora-

[5] Geographer J.M. Pirie (1992:172) describes railway commuting as a planned effect of the country's system of racial capitalism: 'Apartheid required that urbanization was accompanied by the enforced segregation of people of different race. This necessitated a gigantic programme of spatial engineering in terms of which Blacks were allocated housing on the fringes of urban areas or in rural bantustans. In both instances regular, efficient and inexpensive public transport was imperative to ensure that the massive displacement of the workforce did not interrupt the smooth working of the economy. The extensive construction of commuter railways and roads and the subsidization of commuter fares were essential ingredients of this deliberately distorted form of urbanization'

[6] A chapter in Ernest Cole's famous *House of Bondage* entitled 'Nightmare Rides' visually and verbally captures the gruelling conditions of what Can Themba referred to as the 'congested trains, filled with sour-smelling humanity'. Bereng Setuke's 'Dumani' catalogues in grim and extensive detail the various ravages which commuters suffered at the hands of assorted criminals. The cover and centre-fold section of *Staffrider* 4 1 feature photographs by Paul Weinberg and Mxolisi Moyo of everyday scenes at urban railway stations. (The centre-fold is entitled 'Stations and Staffriders' and contains a poem which figures the train as a swallower of lives.)

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ting upon Michel de Certeau's (1984:18) ideas about 'the stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations', the texts which I examine below reveal some of the ways in which

> ... within a grid of socio-economic constraints, [everyday] pursuits unfailingly establish relational tactics (a struggle for life), artistic creations (an aesthetic), and autonomous activities (an ethic) (De Certeau.ix).

Under the 'grid of socio-economic constraints' constituted by apartheid capitalism, the everyday pursuit of commuting to and from sites of alienated and racialised labour did indeed engender 'relational tactics' grounded in autonomous cultural expression[7]. One of the most visible of these everyday cultural forms was the practice of worshipping on trains, represented in the photo-essay to which I now turn.

III
Photographing Resistance to the Menace and Alienation of Apartheid Transport: Santu Mofokeng's 'Train Churches'

> *I think* that particularly in a country like South Africa where for centuries and particularly in the last four decades or so there has been an overt attempt to remove people's identities or to make them something other than what they are .. there is a huge potential there for using photography in a way that could actually, in some small measure, get people back to their identity, get people back their control of identity' (Nunn 1993:208)

> To extend leftist discourses about political economy and the state to a discourse about capitalist civilization is to accent a sphere rarely scrutinized by Marxist thinkers: *the sphere of culture and everyday life*. And any serious scrutiny of this sphere sooner or later must come to terms with religious ways of life and religious ways of struggle (West 1984:9).

Cedric Nunn's call for a photography that would help restore a people's identity and Cornel West's insistence on the need for progressive thinkers to engage the sphere of religious ways of life and struggle are simultaneously

[7] Pirie (1992:176f) notes that in the 1980s the trains became venues for organised political resistance of various kinds. I do not know whether there are literary representations of 'train committees' and 'train rallies' but such representations would in any case fall outside the scope of this paper which focuses resolutely on unorganised and improvised modes of resistance.

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concretised in a photo-essay entitled 'Train Churches', by the documentary photographer Santu Mofokeng. Published in a 1987 special issue of the North American journal *Triquarterly* devoted to new writing, photography, and art from South Africa, 'Train Churches' photographically documents an instantiation of De Certeau's (1984:18) notion of how

> a practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space, it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for manoeuvres of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference

The order here is that of the commuter trains transporting African workers in the service of the apartheid economy; the practice is that of improvised prayer meetings through which some commuters attempt to overcome the menace and alienation of apartheid transport.

In this section I examine 'Train Churches' as a text which frames and valorises certain everyday practices of resistance grounded in religious ritual. Since I am dealing here with a textual representation that *mediates* everyday life and not with a transparent window onto a quotidian South African reality, I devote some attention to the questions raised by the complexity of the photo-essay form. First, however, I offer a brief overview of the trajectory of oppositional South African documentary photography and of Mofokeng's relationship to it.

In his 1987 reflection on documentary photography's role in the struggle against apartheid, photographer Paul Weinberg claims that South African practitioners of the genre can be divided into two generations: the pre-1980s generation, characterised by the figure of the dogged and solitary photojournalist (best exemplified, perhaps, by Ernest Cole)[8], and the generation which came of photographic and political age in the 1980s. While there is some continuity between the two, the work of the 1980s generation is in Weinberg's view largely the product of collective endeavour. Mofokeng belongs to the 1980s generation, one which in a later piece Weinberg dubs the 'Taking Sides Generation'. This generation created a number of photography collectives, one of the most active of which was Afrapix, formed in 1982.

The work of Afrapix was motivated by two broad objectives: on the one hand, to function as an agency and as a picture library; on the other, to foster the practice of documentary photography in alliance with the mass anti-apartheid organisations which emerged in the early 1980s. Afrapix

[8] Cole's *House of Bondage* and Peter Magubane's *Magubane's South Africa* are classic examples of the kind of work produced by the pre-1980s generation. (The temporal demarcations should not be regarded too rigidly; Magubane has continued to produce excellent work into the 1990s.)

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photographers exhibited and published their work collectively, abroad as well as in South Africa. Most of this work attempted to record the ongoing struggle against apartheid from an openly partisan perspective. For instance, 'On the Front Line: A Portrait of Civil War', another photo-essay published in *Triquarterly*, consists of images produced by four Afrapix photographers which document scenes of repression and defiance from the State of Emergency of the mid-1980s[9].

Considered seditious by the State, the work of oppositional photographers was often banned, confiscated, and destroyed throughout the apartheid years. A plethora of legal restrictions severely curtailed the efforts of photographers to document social unrest and opposition to the State. In addition, photographers themselves were regularly harassed, banned, and imprisoned.

Significantly, the clampdown on press freedom during the mid-1980s State of Emergency led photographers to turn their attention to what Weinberg (1989:69) describes as 'more in-depth community photography and more personal searches in the community of the photographer'. In so doing, Afrapix photographers like Mofokeng shifted their gaze from the spectacle of head-on struggle to less dramatic scenes, away from the conflict-ridden streets of the townships. Writing in 1991, two years after the lifting of the State of Emergency and a year after Mandela's release, Weinberg (1991:97) argued that documentary photographers should create a photographic practice that could go beyond the limitations of protest photography:

> The momentum we flowed with has gone. We now have to create our own. Our photography is faced with that challenge. We need to go beyond politics or maybe

[9] Much of the work of young oppositional photographers was showcased in annual collective exhibitions held between 1982 and 1987 under the auspices of *Staffrider*. In a special issue of the journal devoted to the first exhibition, the thinking underpinning the practice of these photographers was made explicit: '"The camera doesn't lie". This is a myth about photography in South Africa in the Eighties that we will not swallow. In our country the camera lies all the time—on our TV screens, in our newspapers and on our billboards that proliferate our townships. Photography can't be divorced from the political, social and the economic issues that surround us daily. As photographers we are inextricably caught up in those processes—we are not objective instruments but play a part in the way we choose to make those statements. [The photographers in this collection] show a South Africa in conflict, in suffering, in happiness, and in resistance. They examine the present and beckon the viewer to an alternative future. Social Documentary Photography is not, in our view, neutral. In South Africa the neutral option does not exist—you stand with the oppressors or against them. The question we pose is how do photographers hit back with their cameras?' (in Weinberg 1989:64).

The ethos of protest photography expressed in the *Staffrider* editorial was to remain dominant for the better part of the 1980s.

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> redefine what politics is. Maybe we should start by recognizing that it is people *out there* that make this struggle. It is people that make those statistics. It is time for photography to shift its focus. People make the struggle and it is not simply the politicians, the press conferences and the talking heads that are important 'News and politics' both so critical in our highly politicised country have made the rendition of imagery superficial and limited

This dissatisfaction with '*superficial* and limited' imagery was also expressed by another member of the Afrapix collective, Cedric Nunn. In an interview in which he argues for empowering people to become active, critical consumers of images from the multifarious social text of late-capitalist South Africa, Nunn (1993:207) charts the transformation in his aesthetic and political concerns:

> Certainly I became a photographer and many people in Afrapix became photographers, because we wanted to make some sort of political intervention. A lot of us have moved, in that process we have come closer to seeing photography as art-form, as a creative art-form ... And that removes it from the arena of hard-core politics, if you want, but I don't think that that diminishes it in any way because it then takes on a creativity of its own.

As the quotations by Weinberg and Nunn make clear, in photography (as indeed in literature), a tactical shift was underway in the late 1980s from the overtly political to realms often dismissed as apolitical (and therefore not 'relevant') by leftist critics[10]. I want to argue that in the terms of Njabulo Ndebele's critique of protest writing, the shift entailed focusing on the arena of 'the ordinary' and on the 'infinite number of specific social details' of people's lives (Ndebele 1989:69) of which the ordinary was composed.

Mofokeng's work shows an abiding concern for depicting 'ordinary black South Africans going about the day-to-day business of living' (Mofokeng in Holst Petersen & Rutherford 1992:73). In 'Train Churches', published in the same year as Nunn's interview, Mofokeng records the activities of railway commuters taking part in prayer meetings, a common feature of urban train travel since the early 1970s [11].

[10] One is reminded here of Antonio Gramsci's (1988:397) remarks on the new literature which might emerge from an intellectual and moral renewal of European culture in the crisis-ridden 1930s: 'The premise of the new literature cannot but be historical, political, and popular. It must aim at elaborating that which already is, whether polemically or in some other way does not matter. What does matter, though, is that it sink its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional'.

[11] In addition to documenting religious railway culture, Mofokeng has recorded the lives of African labour tenants in the rural Transvaal (1991), daily life in Soweto (1990), and scenes from the small Western Transvaal mining-town of Phokeng (Bozzoli 1991:29,199ff,214ff).

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Mofokeng's introductory text, ten photographs, and three captions capture moments in the rituals of the urban railway expressive culture of the 'train churches'. The essay's introduction deftly summarises the characteristics and significance of this assemblage of performative railway practices, keyed on religious faith:

> Early-morning, late-afternoon and evening commuters preach the gospel in trains en route to and from work.
> The train ride is no longer a means to an end, but an end in itself as people from different townships congregate in coaches—two to three per train—to sing to the accompaniment of improvised drums (banging the sides of the train) and bells
> Foot stomping and gyrating—a packed train is turned into a church
> This is a daily ritual (Mofokeng 1987:352).

Comaroff notes that ritual is a key element of the everyday forms of protest of marginalised peoples[12]. Such forms of protest are often imbricated in what Cornel West calls 'religious ways of life' and 'religious ways of struggle' in the 'cultural life-worlds of the oppressed'. In 'Train Churches', Mofokeng's camera has recorded a few moments of the everyday expressive religious culture of the oppressed.

Upon a first viewing, Mofokeng's photographs jar with an outsider's mental archive of images of South Africa in the 1980s. Absent from these photographs are the toyi-toying comrades, the burly, sjambok-wielding policemen, the billowing clouds of rubber-tyre smoke, and the ominous Casspirs which long dominated photographic imagery of that decade produced for international consumption. Instead, in 'Train Churches' we encounter images of mostly middle-aged African women dressed in everyday workclothes who have been photographed while performing various practices such as singing, clapping, healing, praying, preaching and dancing. Surrounded by other commuters who are photographed looking on bemused, reading, or dozing, the framing of the worshippers in these train churches suggests that they are transported by religious fervour.

If the ethnographic arguments of anthropologists like Jean Comaroff are accurate, such fervour is the expression of an assemblage of practices which enable worshippers to mediate the profoundly alienating character of urban railway travel, itself a manifestation of a larger order of alienation, that

[11] Historians and anthropologists have shown how ritual practices of singing, dancing, and spirit-mediumship have played a hidden but significant role in the struggle for African liberation. See, for instance, the work of Terence Ranger on the Beni Ngoma of East Africa, ritual dances which simultaneously mimicked and mocked colonial military styles, Leroy Vail and Landeg White's analyses of living oral traditions of protest song across Southern Africa, and David Lan's treatise on the role of Shona spirit mediums in the Zimbabwean struggle for independence.

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of industrial capitalism in its South African form. In addition to describing what the photographs reveal of that mediation, I want to consider the work they do as images assembled in a photo-essay. Before assessing the character of Mofokeng's photographs as representations, however, I want to consider briefly the nature of the practices which they represent.

In his 1972 study of Zionist rituals on commuter trains transporting Black workers between the township of Kwamashu and white-dominated Durban, ethnographer J.P. Kiernan (1977:215) noted that while the people of the township accepted the train as part of everyday living, it was a constant reminder of their economically and politically dependent status. Further, in view of the sometimes disastrous accidents which took place on the African routes in the major urban areas and of the rampant violent crime on board the trains and at the stations, the train not surprisingly represented menace (Kiernan 1977:216). Kiernan shows how some commuters chose to contest their subordinate status and the menace of the trains through the enactment of religious rituals practised by Zionists (not all the subjects of his study were in fact Zionists).

While Mofokeng's essay does not specify what denominations the commuting worshippers belong to, their singing, improvised drumming, foot stomping and dancing suggests that they are adherents of the various charismatic sects of either the Independent or the Zionist churches of Southern Africa. Jean Comaroff (1985:167) explains that the dynamic system of religious signs and practices of the Zionist sects is centred on 'the ritualized attempt to reform the body and the location of the person in the world'. Reforming the body and re-centring the person are symbolic responses to the sense of alienation and of loss of cultural identity generated by capitalist socio-economic structures in a racially segregated order. Just as the body is at the centre of Zionist ritual and belief, bodies (and especially faces) occupy most of the photographic space of Mofokeng's frames.

In the remaining paragraphs of this section, I attempt a close reading of the photo-essay. I hope to show that in an essay consisting of only a one-paragraph introduction, ten photographs, and two captions, Mofokeng has managed to convey a sense of the resilience of African workers condemned to undertaking the same dreary, dangerous journey day after day. Commencing with three ambivalent pictures of solitary worshippers surrounded by indifferent commuters, and proceeding with a series of five portraits of worshippers in varying states of transcendence, the essay concludes with two collective portraits of exultant commuters continuing their performative practices on the platforms of the railway station.

Before commenting on the photographs individually, I want to undertake a brief reflection on the relationship between myself as viewer/critic and Mofokeng's essay. John Berger (1982:89) observes that when we find a

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photograph meaningful, 'we are lending it a past and a future'. Despite the verbal contextualisation of the photographs through the medium of a prefatory paragraph and two captions, providing 'Train Churches' with 'a past and a future', is not an altogether straightforward proposition.

While 'Train Churches' is not a 'pure' photo-essay, most of the photographs in it lack the most minimal textual features that conventionally accompany a photo-essay: captions, legends, dates, names, and locations.[13] Much about the photographs remains 'unreadable'. We are not told, for instance, why Mofokeng chose to document this particular aspect of quotidian South African urban life. This alone generates questions which the photographs cannot answer. What, for example, is the relationship between the photographer and his subjects? What relationships do his subjects have among one another? Were the photographs taken on different occasions among different groups of congregants? If so, why? What practices are the congregants engaged in precisely?

More intimate details about the photographs are also unavailable to us. What are the names of the people in the photographs? What do they think about their being photographed? The unavailability of answers to these and other questions reinforces the ambiguity inherent in the photographs. In what follows I intend to supplement the weak intentionality of the individual photographs with a narrative pieced together from the clues given to us both by the essay's verbal components and by the arrangement of its visual information. This narrative is perforce fragmentary and much about the photographs remains ineffable. But if John Berger (1982:289) is right in arguing that photographs placed sequentially are restored to a context of interpretable experience, then the ambiguity of 'Train Churches' yields polysemic meaning and not a frozen iconicity.

'Train Churches' opens with a half-body shot of a woman singing, clapping, and swaying her shoulders in the midst of a crowded train carriage. Although the woman's face is the photograph's focus, she is not gazing straight ahead but is looking instead in the direction of somebody in front of her and to her right who appears as a blurred arm in the bottom left part of the frame. The woman's face is the only one we see clearly in this photograph. We can only see partial profiles of the two figures behind her and of the seated woman in the bottom right hand corner. There is an odd tension in the photograph between the fast movement which the woman's blurred hands and body posture convey and the stillness and manifest uninterest of the figures behind her. That tension is further enhanced by the distribution of the light and dark tones. The light streaming in through the window in the

[13] In writing about the form of Mofokeng's text, I have found W.J.T. Mitchell's work on the photographic essay useful (Mitchell:281-328)

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right-hand third of the frame is bright and diffuse, evoking newness and illumination. That sense is offset, however, by the predominantly dark tone of the left third of the picture. The overall impression conveyed by the photograph is one of disconnection *and* engagement. Apparently disconnected from the commuters behind her, the woman sings on regardless, her countenance only slightly less impassive than that of the standing figure whose profile we see in the left third of the picture. The strange sense of impassivity conveyed by these two faces is however, slightly offset by the half-smile of the woman in the bottom right hand corner, who is sitting and reading a book (a Bible?) illuminated by the light from the window.

A similar dynamic is at work in the next photograph, a medium-long shot of a man crouching slightly as he apparently blows air outwards into the carriage with the help of his hands, also blurred. Like the woman in the previous photograph, this man is absorbed in his task and is not looking at the camera, thus lending the photograph an air of disengagement. The intensity of the man's expression stands in strange contrast to the impassivity of the three out of the four figures behind him who are contemplating his actions. The fourth person, the man reading the newspaper at the left of the photograph, is unconcerned with the display of religious expressivity taking place in front of him. Holding up the paper with his left hand, he hangs on to a strap with his right hand, his right arm held diagonally above his shoulder, leading the eye away from the scene to a point outside the frame. The air of disengagement is further enhanced by the way in which Mofokeng has captured the space in which the man is located, standing as he is between two poles by himself, flanked on either side by seated, dozing women clutching their carrier bags.

The mood changes somewhat in the third picture, another medium long shot of a singing worshipper, who like the worshippers in the previous two photographs is looking away from the photographer and is surrounded by considerable empty space. In this case, however, the worshipper has engaged the attention of those around him to a small degree, as is evident from the faint smiles of the two women behind the man, in the left half of the picture.

In the fourth photograph, much of which is dark, the partially lit faces and hands of three women and the light in the windows behind them prevent the dark areas from overwhelming the composition. Even though the women are clapping and singing (while seated), the photograph has a heavy and silent quality to it.

The fifth photograph, which captures women undertaking what appears to be a healing ceremony, generates greater tension than the previous ones. The tension results from the intensity with which the healer (captured from the side) holds the face of the woman in front of her, and the equal intensity with which a younger woman in the background, whose

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illuminated face is the picture's focus, looks on to the scene of the healing with her mouth open as though she is both singing and registering alarm.

The sixth and seventh photographs capture the transported visages of an individual woman and an individual man respectively. Located at the very centre of the frame, the woman's illuminated face and torso convey a sense of sheer exaltation, a sense reinforced by the blackness which surrounds her and by the way in which her lit countenance contrasts with the faint silhouette which we can barely make out to the left of her. A similar effect is achieved in the next photograph, a captioned close-up of a priest with furrowed brow whose lit-up face is framed by two areas of black.

In the eighth photograph, we have close-ups of the serious countenances of two women, praying with their eyes closed while they hold their arms aloft. The last two pictures are of activities outside the train, and each captures more worshippers simultaneously than any of the previous photographs. In the first, a group of five women at the centre of the picture run in circles surrounded at a distance of a few feet by fellow commuters standing in a ring around them. The expressions on their faces are joyful, and that sense of joyfulness is enhanced by the wider sweep of the photograph, taking in as it does a much larger area than any of the previous eight pictures.

The very last photograph in the essay has a caption which reads 'Park Station, Johannesburg'. Singing continues onto platform before people go off in different directions to work'. In the left centre half of the picture, a small band of commuters walk along singing and clapping. Seven faces are visible and most of them are smiling. In the right-hand third of the photograph, other commuters standing at the open doorway of the train appear as blurred figures, while in the bottom right hand corner, the skirt, shoes, and socks of a woman walking along the platform are visible. The rest of her is not. There is a tension in the photograph generated by the contrast between the distinct joyfulness of the commuters on the left of the picture who have descended after surviving the journey intact and the blurred image of the commuters still inside the overcrowded and dangerous train.

Possibly taken on separate occasions, the photographs constitute a narrative whole which tells a story of alienation resisted. Writing about the 'opposition to history' manifested in a photograph by Andre Kertesz, John Berger (1982:103) notes that:

> All photographs are possible contributions to history, and any photograph, under certain circumstances, can be used in order to break the monopoly which history has over time

These words are pertinent to my reading of 'Train Churches'. The train- and time-bound commuters in Mofokeng's photographs are represented in the process of breaking the monopoly which history has over

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time and which the realm of necessity has over their day-to-day lives. As a whole, the essay contributes to this resistance by assembling the images in ways which invite recognition of the everyday drama they represent.

The overall effect of the essay is greater than the sum of its parts. This may be an intrinsic consequence of the montage-like properties of the photo-essay. John Berger (1982:289) argues that still photographs placed in a montage sequence are restored to a living context:

> ... not of course to the original temporal context from which they were taken—that is impossible—but to a context of experience. And there, *their ambiguity at last becomes true*. It allows what they show to be appropriated by reflection. The world they reveal, frozen, becomes tractable. The information they contain becomes permeated by feeling. Appearances become the language of a lived life.

The context of experience to which the photographs in Mofokeng's essay are restored is that of the daily commuting experiences of millions of African workers. Celebratory and detached by turns, 'Train Churches' captures some of the complexity of an everyday experience in which ordinary workers enacted ritual practices that undercut the commodification to which they were subjected, even as they reproduced some of the features of the oppressive order. Appearances here do indeed become the language of lived lives, lives fraught with alienation, hope, and contradiction. Mofokeng's text is therefore in a sense more complex and compelling than either the deceitful, glossy images of life in South Africa circulated by apologists for apartheid or the imagery of unremittingly spectacular confrontation produced even by progressive photojournalists[14].

For all its power, however, a de-contextualized reading of 'Train Churches' could serve to occlude the harsh realities which train-congregants often had to face. In 'Dumani', Bereng Setuke (1980:64) notes preachers and their impromptu congregations are often silenced by train-gangs singing obscene songs. In the story which I analyse in the next section, it is the congregation itself which participates in a 'silencing'.

[14] I am thinking here of texts like T.C. Robertson's *South African Mosaic* (1978) on the one hand, and Peter Magubane's *Soweto: The Fruit of Fear* (1986), on the other. Published two years after the disturbances which rocked the nation's townships, *South African Mosaic* contains beautifully composed photographs of South Africa's landscapes, settlements, climatic features, and peoples. It is virtually impossible to glean any sense from the photographs and their captions that the contemporary reality which they documented was one of race and class war. Cumulatively, they have the effect of making South Africa seem both exotic and reassuring. Conversely, Magubane's text (which consists of photographs of the Soweto uprising) conveys an overall sense of helplessness and victimisation which is hard to square with the resilience of the struggle against apartheid both at the time when the photos were taken (1976) and at the time when they were published in book form (1986).

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IV

'Finding Spaces to Stand Next to Each Other': Train Friends and Patriarchy in Miriam Tlali's 'Fudu-u-u-a!'

> Social reproduction—what we are calling ... everyday life—has, of course, become in our own time the urgent issue on a host of political and cultural agendas, most significantly on that of feminism. For everyday life has always weighed heavily on the shoulders of women (Kaplan & Ross 1987:2f).

> .. if you look at our writings we treat things very superficially We judge the results of oppression and exploitation. We neglect the creativity that has made the people able to survive extreme exploitation and oppression. People have survived extreme racism. It means our people have been creative about their lives (Serote 1981:32).

In my reading of it, 'Train Churches' represents some of the ways in which in the everyday experience of commuting blacks conscripted to serve the material needs of whites managed to contest their legal and economic condition as tokens of exchange in the production of goods, services, and capital. As I have noted, black commuters are represented as enacting this contestation through signifying practices which undercut, in small yet socially significant ways, the relentless processes of commodification to which they were subjected. I have shown how in 'Train Churches' these practices are figured as enactments of bodily presence.

In the last section of this chapter, I analyse a story, Miriam Tlali's 'Fud-u-u-a!', which deals with the contradictory location of women who must contend with multiple layerings of oppression. In the story, the train serves as a device for assembling a community of Black women who cope with the quotidian burden of commuting—with its attendant risks, dangers, and monotony—by constructing everyday practices based on female solidarity and friendship. Equally important, the train is also a device for calling into question simple appeals to racial solidarity which disacknowledge gender inequities.

As I have already suggested, under conditions of structural domination, bodily practices are crucial to the preservation of cultural identity. Writing about the limited forms of protest available to the Tshidi 'peasantariat' of the South African/Botswana border region, Jean Comaroff (1985:260) notes that while collective action of a conventionally 'political' nature is consistently denied them, 'the attempt to reassert control, to return to the world some form of coherence and tractability, continues'. This

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attempt is enacted signally through bodily practices grounded in the religious rituals of the Zionist Church. Because Comaroff's (1985:260f) terse explanation of the social and symbolic purchase of these practices captures precisely the significance which I am ascribing to inscriptions of everyday resistance, I quote her at length:

> The effort [to reassert control] is pursued through accessible implements that remain at the command of the 'powerless' and that speak to the contradictory location of the person in the world—the physical body and the practices which establish viable selfhood and a sense of relationship with a meaningful context. Hence, in the domains of everyday practice that escape direct control, a protest is mounted that acts upon the implications of neocolonial wage labor in its apartheid form and also upon the effects of commoditization on personal and social being. Such resistance, then, while it might not confront the concentrated forces of domination, defies the penetration of the hegemonic system into the structures of the 'natural' world.

In my discussion of 'Train Churches', I spoke about how the 'accessible implements' available to the commuters were singing and dancing as elements of religious ritual. Most of the commuters who appear in Mofokeng's photographs are women, and it needs to be asked how the attempt to reassert control over the world is gendered. It is to this question that I now turn.

Comaroff's observation about 'the contradictory location of the person in the world' reminds us that domination never exists in a pristine, unmediated form. But an abiding awareness of 'the contradictory location of the person in the world' should also serve as a reminder that while human practices of resistance can never be fully incorporated by dominant orders, those practices can themselves be implicated in the forms of domination.

Noting the shift in South African writing (by whites as well as blacks) 'from the representation of mental conditions to a focus on physical realities or resistance, that is, a shift from mind to body in [South African] fiction', Stephen Clingman (1990:56) observes that black writing of the 1980s was concerned with 'elaborating primarily, a sense of social identity, of the regenerative, expansive social body'. In 'Fud-u-u-a!', a story of sexual abuse on the crowded trains, the positive valence given to the signifying practices of congregationists in 'Train Churches' is qualified and Clingman's 'regenerative, expansive social body' is seen to be fractured along lines of gender.

In her introduction to Tlali's (1989) *Soweto Stories*, the collection in which 'Fud-u-u-a!' appears, fellow writer Lauretta Ngcobo remarks on the small number of black South African women writers active in the 1980s. Ngcobo (1989:xv) points out that Tlali has been instrumental in addressing

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the paucity of black women's contributions to South African literary culture and in articulating the structural reasons for this:

> She dared not only to speak out against the South African system, but also against the dominance of male writing which has attended black literature from the beginning[15]

Ngobo observes that in *Soweto Stories*, Tlali focuses on 'working conditions, marriage problems, poverty and poor housing, drinking problems, male fickleness and general degeneration'. As is the case with much black South African literature of the 1980s, the stories are chiefly concerned with life within the black urban communities, rather than with the Black-White racial dialectic. Centrally preoccupied with the lives of Black women, Tlali's stories connect sexism and male dominance with the structures of apartheid. As Ngobo (1989:xixf) notes,

> Through [Tlali's] roving eye we see beneath the skin of dominant men, we see how weak they really are; how decadent and incapacitated. Without any direct reference to the government and its apartheid system, she shows us how deeply the cancerous policies have eaten into our way of life.

Tlali's stories do not foreground either the battery of oppressive laws which constituted apartheid or the array of security and bureaucratic forces whose purpose was to defend and perpetuate those laws. Rather, there is a probing of the hegemonic injuries sustained by blacks living under extremely oppressive conditions, as well as an exploration of the ways in which they resist the penetration of the hegemonic system into their day-to-day lives.

'Fud-u-u-a!' is the story of three black women who are caught in the Friday crush of Johannesburg's rush hour, and who, after missing their preferred train, must wait for a notoriously unsafe train which they would rather not take because of its reputation for violence. In the narrative, there

[15] In response to a comment by a male writer who blithely and condescendingly remarks that 'if you want to write, you will create the time, whether you have a child on your back or whether you are pregnant', Ngcobo (1986.203f) retorts: 'In Africa it is simplistic to say, "Just stand up and write", because though the women might want to write, they are not free to express the difficulties they come across in their marriages. And no woman will stand up in public and say, "I have been trying to write, but my husband won't allow it". So she says "I have been too busy". Those are the problems. When I make an appeal to the men in this gathering to let us write, to present our views differently, it is against the background of an unwilling male world'.

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are several invocations of specifically female solidarity[16]. The first expression of solidarity, however, crosses the gender divide. As one of the characters absent-mindedly walks onto oncoming traffic, a male pedestrian pulls her back on to the sidewalk. The narrator records the character's gratitude for the man's intervention:

> If it had not been for the timely gesture of the man, Nkele would have darted right into the flow of cars which came in rushing impetuously down that street. She stopped abruptly and gasped thankfully, 'Danke Abuti!'. She sighed, looking up at the face of the person whose arm had steadied her and perhaps saved her from certain disaster. 'Our brothers are usually *so* protective towards us in town here', Nkele thought gratefully (Tlali 1989:28)

That brotherly protectiveness, however, is absent from the scenario which Nkele evokes when describing to her friends the abuse to which she, like many other female commuters, had been subjected while riding the train home. Recalling how the train was especially crowded on that day, Nkele remarks that she was forced into an upright position by the crush of many bodies:

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[16] In her study of the social and cultural adaptations made by black domestic servants working and living in an area set aside for whites, Eleanor Preston-Whyte (1982:180f) discusses the complex reasons why train-friendships were of immense importance to Black female commuters: 'The long hours which Mrs M. spends in commuting during the week are not, from a personal point of view, completely wasted. When discussing her personal relations she mentioned with enthusiasm meetings she had with other passengers on the trains. She has regular "train-friends" who meet each morning and, if possible, each evening at the station and sit together in the same coach. They chat, knit or sew while the journey is in progress and walk together part of the way home from the station. Train-friends get to know a good deal about each other and about their respective families and problems. They assist each other in preparing food for parties and celebrations, which always strain both the time and the pocket of domestic servants. When Mrs M. was preparing a visit to her rural home, her three train-friends each gave her a small gift of money to help her meet her expenses. Train-friends also provide something of a protection on the daily journey to and from Durban. The trains are not only crowded, but are filled with people unknown to travellers, some of whom may be pickpockets. Women who travel together regularly can trust each other and so relax. Company on the walk home through the dark township streets is an invaluable guard against attacks and muggings. Should a train-friend not appear on time at the station, her companions will keep her a seat, and if she misses one or two journeys, will investigate by visiting her home; if she is ill or in need, they may provide the spearhead of help and succour. In this we have yet another example of an informal association which provides companionship, potential help and security and one, furthermore, which has arisen from the otherwise negative aspect of long daily commuter trips between Black and white residential areas'.

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> On that 'Four-Six', no one dares sit down on the hard wooden benches. Everyone in the coaches has to stand, on the benches or on the floor. You did what everybody else was doing if you did not want to break your back or lose your limbs .... I jumped on to the bunk and was forced into that upright position by the many bodies around me (Tlali 1989:38f).

Nkele then goes on to describe how from somewhere in the impossibly overcrowded compartment, a woman whom she was unable to see began to lead some of her fellow commuters in a ritual of communal hymn-singing. After reconstructing the call-and-response of the train-church service, Nkele tells her friends that at that moment she really wished 'they would stop singing and praying'. The reason? Under the cover of the worshippers' 'deafening chorus', unnamed perpetrators were engaging in sexual abuse:

> Those who could lift up their hands started clapping them—*hard*. I wanted the music to stop because, instead of helping, the very noise was being used as a 'shield'. I was trying to scream that someone was busy massaging my thighs and backside, trying to probe into my private parts and nobody was paying attention. It was embarrassing and awful! (Tlali 1989:41)

Nkele tells her friends that although her protest went unheard, she attempted to resist the anonymous handling:

> That day, I thanked God for having given me big powerful thighs because all I did was cross them over one another and squeeze as hard as I could. I clenched my teeth and wished that I were *grinding* those fingers between my thighs (Tlali 1989:41).

Her resistance, however, was ultimately unavailing:

> ... with so much congestion, it was impossible to see who the culprits were. We suffocated and suffered in that terrible torture of it all, and there was nothing we could do (Tlali 1989:41).

Nkele notes that her sense of powerlessness was reinforced by the knowledge that the grievances of abused women would not be believed, taken seriously, or even heard. She recalls that until that day, she herself had disbelieved stories of sexual abuse on the trains:

> By the time the train got to Park Station, we were too hurt, too shamefully abused to speak. Who could we speak to? Who would listen to us even if we tried to complain? Everyone would tell us that 'it is all too shameful to say anything about this'. I used to hear women *whisper* about this and never believed it. I used to hear them swearing and spitting (Tlali 1989:41).

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Nkele then recalls that after vociferously expressing their anger, she and the other women who had been sexually handled sought to recover their dignity by reinforcing their sense of femininity:

> On that day I remember hearing a number of powerless women cursing and shouting on the platform, adjusting the wigs on their heads and, like myself, trying their best to look lady-like and presentable (Tlali 1989:41).

The memory of this episode prompts Nkele into an implicit critique of the patriarchal papering over of the abuse of sexual power:

> What is even more annoying is that no one wants to even *talk* about this whole 'nonsense', as they regard it. It is *not* nonsense because who suffers? We suffer. They just don't care. They treat us exactly like animals (Tlali 1989:42)

Significantly, however, Nkele's incipient critique of the sources of female abuse is truncated by the arrival of the train which she and her companions have been waiting for. The limited nature of Nkele's critique possibly belies a deeper anxiety at work in the text. In an incisive reading of this section of Tlali's story, Zoe Wicomb (1990:41) notes that the mode of narration through which Nkele's remarks are conveyed serves both to critique and to conceal the sources of sexual abuse of women:

> There are no male characters, no actants who perpetrate the abuse .... The abuse takes place on the horribly crowded trains for which the politics of segregation are squarely blamed, but the floating deixis ['they'] ... points to female reluctance to identify black men. The ambiguous 'they' can refer both to men who control female discourse and to the authorities who create conditions in which abuse becomes possible—that is, 'they' may create extenuating circumstances for men. Concealment, then, becomes a trope for the woman writer who has to negotiate the conflicting loyalties of race and gender

If Wicomb's reading is accurate, it may help to account for the frequent invocations by the narrator of both the fact of, and the need for, female solidarity. When Nkele introduces a woman she has just met to the friend with whom she had a rendezvous at the train station, the narrator remarks:

> The three laughed loudly. There were no formal introductions necessary. Women in distress just accept each other without much hesitation because they know that they *need* each other (Tlali 1989:33)

On a positive reading, such an expression of female solidarity may simply reflect the strength of the gendered bonds which working-class women must achieve to survive the ravages of alienated and alienating labour.

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Cumulatively, however, the frequent invocation of dictums like the one I have just quoted seems to betray an unspoken anxiety in the narrative over one of the causes of female oppression.

As Wicomb notes, segregation under capitalism is one cause of black women's domination and is identified as such in the story. Another, more intimate, source of domination, that of black men, is not named directly, however. Instead, the narrative relies on the anonymous third person plural marker 'they' (Wicomb's 'floating deixis') to refer to the perpetrators of sexual abuse. Even the nameless third person plural, however, seems to generate too much potentially uncontainable anxiety[17]. After Nkele's comment about the way 'they' treat women like animals, the narrative focus shifts to the arrival of the long-awaited train:

> 'Here's the 'O-Five'!' someone shouted loudly. Others whistled. Nkele, Ntombi and Shadi scrambled into position. It was now time for business. Serious 'muscle' business; the tooth and nail fight for survival. 'Fudua! fudua! fud-u-u-u-a!' several gave the word of command (Tlali 1989:42).

The train's arrival serves to interrupt not just the women's conversation on the platform, but the narrative's evocation of gender conflict as well. In the story, 'business' takes over, the grinding quotidian business of struggling to carve out a space in the crush of homeward-bound bodies on the apartheid trains.

But while the story passes over in silence the conflict which the women fleetingly whisper about, its very mention constitutes a victory of sorts for the characters, as women struggling to survive in a patriarchal order. The evocation of this conflict also amounts to a victory, however muted, for the text as an intervention in a climate in which women's access to social and political power has met with stiff resistance, even from progressive quarters[18].

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[17] In reading the story this way, I am of course making the text speak more than it knows. I think, however, that the text's structural hesitations and deflections call out for a reading of what it may be leaving unsaid.

[18] In a meditation on the contribution which women's poetry could make to a post-apartheid dispensation, Ingrid Fiske (1989:78) makes the following suggestive remarks about the importance of 'seizing speech': '... in a country that's reconstructing itself, with great labour, the opportunity to assert the importance of women's experience "to seize speech" is there. The word is especially disqualified in South Africa; how much more available then is it for reworking by women? To have as one's endeavour the definition of the female self is one thing, to be defining within the context of a fractured state and revolutionary pressure is quite another. For what revolution is worth fighting if it perpetuates myths which exclude half its comrades?'.

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This victory is encapsulated in the meanings of the story's title. On the first page, an asterisk refers us to an explanation of the word 'Fudua!': 'a chant sung by distressed commuters trying to get on to crowded trains'. Commuters have to turn their backs to train doors and wriggle their bottoms to make room for themselves 'as they chant "F-u-d-u-u-a!"'. The everyday practice signalled by the chanting of 'Fudua!' is analogous to the work which the story performs in creating a space, however constrained, for a woman's narrative of everyday resistance. As Wicomb (1990:41) puts it:

> The chant has specific illocutionary force those inside are forced to shift, to re-occupy the space in order to accommodate more people, and the contextual meaning of the title quietly transfers to the story and whispers its plea

Recalling the first time she and her friend Ntombi (one of the other two women on the platform) had braved the commuter crowds, Nkele reveals the full lexical meaning of the story's title:

> When the train came bouncing into that Naledi platform, I was surprised to see people turn their backs away from the doors ready to propel with their shoulder-blades and backsides. 'Fudua! ... fudua! ... fud-u-u-a!' (stir the pot! st-i-i-r the p-o-t!), the push-push yelling started as everyone, man, woman, and child alike, strained all the muscles in their bodies to get inside I just allowed myself to be 'carried' along. I thought I would be flattened dead (Tlali 1989:38).

Like a commuter able to make a space for herself in a dangerously congested carriage but prevented by the crush from moving or turning, the narrative manages to register a muted protest against a stifling masculinist discourse but is unable to confront that discourse head on[19]. Nevertheless, in the wider extra-textual context of the lives of working-class black women in the 1980s, 'Fud-u-u-a!' manages to 'stir the pot' of official discourse 'in order that a new space can be created for the crushed and degraded female to articulate her plight' (Wicomb 1990:41).

[19] In a response to a paper on feminism delivered by Buchi Emecheta at the Second African Writers' Conference at Stockholm, Tlali (1986.185) comments on the generalised hostility to feminist perspectives among Black South African men, and points out that Black male sexism is complicit with the ideological underpinnings of apartheid. 'In South Africa, the question of Western feminism, encroaching into the minds of the African woman is a very, very sensitive question, particularly for the African man. Anytime you ask him to do something, to go and fetch the child today, or something like that he says: "Look, you are already a feminist. You are a white woman and a feminist". It is thrown into your face in the same way in which Communist is thrown into the face of the blacks in South Africa. So the fear is a concrete thing, there is a definite fear of feminism in the African men, especially in South Africa'.

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These 'crushed and degraded' females are not at all represented as hapless victims of an unrelentingly oppressive situation. Rather, they are women who within desperately constrained circumstances manage to maintain a viable and resilient sense of selfhood. (Often in the story the women are smiling and laughing as they chat, and we should recall Nkele's attempt to grind the hand of the man abusing her.) However, as the story winds to a close upon the train's arrival, it seems as though men are once again going to displace women from the narrative, just as women were often displaced from the narratives of nation and of the national liberation struggle:

> Some youthful men wasted no time. Even before the train stopped, they held tightly on to the sides of the open windows, and swung their bodies, legs first, into the coaches. As soon as they had secured sitting space, they 'reserved' places for their female companions who of course had no alternative but to join the 'fudua' routine at the door (Tlali 1989:42).

But in the very last sentences of the story the women reassert their presence and achieve thereby a kind of 'victory':

> In another two to three minutes, the train had come to a complete standstill and the three women had succeeded somehow in battling their way in. They had at last found space to stand next to each other. It was an achievement and a victory which deserved to be celebrated. Alert and watchful as ever, they stood smiling into each other's faces. They sighed. They had 'won' .. The whistle went. The 'O-Five' rambled on and on noisily and 'indifferently' towards Naledi (Tlali 1989:42).

The qualified victory of the women in obtaining a space on the crowded and dangerous trains reflects the qualified victory of the story as a whole in 'stirring the pot'. But the very last sentence reminds us of the contingency of the women's victory; they are still forced to travel in unsafe trains which ramble on 'indifferently' towards their destinations.

Whereas in Mofokeng's photo-essay the community constructed around the expressive practices of religious railway rituals is represented as unproblematic, in 'Fud-u-u-a!' those expressive practices provide a shield for sexual abuse and force the community to unwittingly conceal the abuser. The story thus throws into question definitions of community based on unproblematized assumptions of racial solidarity. But the implicit critique of a male-centred version of community remains undeveloped. Both texts thus partake of the fluidity which characterises the dialectic between domination and resistance.

The two texts which I have analysed in this paper are in a sense little more than fragments of the jostling, vibrant picture of black South African

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cultural production of the 1980s. Nonetheless, by undertaking contextualised symptomatic readings of them I hope to have shown the considerable extension of their social meaning. Further work on the hidden histories of resistance in cultural production of this period will furnish more comprehensive perspectives on the picture which this article has attempted to describe.

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Fact(or) Fiction in Dominee Du Toit's Inscription of the White Queen into the Origin of African Civilisation—Notes on an Extract from *Di Koningin fan Skeba*[1]

Stephan Meyer

> The contingent event legitimises itself by total possession of history and is shattered on the ostensive representation of this claim (Blumenberg 1982:55)

The following pages look into the use of myth to legitimate power. The specific myth is that of the white queen of Sheba who is the purported founder of civilisation in southern Africa. The specific power is that which both emanates from, and is awarded to white, male, Christian, colonial, capital. The thesis proposed is that Du Toit invents a myth about the white origin of civilisation in southern Africa (which can be neither falsified nor verified) with which to legitimate expansion into Zimbabwe, presented as a second coming which is the fulfilment of that original, but now dormant cultural and economic promise.

After contextualising the publication of *Di Koningin fan Skeba* in section (i), section (ii) will deal with the use of myth as medium of

[1] This paper was written to coincide with the publication, one hundred years ago, of one of the first Afrikaans novels—one which was widely read far into the twentieth century. Many thanks to Thomas Capitelli, Elma Meyer, Johan van Wyk, Minnaar van Wyk and Henriette Roos for their respective contributions to this paper.

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legitimation. In section (iii) the use of the myth of the white origin of civilisation in Africa to legitimise the expansion of white Christian capital in southern Africa in Du Toit's novel will be dealt with. The conclusion (iv) points out the inevitable failure of this intention due to the means used.

(i) The Contextual Setting of the Publication of *Di Koningin fan Skeba*

Di Koningin fan Skeba is the promised sequel to another publication, namely Du Toit's travel journal which appeared under the title of *Sambesia of Salomo's Goudmijnen Bezocht in 1894* (published in 1895 by D.F. Du Toit & Co., Beperkt, Drukkers of Paarl) of which an altered English version *Rhodesia Past and Present* was printed by William Heinemann of London in 1897. *Sambesia* itself follows other travel reports of Du Toit's on trips to destinations such as England, Germany, and the Middle East. In *Sambesia* he reports on his trip to the region Rhodes had begun to claim with a treaty of friendship with Lobengula in 1888, followed by the founding of the British South Africa Company, the building of a fort in 1890, and the sanctioning of settlement by the British in 1894.

Sambesia and *Rhodesia* both contain at least three inducements to Afrikaner and English readers (the former presumably a Cape readership rather than the Boers of the Transvaal, the latter including an international audience). They are a call for a joint venture between Afrikaners and English to (i) spread 'civilisation' to the north, (ii) to excavate the gold of the area, and (iii) to excavate the past through archaeological research. The co-operative colonisation ('spreading of civilisation') is possible because of the complementary skills of the English and the Boers, concretised in their respective technologies which both pull together under the same godly mandate[2]:

> The old voortrekker opened the country with the oxwagon, the Englishman is now opening it with telegraph and railway line. We are living in the time of transition. What can be more appropriate than to think now what the oxwagon and what the railway line respectively have done for the opening of our country; to what extent both still mutually need each other; and to what extent the Afrikaans Boer and the Englishman have to co-operate under the same Godly

[2] The feasibility of this co-operation is illustrated throughout *Di Koningin fan Skeba* in a similar division of labour between Du Toit and his partners. Their interest is in the gold and in the future finding of it. His is in knowledge and excavating the past. But his apparently past directed search for the truth about the past has a special place in their venture because it is this knowledge of the past which is necessary in the search for the new riches of the future.

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> mandate to develop our great and good country—the country of the future (Du Toit 1895:5)[3]

Co-operation between English and Afrikaner under the godly dictate is future directed and aimed at development related to both size ('groot') and morality ('goed') of that which already belongs to them—the reference is not to *the* land but to *our* ('ons') land. Selling this political joint venture, a northerly expansion of 'civilisation' to his readers, is possible because of the presence of gold in the area[4]. Thus much of *Sambesia* and *Rhodesia* is spent on descriptions regarding the practicalities pertaining to mining and living in the area. It is very much a 'How to live and work in Sambesia' for the 1890s, inviting individuals and companies to embark on a gold rush on the back of which political and cultural expansion could ride[5].

As a scholar of antiquity, Du Toit is intrigued by the remnants of an ancient civilisation to be found in Zimbabwe. He offers this apparently neutral theoretical interest in the past as one of his reasons for the occupation of the area north of the Limpopo. Two well concealed knowledge guiding interests are at work behind this front though: the one is to provide clues leading to the hidden gold, the second is to search there for reasons for the collapse of this ancient civilisation which was perceived to be in a similar situation to that of the newly founded Boer republics and British colonies with their Afrikaans subjects, who should learn as much as they can from the past to prevent history repeating itself:

> Generally it is however not difficult to guess what made an end to this blooming colonial settlement here. It has become quite evident, both from the mineworks as well as these ruins, that a *higher developed race*, presumably *descending from elsewhere*, or in any case in living contact with *Phoenicia, Egypt and Palestine*, were in command and had these works executed by a subjected slave race, which had to be constrained given all the fortifications. When now the motherland goes

[3] De oude voortrekker opende het land met den ossenwagen, de Engelschman opent het nu met telegraaf en spoortrein. Wij leven in den tijd van overgang. Wat kan gepaster zijn dan nu even na te denken: wat de ossenwagen en wat de spoortrein respectivelijk gedaan hebben voor de opening van ons land; in hoever beiden wederkeerig nog steeds elkaar noodig hebben; en in hoever dus ook de Afrikaansche boer en de Engelschman onder éénzelfde Godsbestuur moeten samenwerken tot de ontwikkeling van ons groot en goed land—dit land der toekomst (Du Toit 1895:5).

[4] The fact that Du Toit's party doesn't find the gold, but conjure up enough proof that it is still there, of course acts as a further incentive to future treasure hunters.

[5] It may be worthwhile investigating the use of the widespread myth that Solomon's goldfields were located in Zimbabwe, to establish to which extent it was used by political strategists to coax economically interested companies and individuals into paving the way for political expansion.

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> under and such a *colonial settlement* receives no support from there any longer, then it is easily understood, that *a general uprising of the subjected tribes could put an end to the colonial settlement* (e.a.) (Du Toit 1895:216)[6]

Such research, Du Toit acknowledges, is hampered by the absence of written historical records from, and about these times. These absences are indicated in the 'blank spaces' scattered throughout *Sambesia* in the form of open and unanswered questions about who these mysterious original inhabitants were.

These 'blank spaces' are too tempting to allow let them pass by, and Du Toit rises to the challenge set up by himself to fill them with speculations which hardly succeed in concealing the self-promoting knowledge guiding interest which is at work here:

> What drew our attention most of all were the great aqueducts. We had so often seen them in Oriental countries, for instance around Damascus. We were firmly convinced that the Kaffirs had not made these aqueducts. On our travels through Rhodesia we had seen a hundred places where the ancients had dug gold, where they had lived in their towns, but now it became apparent to us that they had also been agriculturists. Who were these ancients? (Du Toit 1897:181).

To answer this question, Du Toit has to go beyond the covers of *Sambesia*. This promise of a supplement, which goes beyond the purported factual travel journal of *Sambesia* is an opening at the closure of that book, funnelling the reader from *Sambesia*, into *Di Koningin fan Skeba* from 'fact' to fiction as unobtrusively as possible:

> And with this we end our description of the old mineworks and the old ruins *as they appear now and what can now be deduced from them*. If we are granted the execution of our will, then we hope, later, in the form of a historical novel, to let the old times relive, and to let the Queen of Sheba relive, with Solomon and the whole environment of the population which lived and worked here in the far away times. Thus not a *history*, nor a complete *fiction*; but a *revival* of this time as closely as possible, according to the information which we have in old historical works and in these remains,—but then you will rediscover Zimbabwe and the whole of Zambesia full of life and motion, the gold industry in full bloom, the whole social interaction; and we especially hope to let you realise then that the old

[6] Over het algemeen is het echter niet moeielijk te gissen wat een einde maakte aan deze bloeiende volkplanting alhier. Het is toch alleszins gebleken, zoowel uit de mijnwerken als uit deze bouwvallen, dat hier een *hooger ontwikkeld ras*, denkelijk *van elders afkomstig*, of in elk geval in levend verkeer met *Fenizië, Egypte en Palestina*, gezag voerde en deze werken deed uitvoeren door een onderworpen slavenras, dat in bedwang gehouden moest worden blijkens al die fortificaties. Wanneer nu het moederland ten onderging en zulk eene *volkplanting* geen steun vandaar meer kreeg, dan is het licht te begrijpen, dat *een algemeene opstand van de onderworpen stammen een einde aan de volkplanting kon maken* (e.a.) (Du Toit 1895:216).

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ones were people too, who lived, felt, loved, hated, knew joy and sorrow, just as we do[7] The readers of Zambesia we thus wish Farewell!, and till we meet again! (e.a.) (Du Toit 1895.217)[8]

(ii) Fact(or) Fiction and the Legitimising Power of Myth

Between March 1886 and May 1889 this promise is fulfilled with the publication, in serial form, of *Di Koningin fan Skeba* in *Ons Klyntji*. It neatly supplements the facts (?) of *Sambesia* with a fiction which intentionally shrouds the distinction between two types of writing, the factual travel journal and the fictitious adventure novel[9]. Aware of the risks involved in his venture of inscribing a white origin of civilisation into African history, Du Toit has to immunise it against possible attack. This is done, firstly, by associating it as closely as possible with factual texts and the newly invented and still to be trusted medium of photography[10]. Should this fail, the second

[7] It is more important for Du Toit to establish a common humanity with the ancient white predecessors than with the black contemporaries by which he uncritically accepts the tradition of black enslavement by white colonists

[8] En hiermeê eindigen we onze beschrijving van die oude mijnwerken en die oude bouwvallen *zooals ze er nu uitzien en wat er nu uit af te leiden is*. Wordt het ons vergund ons voornemen uit te voeren, dan hopen we later, in den vorm van een historisch roman, die oude tijden te doen herleven, en de Koningin van Scheba te doen herleven, samen met Salomo en heel de omgeving der bevolking die in die verre tijden hier leefde, en arbeidde. Dus niet een *geschiedenis*, ook niet een algehele *verdichting*, maar eene *herleving* van dien tijd zoo na mogelijk, volgens de gegevens welke wij hebben in oude historische werken en in deze overblijfselen;—maar dan hervindt ge Zimbabwe en heel Sambesia vol leven en beweging, de goudindustrie in vollen bloei, geheel het maatschappelijk verkeer; en vooral hopen we u dan te doen beseffen, dat die ouden ook menschen waren, die leefden, gevoelden, beminden, haatten, vreugde en smart kenden evenals wij. Den lezers van Sambesia roepen we dus toe. Vaartwel! en tot wederziens! (e.i.o.) (Du Toit 1895.217)

[9] I am not arguing that one can always identify a purity of genres, and that the factual (travel journal) is not imbibed with the fictitious. This is evident from various travel journals on southern Africa and elsewhere. The point is that there are differences (although they may sometimes be hard to separate) in the *ways in which texts are postured* as either fact or fiction, with different claims as to the consequences that posture should have as regards the reception of the text and possible action which might flow from it

[10] The first edition of the book contains several photographs as evidence of Du Toit's trip to Zimbabwe. One of the photographs which has this function is the one where he is seated at one of the towers of Zimbabwe, with the caption reading 'Di gehymsinnige toren in Simbabwe, waaronder di perkamentrol ontdek is' (Du Toit 1898.5) in which his authority is confirmed ('he has been there himself'), and the 'reality' of the scrolls is enhanced by their connection to a materially existent building.

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strategy is to place it between the factual and the fictive in the space usually occupied by myth. With this Du Toit employs one of the strategies used in the ideological legitimation of domination which Thompson calls narrativisation[11].

The opening lines of *Sambesia* are as appropriate, or maybe even more appropriate, to *Di Koningin fan Skeba* in this respect:

> More diverse pages and chapters have seldom been found by the reader in one book (Du Toit 1895:Preface)[12]

Although Du Toit wants to convey here that his journal was written under varied circumstances during his journey—and that the last part, which deals with King Solomon's mines, was written upon his return in his study and library, relying on books about the north, especially the 'oude delverijen en bouwerken', making it a summary of much reading and thought combined with own investigation and observation (Du Toit 1895:Preface)—it can also be taken as an unintended acknowledgement of the conflation of fact and fiction. This blend determines the very nature and status of both texts (*Sambesia* and *Di Koningin fan Skeba*), but especially that of the 'novel'. *Di Koningin fan Skeba* capitalises on its origin in the (apparently) factual travel journal, but like *Sambesia*, consists of such a precise mixture of fact and fiction that it procures the benefit of both, without incurring any of their respective strictures.

As a supplement to a text which postures as non-fiction, i.e. *Sambesia*, *Di Koningin fan Skeba* feeds off the latter's claimed status as a true report and calls for a special type of reaction. But, as a supplement to an even truer, the ultimately true text, i.e. the Bible, it feeds off even greater authority. As an aspiring apocryphal text which is excluded from formal religion only because it deals with its more worldly/historical aspects, it is conveniently situated between the contemporary empirical facts, as reported in *Sambesia*, and quasi-metaphysical history as reported in the Bible. The factor fiction is thus veiled in such a way that the question, 'Fact or fiction?' does not arise

[11] Claims are embedded in stories which recount the past and treat the present as part of a timeless and cherished tradition. Indeed traditions are sometimes *invented* in order to create a sense of belonging to a community and to a history which transcends the experience of conflict, difference and division. Stories are told, both by official chroniclers and by individuals in the course of their everyday lives, which serve to justify the exercise of power by those who posses it and which serve to reconcile others to the fact that they do not (Thompson 1990:61f). For differing views, see *inter alia* Hamilton (1993:63-78) and Cobbing (1988).

[12] Ongelijksoortiger bladzijden en hoofdstukken he[.]ft de lezer zelden in één boek gevonden (Du Toit 1895:Voorrede).

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so that the conclusion—'this cannot be true' cannot follow. It is this very placing of *Di Koningin fan Skeba* in the realm where this question is suspended, which allows Du Toit to import his ideological claims into the self immunising safehold of myth.

Using historical material in a novel is nothing unusual, and not problematic in itself. (No novel can be absolute invention, and it would probably be of no interest nor understandable to us if it were.) Two possible categories of historical novels which bring something new to light may be those which bring to the fore *new facts* about the past which were previously little known, and those which *give a new interpretation to* the old facts. But Du Toit's 'novel' does something very different. It invents 'facts' about the past and places them in a space he has declared blank because there are, according to him, no reliable sources about it. In this way what Du Toit poses as fact, is immunised against comparative critique based on historical sources.

It may be retorted by some that this is a feature of all literature, i.e. that it exists in that region beyond truth and falsity. Whether this is indeed the case is not at stake here. My criticism of Du Toit is that he wants it both ways. He resorts to uncriticisable invention (a feature of fiction) without ceding the claim that what he writes isn't fiction ('niet een *geschiedenis*, ook niet een algehele *verdichting*; maar een *herleving* van dien tijd'). To claim unquestionable truth (in the sense of truth which cannot but be right) while at the same time claiming to be unquestionable truth (in the sense of truth which is immunised against questioning) is one of the typical features of ideology. In *Di Koningin fan Skeba* we thus have the confluence of two self-immunising strategies, the fictive and the ideological, each in service of the other.

This blend of fact and fiction is typical of *Ons Klyntji* in which *Di Koningin fan Skeba* originally appeared. The very tensions found in the 'novel' are rooted in that magazine. A glance at the contents pages reveals that *Ons Klyntji* is made up of an aggregation of fact and fiction. The fiction includes humours and romantic poems, and by 1900 fact-related fiction like war poetry. The non-fiction includes scientific and quasi-scientific pieces on astronomy, farming hints, and history[13]. Between the covers of *Ons Klyntji*

[13] The index for 1900 gives insight into this melange: the headings include 'Liifde in Oorlog'; 'Skets fan di teenwoordige Oorlog'; 'Grappe in di teenwoordige Oorlog'; 'Straffe op Boere Komandos', 'Wat Mensehande kan doen' ('Di langste Tunnel op Aarde', 'Di Sues Kanaal' etc.), 'Wondere fan die Sterrehemel'; 'Kaffer Folksstoriis'; 'Liidere met Musiik'; 'Gedigte'; 'Oue Liidjiis'; 'An di Fergetelhyd ontruk', 'Dire Storiis'; 'Gemengde stukke', 'Portrette en Prente fan Predikante' (*Ons Klyntji* 1900) The January edition of that year contains an article 'Nuttig en Fermakelik' subtitled 'Fer gesellige Ferkeer' (under the category 'Gemengde stukke') from which the following extract illustrates this mixture of entertainment, education, and politics: 'Persi'e alleen foer jaarliks 500 miljoen pond an dadels uit. Egipte is di enigste land fan di wêreld waar meer mans-mense as frou-mense is. Daar is 160,000 meer mans as frouens; dis 'n goeie kans fir di mysiis' etc. (*Ons Klyntji* Jan 1900:17).

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fact and fiction exist next to each other, and it comes as no surprise that this coexistence should rub off on *Di Koningin fan Skeba* in which the distinctions are conveniently erased[14].

This erasure of the fact-fiction divide means that Du Toit's narrative aspires to more than fiction and more than history. It aspires to the status of myth by insinuating itself into the classic histories and myths of the Middle-East from which Christianity sprung. His narrative of the origin of civilisation in Africa thus acquires those qualities typical of myths of origin. Because they deal with the gods, they demand undoubting acceptance which rests on the authority of those gods. Where this fails, they stand beyond question, because they report on times beyond ours which allow neither verification nor falsification. As such they are the ideal medium of

[14] On the connection between the rise of capital, the travel report, the novel, regular publication of magazines and newspapers, and the emergence of the public sphere in Europe, which has some analogies with *Ons Klyntji, Sambesia and Di Koningin fan Skeba*, see Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. His comment on the connections between the power of the interpreting author, the historical/ancient truth, and the mixture of fact, fiction and the absurd, from which the creation of a passive public sphere arises, throws light on Du Toit's role as interpreting authority of ancient truths, one who ritualises representation, thus participating in the generation of a passive public through the medium of *Ons Klyntji*. 'The traditional form of authority included as one of its elements the right to represent and interpret whatever was held to be "the ancient truth". Communications concerning actual events remained anchored in this knowledge of the tradition. Anything novel appeared under the aspect of a more or less marvellous event. "New facts", if only they were sufficiently unusual, were transformed in the court of the "ancient truth" into something "extraordinary"—into signs and miracles. Facts were transfigured into ciphers Since they could only be representations of knowledge vouched for by tradition, the novel and the surprising assumed an enigmatic structure. In this respect no distinction was made between events in the world of nature and in human history; natural catastrophes and historical incidents were considered equally suitable for miraculous stories. The fifteenth-century broadsheets and sixteenth-century single sheet prints called *New Journals* still bore witness to the strength with which an unbroken traditional knowledge was able to assimilate communications whose rising stream, to be sure, already pointed to a new form of public sphere. Such sheets indiscriminately spread the news of religious wars, campaigns against the Turks, and Papal decrees as well as news of rains of blood and fire, freaks, locust plagues, earthquakes, thunderstorms, and heavenly phenomena, of Papal Bulls, electoral agreements, and discoveries of new continents as well as of baptisms of Jews, punishments by the devil, divine judgements, and resurrections of the dead Often the *New Journals*, like the broadsheets before them, were written in the form of songs or dialogues, i.e., were meant to be declaimed or sung, alone or with others In this process, the novelty moved out of the historical sphere of "news" and, as sign and miracle, was reintegrated into that sphere of representation in which a ritualized and ceremonialized participation of the people in the public sphere permitted a merely passive acceptance incapable of independent interpretation' (Habermas 1991:254, footnote 35).

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ideological legitimation. Those who dare to question are branded as heretics. And those who are not scared off by this threat have nothing to hold up as a comparative against myth and the power which is legitimised by it.

(iii) The Myth of the White Origin of Civilisation in Southern Africa

Di Koningin fan Skeba is a contradictory and muddled[15] attempt by Du Toit to write Africa into the history of Christianity and Europe. He does this by situating one of the strands of (European Christian) civilisation in Zimbabwe, rather than the Orient, as scholars of his time did. In doing this he may be misunderstood to be countering the Hegelian view that history passed Africa by, by writing the history of early black African civilisation. But, although Du Toit writes the 'forgotten history' of one of the 'foundations of civilisation', it is not the history of a black Athena, but of a fictitious white origin of civilisation in Africa. Thus, rather than bringing to the surface the African foundations of European civilisation, he plants into Africa a white origin, which not only cleanses the roots of European civilisation from non-European impurities, but also confirms the special role of whites as an elected people in southern Africa.

Du Toit, who is at once author, narrator, and character in the novel, cleverly conceals his own voice and interests by placing the dubious story about the origin of civilisation in Zimbabwe in the mouth of the disaffected black 'witchdoctor' Umsalomi. As with most myths of origin, Umsalomi's narrative obscures the point of origin with a long and irrecoverable trace which fades into the distant past. This allows for unquestionable arbitrariness in its selection of a point of beginning, as well as the nature of this beginning. As a form of pre-history, which lies beyond the point of the beginning of history, myth is not susceptible to the type of logical and empirical criticism which can be levelled at historical claims. These immunisation tactics are evident from Umsalomi's narrative which starts as follows:

> My father has told me, that my father's father told him, many moons backwards, more dead moons than I can say, that 'Abalanga' (white people) with long hair once lived here. And they had a white queen, with very long hair which hung to nearly on her feet. And then other white people came here from the big water, where the sun rises. They came with wonderful pack oxen, not like our oxen (camels) and they brought a lot of limbo and copper and beads. They built the

[15] The fact that it was written over an extended period, and as a serial without the possibility of returning to the beginning to change it, may explain some of the confusion and contradictions in the text. Yet another cause for this confusion is certainly the difficulty that arises in writing a piece which is neither wholly history, nor wholly 'verdichting' (fiction), and in which the knowledge guiding interest in the past is the legitimation of current power against the odds of the facts.

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> large kraals with stone walls and stone roofs. They had many assegaais and arrows and sables, and they were masters in fighting our nations, and made slaves of us. They let us dig holes in the ground to take out 'Isipsi'. The white people built the large stone kraals, as high as the trees, and they lived in the land for many moons (Du Toit 1898:3[4]#)[16]

That the beginning of this 'history' is lost in time immemorial, makes it possible to postulate an origin which suits Du Toit's intention of writing the origins of (African) civilisation in white. Because the origins go beyond the ambit of empirical evidence he can state that the original inhabitants of the area, and the founders of civilisation, as well as the second generation which came from across the sea as colonists, were white, without any danger of being proven wrong.

Of course it also means that his claim cannot be corroborated, a state of affairs which Umsalomi is acutely aware of. For this reason he closes his report with the self-validating claim: 'And this is the truth which I have now told you' ('En dis di waarhyd wat ek nou fer julle fertel het') (Du Toit 1898: 3[4]). As Umsalomi's conclusion indicates, the only backing for the truth of these mythical claims is derived from the authority of the speaker. For this reason Umsalomi's status as keeper of knowledge is stressed because it counts as verification by authority: 'From time immemorial it has been the case, only the captain of the hill and his witchdoctor know the secrets of the ... place' ('Fan fanmélewe af is dit so, net di kaptyn fan di kop en syn towerdokter weet di gehyme fan di (di) ... plek') (Du Toit 1898:3[3]). That the reader should be lead to accept this strategy of verification through enshrinement in authority by the way in which Du Toit receives it, is of the utmost importance to Du Toit. Here he guides the reader into accepting a verification strategy which is extrapolated to the novel as a whole, since his own claims raised by the novel are enshrined in similar authority as Umsalomi's. As master and keeper of divine knowledge in his own society Umsalomi is

Page numbers in square brackets refer to the modified and modernised Afrikaans edition of 1963.

[16] 'Myn fader her fer my fertel, dat myn fader syn fader fer hom fertel het, baing mane agteruit, meer dooie mane as ek kan sê, dat hiir eenmaal 'Abalanga' (witte mense) gewoon het met lange hare. En hulle het 'n witte koningin gehad, met baing lange hare, wat tot amper op haar foete gehang het En toen is hiir ander witte mense gekom fan di grote water af, waar di son opkom. Hulle het gekom met wonderlike pakt osse, ni nes ons osse ni (kaméle), en hulle het baing limbo en koper en krale gebreng Hulle het di grote krale met klip-mure en klip-dakke gebou. Hulle het baing asgaaie en pyle en sawels gehad, en hulle was fer ons nasiis baas om te feg, en het fer ons slawe gemaak Hulle het fer ons gate laat grawe in di grond om 'Isipsi' (goud) uit te haal Di witte mense her di grote klip krale gebou, so hoog soos di bome, en hulle het baiing mane in di land gewoon' (Du Toit 1898:3[4]#).

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equivalent but not equal to Du Toit who occupies a similar position in his own tradition. As a dominee, Du Toit is closely connected to the authority of the gods, he is an authority on the gods (who are the ultimate source of authority) and thus carries authority[17]. This authority validates the narrative of the white origin of civilisation in southern Africa, which in turn legitimises Du Toit's authority as legitimate successor to that civilisation[18].

The loss of the beginning of the history, which suits him as it allows free space for his ideological intention, is evident both in Umsalomi's oral narrative above, and 'corroborated' by the similarly lost beginning of the Hebrew manuscript which the party discovered in the tombs and which narrates the history of the classic civilisation:

> Yet they [the parchment scrolls] are for the largest part well legible *mainly at the beginning that they are damaged*. The reader should now imagine a scroll: 2 covers ... and the joint where the casing in which it was locked is damaged; *thus the beginning is illegible*, then the further cover on the other side is legible again, and the second cover opposite the joint is illegible again (e.a.) (Du Toit 1898:36[30])[19].

Thus both Umsalomi's oral narrative of the white origins of civilisation in southern Africa, and Du Toit's translation from the written Hebrew corroboration, postulate a beginning which go beyond their own range. The fact that the origin is beyond the range of oral memory, and beyond the range of

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[17] The title page of *Di Koningin fan Skeba* clearly states the author as '*Ds.* S. J. Du Toit'.

[18] For a similar criticism of the priesthood, see Nietzsche's 'The Anti-Christ', especially # 9,12 and 26. According to Nietzsche, the priest, who takes upon himself the task of improving, redeeming and saving, is elevated, and elevates himself to the position of sole determiner of right and wrong (#12). He declares one, i.e. his, perspective as the only valid one and by denoting it as eternal and godly knowledge, beneficial to salvation, makes it sacrosanct. Like the priest which Nietzsche writes about, Du Toit too, translates the 'Volksvergangenheit', the historical reality, into a quasi-religious one. His 'historical inquiry' is thereby immunised against empirical criticism. The priest, then, becomes the expert on both the present and the past (which is now but an extension of his field of specialisation, i.e. religion). Through this translation of historical knowledge into religious knowledge, the priest secures his power over an even larger sector of social life and thereby becomes more and more indispensable (#26). Disagreeing with the priest, even about facts, now becomes more than disagreement about the facts of the past. It becomes revolt against god, i.e. sin.

[19] Tog is dit fer di grootste gedeelte nog goed leesbaar. Dis mar meer by di begin wat hulle beskadig is. Di leser moet sig nou 'n rot foorstel: 2 omslage by di foeg waar di koker waar dit in was sluit is beskadig; dus di begin is onleesbaar, dan is di ferdere omgang [?]n di andere kant weer leesbaar, en di twede omgang teeno'er di foeg weer onleesbaar (Du Toit 1898:36[30]).

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preserved written 'history' allows for its easier usurpation by Du Toit's contemporary ideological interests aimed at the legitimation of yet another wave of white colonisation.

One of these ideological interests is evident from the connections which Du Toit wishes to forge between the Egyptian civilisation, Judaism, Christianity, and *ons* (us):

> And here we now have the memoirs from King Solomon's time, nearly 3 thousand years old, and which refer to *our* land and the old mines and ruins of which we want to know the reality so much (e.i.o.) (Du Toit 1898:36[29])[20]

What is portrayed here as a purely theoretical interest in the past, is soon revealed as more than that. Du Toit uses the knowledge guiding interest of the other members of his party—which is the discovery of gold and treasure for purposes of personal enrichment—as a foil to show the purity of his own, apparently theoretical, interest in the past. As a matter of fact though, his own knowledge guiding interest is to legitimate his own current occupation of the land with a mythical history which ascribes the origins of civilisation in Africa to white, longhaired people, both indigenous, or from across the ocean, who are *his* religious ancestors rather than the ancestors of what he describes as the Bushmen currently inhabiting the area.

Besides elevating himself and his own project, the other function of the myth as ideology is, for Du Toit as ventriloquist using Umsalomi as a front, to identify an enemy. According to him this civilisation was destroyed by crafty black people who by implication, together with what he perceives to be deceitful Bushmen (Du Toit 1898:91[134]) and the unreliable Umsalomi, still pose a threat to white efforts to civilise Africa:

> But later on we became rebellious ... And then we cornered the Abalanga here, and threw poison into their water, and burned down their large kraals. And so that they shouldn't come again, we, as much as we could, broke down their kraals and filled the holes with ground (Du Toit 1898:3[4])[21].

Despite its dishonourable effort, black craft was unable to destroy the white foundations of civilisation which survive underground, waiting for the white dominee to reveal (and English technology and capital to rejuvenate) them,

20 En hiir is nou gedenkskrifte uit Koning Salomo syn tyd, amper 3 duisend jare oud, en wel wat betrekking het op *ons* land en op di oue myne en boufalle waarfan ons so graag di werkelikhyd wil weet (e.i.o.) (Du Toit 1898:36[29])

21 Mar naderhand het ons opstandig geworde ... En toen het ons di Abalanga hiir fas gekeer, en gif in hulle water gegoi, en hulle grote krale ferbrand. En dat hulle ni weer moet kom ni, het ons sofeul as ons kan, hulle krale afgebreek en di gate fol grond gegooi (Du Toit 1898:3[4]).

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thus confirming the true white roots of African civilisation and at the same time affirming their own status as god's elect:

> I then asked him: 'But what happened to the white queen when your fathers burned down this city'.
>
> 'We don't know' he says. 'Some say she fled to the mountain Fo ra, there far where the sun goes to sleep in the evenings Because up to there the Abalanga dug for "isipsi" everywhere. But some say she went into a big house under the hill with the white young maidens who were always with her, and that they are still living under the hill. And we think so too' (Du Toit 1898:3[4])[22]

Thus, just as god had set Solomon on the select Israel's throne to make it 'endure for ever' (2 Chronicles 9:8), Du Toit and his company (*ons*) claim this role by virtue of their white Christian heritage and the power/knowledge their archaeological skills, knowledge of the language of the chosen people (Hebrew), capital, and technology affords them. They are the present fulfilment of a dormant civilisation, the white princes on iron horses, who, with the kiss of power/knowledge and capital will reawaken the white queen from her subterranean slumber, thus restoring history to its original intention.

In what, on a certain level, looks like religious tolerance remarkable for a dominee and which was soon to vanish from popular Afrikaans culture (see footnote 23), Du Toit displays an expansive knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture, the Semitic, and the Islamic traditions. Initially this comes across as an acceptance of religious diversity. However, an early sign that this is not the case is Du Toit's failure to pay equal respect to the indigenous religions of the San, who, according to him, also posit one of the main threats to his party's survival. Du Toit is so fixated on the classic cultures which feed into the Christian West that the only way in which he can perceive civilisation in Zimbabwe, is as an extension of the Middle-Eastern roots of European history into southern Africa. The glory of Zimbabwean civilisation (which is under the control of Sheba, the woman) derives from its connection to the classic Jewish and Christian cultures (epitomised here by Solomon, the man), which Du Toit, the Christian dominee with his European roots and knowledge of the classical Jewish and Christian cultures, combines in southern African (un)holy matrimony.

It also soon becomes clear that his exploration of the varied origins of Christianity should not be confused with the propagation of religious

[22] Ek fra toen fer hom. 'Mar wat is fan di witte koningin geworde toen julle faders hiir-di stad ferbrand het?'

'Ons weet ni', sê hy. 'Party sê sy het geflug na di berg Fo ra, daar fêr waar di son saans gaan slaap .... Want tot daar oral het di Abalanga "isipsi" gegrawe Mar party sê, sy is in 'n grote huis onder di kop ingegaan met di witte jong nois wat altyd by haar was, en dat hulle nog altoos onder di kop woon En ons denk oek so' (Du Toit 1898.3[4])

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diversity and tolerance of even the traditions related to Christianity. Like any historian who wants to excavate a normative ideal from the past, Du Toit too has to confront problems of continuity and discontinuity between it, the present, and the future[23]. Such a confrontation can have various aims and take various forms. One aim could be to unearth those voices buried under the ruins and/or excluded by the designs of specific civilisations. Du Toit seems to be going some way in this direction in bringing the various voices from the Christian related past to speak in the present. Yet, at the same time he is bent on reducing this multiplicity by eliminating those differences which could deprive him of his position of master and keeper of the tradition. Thus, in the specific form which his relation to the past takes, he deprives it of its potential civilisatory resources. Instead of taking a rational critical stance towards the past, panning a more humane future from it, Du Toit uses the opportunity to install himself as normative authority. He, and even more so the cultural experts who succeeded him, purify the past to a single voice—that of the authoritative interpreter of the tradition, who in his act of interpretation authorises himself[24].

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[23] [O]ur responsibility also extends itself to the past. The past is not simply accepted as something factual and complete .... We can definitely not compensate for past suffering and injustice, but we have the weak power of an atoning memory. Only the sensibility towards the unjustly tortured, on whose inheritance we live, also produces a reflective distance to our own *traditions*, a sensitiveness towards the abyss-like ambivalences of the traditions that formed our own identity. However our identity is not only something to simply be discovered, but it is also and at the same time our own project. We cannot pick out our traditions, but we can know that it depends on us *how* we continue them. In this respect Gadamer [who practices a hermeneutics of the past] thinks too conservatively. Every continuation of a tradition is selective, and precisely this selectivity today has to pass through the filter of criticism, a willful appropriation of history, if you wish: through a consciousness of sin (Habermas 1996:7).

[24] I have been unable to trace the origin of the difference between the Smit (1921) and Nienaber (1962) editions on the one side, and the first edition in book form of 1898 in the following extract which illustrates the increase in dogmatic purity began by Du Toit and continued by his later editors: 'Wat die vorme van godsdiens aangaan, in die Bybel self sien ons uit gevalle, soos van Job en Melgisedek en Jetro, dat self oorblyfsels van die diens van die ware God toe nog in die heiden wêreld op enkele plekke bewaar gebly is. *Maar al die verskynsels beoordeel ons volgens die Bybel, wat die enige bron en maatstaf is van ware godsdiens*' (e.a.) (Du Toit 1963:96).

Compare to:

'Wat di suiwere godsdiins angaan, in di Bybel self siin ons uit gefalle, soos fan Job en Melgisedek en Jetro, dat di diins fan di ware God nog in di hydenwereld op sommige plekke bewaar gebly is. *En in geleerdhyd was Egipte di leerskool fan di wysgere geskiidskrywers en digters fan Grike en Romyne en alle oue folke*' (e.a.) (Du Toit 1898:71).

The difference seems to confirm Du Toit's relative tolerance when compared to that of later editors and cultural experts who not only wanted to play down the non-Christian and African influences on Europe and the white colonists, but wanted to make it clear that the Bible is the final standard by which all knowledge is measured.

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The presentation of these Christian related religions is clearly constrained and directed by Du Toit's, and his likely reader's, commitment to reformed Christianity. The Middle-Eastern and Zimbabwean histories are only pre-histories to Christianity (and not its equal) which is purged first by the Mosaic, and then by the Christian (and probably Calvinist) traditions:

> 'But the Bible says it itself', remarks cousin Gideon, 'that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and it would be a wonder if no trace should be found in his legislation. It doesn't damage the godly revelation to him; because we see he kept what is good, but the idolatry and other wrong things he, under God's guidance, did not only take up in the religion, but even forbade them' (Du Toit 1898:72[96])[25]

As a case in point the Hebrew scribe Elihoref actually suffers a destructive fate because he betrayed the god of Israel, 'the only true God' ('di enige ware God') (Du Toit 1989:93[138]). Just as Moses drew on a heathen past which he revised in Judaistic/pre-Christian sense, so Du Toit implies that the new colonists in Africa (god's new elect brought to Africa, if not to found, then to find again and revive civilisation and the true religion) can draw on African wisdom of Egyptian and Judaic origin, as long as it is acknowledged that it is originally white. Furthermore, where the white origin of civilisation has become tainted by black and heathen ideas it can, and has to be cleansed with the measure of the Bible which dominee Du Toit, the new Moses (who, like the one of the Bible leads his people to the holy land and inscribes his power in history with the power of the W/word) controls.

Du Toit radicalises Gregory of Nyassa's and the Jewish historian Jospehus's views that the queen of Sheba reigned in the region of Ethiopia, placing it even further south in Zimbabwe. By thus positioning her queendom in the geographic area of his own sphere of influence Du Toit can claim for himself, if not to be biological heir to Solomon and Sheba (as Haile Selasse did), heir to their ideas and wisdom, which he reforms by testing them against the Bible as he as qualified dominee, keeper and master of sacred knowledge, reads it. Such an appropriation in which geographic expansion supervenes on cultural imperialism would not have been possible if he had placed Sheba in South Arabia which would be the logical consequence of the fact that he at times uses her Arabic name, Balkis. As is well known from the

[25] 'Mar di Bybel sê dit self', merk Neef Gideon en 'dat Moses onderwese was in alle wyshyd fan di Egiptenare, en dit sou 'n wonder wees as daarfan gen spore sou te finde wees in syn wetgewing ni .... Dit doen ni te kort an di goddelike openbaring an hom ni; want ons siin wat goed is het hy behou, mar di afgodery en ander ferkeerde dinge het hy onder Gods lyding ni alleen ni opgeneem in di godsdiins ni, mar selfs belet' (Du Toit 1898:72[96]).

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histories of various peoples such geographic quibbles are of the utmost importance when it comes to the legitimation of the occupation of land, of power, and rights of succession.

(iv) Successor or Precursor to the Unpanned Treasure in the Ruins?

Du Toit's aspiring apocryphal supplement-with-political-intent to the Holy Scriptures tries to avoid being labelled as either *fact* or *fiction*. This doesn't however hinder him from using every possible fictive and non-fictive appendage, to capitalise on both genres. His conflation of history, religious dogma, archaeology, anthropology, contemporary popular legend, and contemporary political intention attempts corroboration from all possible resources to give credibility to his fictive claims. This is a repetition of a narrative strategy which goes back several hundred years to the earliest 'historical novels' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These too called themselves *historia*. They too were so called 'eyewitness reports' (Müller 1984:258) of the historically as well as geographically distant. And they too used similar strategies of 'authentication' (e.g. references to the authority of the narrator) in narratives in which the distinction between the entertaining and informative is obscured (Müller 1984:253).

But, Du Toit's eclectic, and at times disparate use of these resources, as well as his obsessive drive to convince, no matter the means, indicate a fissure in his ideological intention which does not always succeed against alternative historical evidence and pure common sense. More than this, his intentional erasure of the fact-fiction distinction doesn't only make it possible for him to invent arbitrary facts about the origin of civilisation in southern Africa—at the same time it also makes the postulation of facts impossible. The factor fiction which is the cornerstone of his narrative, and which can be neither verified nor falsified, corrodes the fact-fiction divide. By posturing *Di Koningin fan Skeba* as both fiction and more than it, he collapses the distinction which differentiates between fact and fiction, a distinction without which truth isn't possible. And with the loss of the possibility of truth goes the loss of the possibility of Du Toit's legitimation of his own position as coloniser. It is in other words the very strategy which allows Du Toit to invent his legitimation for his position, which undermines the possibility of legitimation as such. The erasure of the fact-fiction divide on which Du Toit's legitimation rests, itself triggers an upsetting reading of *Di Koningin fan Skeba*, revealing it for what it is: an ideological attempt to legitimate power which, when read closely, reveals like all ideology, that it has set itself up.

Du Toit's posturing of his own tradition (which he represents as the legitimate successor to a fictitious white civilisation) aims at presenting itself

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as the resurrection and fulfilment of that dormant civilisation. As mere resurrector Du Toit would be an old conservative (Habermas 1981:13). As fulfilling successor he could possibly be mistaken for a proponent of 'the project of modernity [which] has not yet been fulfilled' (Habermas 1981:12). But precisely because he provides a 'hermeneutic' of 'his past' (with the sole aim of showing how his presence is an extension of the glorious past into the horizons of the present) which stops short of critique[26], he misses this opportunity in favour of bolstering his own authority. Thus the emancipating potential of hermeneutics made possible by a critical appropriation of the past, is ceded in favour of a technical interest in manipulation. In his very strategy then, Du Toit rather shows himself to be a precursor to those young conservative postmoderns (Habermas 1981:13) who fall back beyond a constitutive distinction of Modernity, i.e. the distinction between fiction and non-fiction. In collapsing the fact-fiction divide Du Toit, like these conservative postmoderns one hundred years later, thereby liquidates the possibility of the critique of domination (Habermas 1985:219ff.), thus contributing to the ruining of the remaining chances of civilisation, rather than panning from the past the undeveloped potentials of a more humane future.

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[26] That he does not even employ such a literary form of critique as irony, which is premised on the doubling move of both closeness and distancing, is an indication of his unreflected absorption in his own tradition and in his fabricated origin of that tradition. (For a discussion of irony as a form of critique, see Richard Rorty's (1989) *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, published by CUP) For an example of its use in a historical novel, compare Etienne Leroux's ironical relation to the past, and his self-irony in *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein!*).

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Dwaalstories—the Stories of a Roaming Bushman; Committed to Paper by a Wandering Boer

Rita Gilfillan

For the purposes of this article I use the term *Bushman* for lack of a better word. I do so advisedly, since the word *San* is not free of derogatory connotations, as David Lewis-Williams (1989:9) convincingly argued.

The past three to five years have seen a marked revival of interest in the Bushman in Afrikaans writing. I am referring to titles such as *Die Spoorsnyer* (Piet van Rooyen), *Koms van die hyreën* (Dolf van Niekerk), *T'sats van die Kalahari* (Willem D. Kotzé) and the work of poets such as Donald Riekert, Thomas Deacon and Tom Gouws. This interest can be interpreted as a sign of the times: perhaps it is a belated act of homage to an extinct and almost forgotten part of our nation. Be it as it may, it is a fact that the Bushman stands at present in the centre of attention at many a conference; folklorists as well as anthropologists direct their attention anew to Bushman rock art, their customs and their stories[1].

But the present concern is not the first and the only that Afrikaans writing has directed towards the Bushman. With this article I want to focus on a previous manifestation of interest—by authors who published between roughly 1920 - 1930. I am referring to G.R. von Wielligh's *Boesmanstories* in four volumes which appeared from 1919 - 1921, to *Skankwan van die Duine* (1930) by the Hobson Brothers and in particular to *Dwaalstories* by Eugène Marais. According to his biographer Leon Rousseau, Marais wrote these stories down while residing on the farm Rietfontein in the Waterberg. It was here that he met the Bushman, Ou Hendrik (Old Hendrik), from whom

[1] See especially the publications by Van Wyk (1994) and Van Vuuren (1994; 1995a; 1995b).

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he heard the tales. In 1921 the stories appeared in *Die Boerevrou* (The Farmgirl), probably through the intervention of Marais' niece, Mabel Malherbe, who was editor of the journal. In 1927 it was published under the title *Dwaalstories en ander Vertellings*.

It is not clear when Marais and old Hendrik met for the first time. It was in 1913 however, when the wandering Bushman visited Rietfontein on his yearly rounds, that Marais jotted down the stories. On this occasion, the painter, Erich Mayer, was Marais' guest at Rietfontein and his presence bears testimony to this. During this visit, Mayer made the sketch of old Hendrik that was later used as frontispiece to the 1927-publication. This was timeous, for shortly afterwards old Hendrik died, well over a hundred years old.

We can assume that old Hendrik told these stories in the Afrikaans known to him, and probably interspersed with words from his own language. That Marais had difficulty with some of the Bushman concepts, becomes clear when we consider a coinage like *uitspeelstel*, which keeps baffling generations of scholars. How big Marais' input was in shaping these stories, is impossible to ascertain. From Stephen Watson's remarks in his preface to *Return of the moon*, it is apparent that to translate Bushmen stories in a way that Westerners can follow, is not an easy undertaking. He points out some of the problems:

- /Xam stories are repetitive—a characteristic of oral literatures in many parts of the world—and they create a circling rather than linear progression.
- Western literature relies heavily on the adjective whereas in /Xam narrative, the use of adjective hardly exists. (He points out that a phrase like the Homeric 'wine-dark sea' is quite unthinkable in /Xam)
- The /Xam world-view differs from the modern, especially concerning time and their notion of causation.
- Many of their narratives do not make use of closure in so marked a fashion as other literatures Their stories simply peter out, digress, or mutate into further stories (Watson 1991 14-19)

What the raw material sounded like, we will never know. The written product, however, remains remarkable That a poet of N.P. van Wyk Louw's stature considered these stories to be of the finest in Afrikaans is evident in his statement that '... these four pieces are of the best prose in our language'[2]. As a journalist, Marais enjoyed the greatest esteem and as scientist he was far ahead of his time[3]. His literary attempts, however, seem

[2] . hierdie vier stukke is van die grootste prosa in ons taal (cf De Vries 1983 13)

[3] Cf. his *The Life of the White Ant* and *The Soul of the Ape*

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to be of lesser quality. His biographer states that with *Dwaalstories* he reaches heights that overshadow all his other prose; a scholar of Ernst Lindenberg's stature is reported to have said: 'I cannot believe that Marais wrote these himself'[4].

This leads Rousseau to speculate on the use of hallucinogenic drugs. That Marais was a substance abuser, is a well established fact. But perhaps even Old Hendrik used drugs? Did he tell his stories after smoking dagga?

> The smoking of dagga was allowed on most farms and usually children were not prohibited to listen to the stories of the daggasmokers. Amongst them were some of the most prominent storytellers and the dagga rhymes—which were recited after the first few deep, deep draws on the daggapipe and after the characteristic violent coughing stopped—constitute some of the most notable and remarkable rhymes in our folkpoetry[5]

Do we have, in these stories, a double dose of drugs? That is a possibility that Rousseau asks his reader to consider. Was the teller's mind sharpened by the effects of dagga? It is an established fact that the man who wrote the stories down, who honed them and gave them shape, was, to put it metaphorically, an opium-eater. Did he add something to these stories that he saw in a drug-induced state? In his discussion of *Dwaalstories*, Van Wyk Louw probably hints at this addiction when he writes: 'Here, in "visions", Marais saw something of what Afrikaans art can be. Purer than what he could ever express in verse'[6].

With this article I want to posit that at least one of the *Dwaalstories* is about a journey undertaken in a state of trance, in other words, that it is about out-of-body travel. If this is indeed the case, we can talk about a triple trance: that of dagga, that of morphine and that state induced by the Bushmen through dance and hyperventilation. I am referring to the state of trance, when the body lies motionless; almost dead, and the spirit wanders far and wide.

The name that Marais gave to these stories, is in itself revealing. Of the word, 'dwaal', the *Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (1970) gives the following definitions:

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[4] Ek kan nie glo Marais het hulle self geskryf nie (Rousseau 1974 254)

[5] Op die meeste plase is daggarokery oogluikend toegelaat, en kinders is gewoonlik nie verbied om na die daggarokers se stories te gaan luister nie. Onder hulle was baie van die bekendste storievertellers, en die daggarympies—wat opgesê is na die eerste paar diep, diep skuiwe aan die daggapyp en nadat die kenmerkend oordrewe hoesbui bedaar het—is van die merkwaardigste en indrukwekkendste ryme in ons volkspoesie (Rousseau 1974: 254).

[6] Marais het hier in 'gesigte' soms iets gesien van wat Afrikaanse kuns kan wees. Suiwerder as wat hy ooit in verse kon sê (Louw 1981 136)

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1 Op 'n verkeerde pad beweeg (to travel in the wrong direction),
2 Rondswerf (to wander, roam about, to stray, to ramble);
3 Afwyk van die goeie pad, sondig (to sin);
4 'n Verkeerde mening hê, jou vergis (to be mistaken, to err),

Of a person can be said that 'hy is in 'n dwaal', meaning that he is absent minded or literally, that his body is roaming about aimlessly, while his mind is elsewhere.

For the purpose of this article, I want to discuss only the first *Dwaalstorie*, namely 'Klein Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil' (Little Reed-all-alone-in-the-whirlpool). When viewed against the background of the European wondertale, this is the typical story about a young person leaving home, the trials and tribulations he meets on the way, and, contrary to expectation, the negative outcome of his venture. This young man was named 'Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil' by his grandfather, old Heitsi-eibib. According to Hahn (*Tsui'Goam the Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi*; as quoted by De Vries 1983:16), Heitsi-eibib was known as a prophet 'who could tell to new born children as well as to heroes their fate'. If the young man's name was indeed prophetically inspired, we can expect him to meet his fate in water. (His name can be translated roughly as Reed-all-alone-in-the-whirlpool). That his name has to do with water, is perhaps not so surprising. The teller of the tale, old Hendrik, roamed the Waterberg, like many Bushmen did. To think of the environment as barren and desert-like, is a mistake.

The story tells, in typical wondertale fashion, that a great danger threatened the community, without going into detail about the nature of this danger. To act was of the utmost importance.

Thus the elders of the community gathered at nightfall, and at dawn the next morning, they had a plan of action. Riet was to carry a message to Rooi Joggom. He was chosen for this important task because he was the fastest man in all the tribe. The content of the message remains a mystery. In all probability the elders sent for help, and where better than from a spiritual being? The name, *Rooi* (Red) Joggem, points in such a direction, as De Vries (1983:16) indicates when he quotes Hahn as translating the name of one of the main figures in Bushmen mythology as 'Rooi Dagbreek' (Red Daybreak). There is also another possibility: *Joggem* may just as well be a distortion of *Kaggen*, the Supreme Being of the Bushmen. (We must keep in mind that Marais wrote down what he thought he heard; or, he tried to make sense of what he heard. We have no evidence that he was an expert on Bushmen mythology.)

At daybreak, Riet leaves the settlement, with the warning of his grandfather ringing in his ears: he had to be careful, Nagali has great power and she will do her utmost to outwit him. In his right hand Riet carries his

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mysterious 'uitspeelstel' and with his left hand he keeps hammering the words of the message into his head. (De Vries is of the opinion that the 'uitspeelstel' probably was a lucky charm made from pieces of wood, animal teeth, bits of ostrich eggs, etc ; De Vries 1983:17.)

In typical wondertale fashion Riet meets with three obstacles in ever increasing grades of intensity. Almost in textbook fashion the story answers to the first functions that Propp has distinguished as inherent to the wondertale:

1 A member of a family departs from home (absentation);
2 The hero is warned against evil; in this instance, against Nagali (interdict);
3 Riet does not recognise Nagali in the shape of a lovely girl, and he interacts with her (the interdict is broken).
4 The scoundrel, (Nagali) makes contact with the hero (reconnaissance)
5 The scoundrel gets information from the hero (delivery)
6 The scoundrel tries to trick the hero (trickery)
7 The hero plays into the hands of his opponent (complicity)

It is evident that this Bushman story fits perfectly into the pattern of all wondertales world-wide. Due to his own, inherent weakness, Riet does not complete his mission and he does not live happily ever after. He is being tested, and he fails. He fails because of his pride.

Riet cannot accept that he is not the fastest runner of all, and he allows himself to be distracted. So it happens that it is at the evil time of nightfall that he reaches the river. On the bank, the knobkierie of the sorceress Nagali sits. It is imbued with a life of its own, for the kierie is laughing at Riet. It is as if Nagali is so assured of the outcome, that she no longer bothers to put in a personal appearance. And here, in the black waters of the river, Riet will meet his fate. (It is not for nothing that this particular drift is called 'Moetmekaar se drif' (Stream of Meeting) (Marais 1964:10). That he will be all alone in the whirlpool when his fate is decided upon, was foreseen by his grandfather when he was still a small child upon his mother's back.

Riet is tired out from having taken two detours (dwaalweë) and from the strenuousness of the journey. Thus he is no longer able to recognise the crocodile for what it is when he reaches the river. He takes it for a treetrunk and plans to use it as a means of transport across the 'angry' stream. Such is his confusion that he does not even notice that he is washed up on the selfsame bank from where he departed. As soon as he reaches land, he starts running again. Significantly, it is at daybreak that he notices the fire, and he takes it as a sign marking the end of the journey: he must be close to Rooi Joggom's abode. But alas! It is of course the homefire that he sees burning

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and it is his own grandfather who is waiting for him. The story ends like this:

> Before he reached halfway, they grabbed him and only then did he realise that he was back again in Gammadoekies and that it is his own grandfather who was clutching his left leg.
>
> And Heitsi-eibib said to old Rockrabbit One-eye 'We have to stretch him tighter than the string of the big ramkie!'
>
> And there they killed the fire of Reed-all-alone-in-the-whirlpool'

****

After considering David Lewis-Williams' work on Bushman rock art, I took a fresh look at 'Klein Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil'. I suppose it is the collective title that Marais gave to these stories that kept turning over in my mind: *Dwaalstories*. That, together with Marais' addiction to morphine and Rousseau's hints about Old Hendrik's use of dagga, compelled me to reread Lewis-Williams on Bushmen rock art. If Riet had to carry a message of great importance, what better way to travel than out of body? I kept asking myself. Carlos Castaneda's account (see *The Teachings of Don Juan*) of his encounter with his dog-god while under the influence of peyote, was also making a reappearance in my thoughts. A wise and well-travelled Bushman such as old Hendrik, would surely be aware of the possibilities of the trance? Why run at all when it was possible to cover vast distances in the spirit?

So the trance must be considered. The trance was achieved for specific purposes, as is pointed out in *Images of Power*:

> During this state of trance, Bushman shamans perform their tasks, the most important of which is to cure people of known as well as unperceived ailments . Other important tasks ... include rain-making, *visiting distant camps on out-of-body travel*, and control of animals (e.a.).
>
> Today Bushmen hardly ever use hallucinogens, but they may have done so in the past. Instead, they rely on hyperventilation, intense concentration and highly rhythmic dancing to alter their state of consciousness (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:32)

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7 Maar eer hy halfpad was, gryp hulle hom, en toe gewaar hy dat hy weer terug is in Gammadoekies, en dis sy einste oupa wat hom aan die linkerbeen beet het

En Heitsi-eibib sê vir ou Klipdas-Eenoog. 'Ons moet hom stywer span as die snaar van die groot ramkie!'

En daar het hulle die vuurtjie doodgemaak van Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil (Marais 1964:11).

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The danger that threatened Gammadoekies could have been a severe drought, in which case a shaman would have been sent in search of the rain-bull. Another possibility is that Kaggen's help was needed to direct animal herds towards the settlement. Whatever the exact nature of the task, it was a matter of urgency, and for this, the best man was chosen. The most effective way of travel, would of course have been out-of-body, especially in an emergency such as this.

According to Lewis-Williams (1989:32), most young men desire to become shamans, 'not for personal gain, but because they will be able to serve the community'. Riet was chosen to serve the community because he was the fastest runner. That much can be established when we look at the story realistically. If Riet was chosen for an out-of-body journey, it must have been because he had proven himself in this way before. The gathering which lasted throughout the night, could have been the prolonged dance used to induce the state of trance. To go into a state of trance is a painful process. I quote:

> A !Kung man told Richard Katz: 'The young ones fear n/um and cry out. They cry tears. They cry out, "It's painful! It hurts!"' By the age of thirty-five they will know whether they will be able to conquer the pain and fear to become effective shamans (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:34).

When Riet departs on his journey, there is great fear among the men:

> And the men are so afraid, that their toenails rattle and the sweat rolls down their bodies in big haildrops. Each one can blow out the fire with one blow[1]

Possibly the men are so frightened because they know how painful and dangerous the journey can be. They are familiar with the treacherous nature of the manifestations of the spirit world.

Riet is carrying his 'uitspeelstel' when he departs on his journey. We do not know what the exact nature of this object was, apart from De Vries' guess that it could have been a sort of lucky charm. David Lewis-Williams points out that 'ordinary items of equipment' often had special bearing on the trance. He mentions the hunting bag, the digging stick and the fly-whisk in particular and suggests that they had special significance beyond everyday use—in short, they are metaphors for trance experience (Lewis-Williams 1989:116-117).

On his journey Riet encounters the sorceress Nagali in different guises. He first meets with her in the form of a beautiful maiden who leads him back to where he started from, and who robs him of his 'uitspeelstel'. At

[1] En die mans is so bang dat hulle toonnaels kletter en die sweet drup van hulle lyf in haelkorrels Elkeen kan die vuur met een asem doodblaas (Marais 1964:8)

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the next meeting Nagali appears in the form of a man who challenges Riet to race with him. In both instances it is Riet's pride that forces him to interact with these illusory personages. In both instances these forms lead him astray and tire him out before revealing their true nature: the girl was Nagali's whirlwind and the man was none other than her gazelle.

These two meetings may perhaps correspond with the first two stages of trance. In the first stage, the so-called entoptic stage, people see luminous geometric shapes which are experienced as shimmering; they seem to be moving with a life of their own. (The dancing girl, who turns into a whirlwind?) In the second stage, people try to make sense of the entoptic phenomena by 'translating' them into objects with which they are familiar. This is most probably how the ordinary 'vaal Boesman' has to viewed (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 60-67).

Due to these delays, it is at dusk that Riet reaches the river. Lewis-Williams (1989:54) points out that another metaphor for trance experience is *underwater*:

> Like 'death', being underwater has a number of parallels with trance. Both involve difficulty in breathing, sounds in the ears, affected vision, a sense of weightlessness, unusual perspectives and, finally, unconsciousness. Numerous accounts of trance experience show that the Bushmen link trance with being underwater'.

Moreover, the experience of descending into a pool, corresponds with the last and deepest stage of the trance. This stage is associated with powerful emotional experiences.

It is during this stage that Riet's failure becomes irreversible. He never reaches his destination. He does not meet Rooi Joggem to deliver his message. The reason for this is probably his sense of personal pride. In Bushman society the shamans are not a privileged class. They are ordinary people who also have to perform all the everyday tasks (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:31). Riet's pride in his ability was thus misplaced.

The ensuing punishment seems extreme, particularly among the Bushmen who were a nonjudgmental people. Failed shamans simply resumed their ordinary life in the group as if nothing had happened. Perhaps it was Marais who ended the story in this particular way—his (eurocentric) need for closure probably got the better of him. The story thus ends at Gammadoekies where it had started. Moreover, it ends at break of day—the same time that Riet had departed on his journey and so the circle is completed. At the same time the small span of Riet's life has also reached it's conclusion '... and there they killed the fire of Reed-all-alone-in-the-whirlpool'[9].

[9] ... daar het hulle die vuurtjie doodgemaak van Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil

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Riet's pride in his own ability probably caused his downfall. This, in turn, brings Carlos Castaneda's experience back to mind. He went into training with an old Indian named Don Juan, to become a man of knowledge. (In other words, a shaman.) Yet, the teaching became so strenuous and the encounters with the spiritual world so frightening, that he gave it up. Years later, on another meeting with the old Indian, Don Juan told him that he took himself far too seriously:

> 'The reason you got scared and quit is because you felt too damn important', he said, explaining my previous withdrawal. 'Feeling important makes one heavy, clumsy and vain. To be a man of knowledge one needs to be light and fluid' (Castaneda 1971:13)

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Poor White Satyrs and Nationalist Blueprints[1]

Johan van Wyk

1 Satyrs and Civilisation

In this article I am exploring the burden of 'civilisation' with reference to the depiction of poor whites in two Afrikaans plays: *Hantie kom huis toe* (first published in 1933) by P.W.S. Schumann and *Siener in die suburbs* (first published in 1971) by P.G. du Plessis. I shall explore the depiction of these poor whites in terms of Nietzsche's (1956:59) concept of the chorus of satyrs in tragedy as

> a chorus of natural beings who live ineradically, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and the history of nations

and Freud's discontents who embody an anxiety, a *malaise* or dissatisfaction with civilisation in so far as civilisation implies repression or the 'progressive renunciation of constitutional instincts, whose activation might afford the ego primary pleasure' (Freud 1985a:40).

Civilisation as a process of repression requires discipline which makes every individual virtually an 'enemy of civilization, though civilization is supposed to be an object of universal interest' (Freud 1985b:184).

The Afrikaner (as European-descended Africans, and the first group to embark on an African nationalist struggle) occupies an interesting position within the discourse on civilisation. In the late nineteenth century the Afrikaner has been seen as having 'degenerated into white savages' (Brantlinger 1988:193). Through a strong association with Africa, the Afrikaner embodied an image of regression. Afrikaner nationalism of the early twentieth century was in part a movement against this image. It is within this context that poor whites in the two texts are of interest, as they represent the potential of degeneration against the attempts of the nationalists

[1] I would like to express my appreciation for support received from NALN (the National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre)

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to maintain an image of 'civilisation'. Material poverty was only one dimension of the poor-white problem. More on the surface was the dimension of uninhibited violence, sexuality and music, their satyr-like existences which linked them to barbarism.

When the characters in *Hantie kom huis toe* (Schumann 1955) are described as 'poor whites', they are seen mainly in socio-economic and political terms. The satyr element in the characters, their uninhibited sexuality and violence, are depicted as symptoms of poverty and the slum environment in which they live. In the second play, *Siener in die suburbs* (Du Plessis 1981), on the other hand, characters from the marginal suburbs re-enact savage tragedy: love, betrayal and death. Their bodies inscribed with the sexuality and violence of the suburbs seek, to no avail, to escape. They want to signify or belong to a significant class within the booming modern city—within 'civilisation'. One is not directly aware of a political message in this play. One suspects, though, that the author identifies, or even idealises, the sexuality and violence of the suburbs. He does not occupy any moral point of view concerning the situation or destruction of his characters.

2 Background

About 40 years separate the publication of *Hantie kom huis toe* in 1933 and *Siener in die suburbs* in 1971. *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955, eighth edition) was written in the 1930s: depression years—with poor whiteism a widespread social phenomenon (300 000 from a total population of 1 800 000 of whites in South Africa were very poor). This prompted the Carnegie Commission to investigate the poor white question in South Africa. A five-volume report, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa*, appeared in 1932 (vol. I by Grosskopf and vol. II by Wilcocks are used in this article). It was especially the nationalists who at this time mobilised around the issue of the poor whites and nationalist-inspired authors often used it as a theme. *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) is an example of a text written in the mode of a nationalist-inspired naturalism.

Naturalism was introduced into Afrikaans and adapted to the specific nationalist needs by J.F.W. Grosskopf in the 1920s. Grosskopf studied theatre and politics in Europe just before returning to South Africa in 1914 when he participated in the rebellion of nationalist Boer generals against the government of General Botha who supported the British in the First World War. Grosskopf was also one of the contributors to *The Poor White Problem in South Africa* (see vol. I *Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus* 1932). Naturalism was a perfect vehicle for expressing his nationalist concerns with the poor whites—especially using the insights of sociology as discipline (in which he was active).

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The play by P.G. du Plessis, on the other hand, was published and performed in 1971, ten years after South Africa became a republic in 1961. Apartheid as policy was firmly established. It was before international boycotts became a reality. At this time poor whites have already become a hidden aspect of society: a marginal minority. It was a time when the rift existing between Afrikaans authors and the ruling National Party intensified due to the implementation of stricter censorship laws in 1963. The literary historian, J.C. Kannemeyer (1983), refers to the 'polarisation' in the sixties and seventies between the writers on the one hand and the authorities, the church and the literary 'establishment' on the other. He describes the authors of the sixties as a generation who broke away from the taboos and prejudices of traditional Afrikaner society and who changed the literary, moral, religious and political conventions. The emphasis on sexuality, the absence of nationalist politics and the sacrilege at the end of *Stener in die suburbs* forms part of the literary struggle against the 'establishment'.

3 *Hantie kom huis toe*

Hantie kom huis toe (1955) is a thoroughly political drama, more radical in its resolution of poor whiteism than the different blueprints produced by nationalist-inspired commissions and delegations. In its raw realism it inspired the avant-garde Afrikaans intellectuals (often with nationalist-socialist leanings) of the 1930s. A group of highly influential Afrikaners lived in Cape Town in this period: among them N.P. van Wyk Louw, considered by many as the greatest Afrikaans poet, his brother W.E.G. Louw—both of them acted in social realist plays such as Grosskopf's *As die tuig skawe* (1926) and both gave advice in the staging of *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955)—and the famous Afrikaans actress, Anna Neethling-Pohl who acted in the leading role in *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) when it was performed in the Cape for the first time.

Anna Neethling-Pohl studied at Stellenbosch University Among her courses was economics with J.F.W. Grosskopf as lecturer. In Cape Town her theatrical career started with plays like *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955). Later she moved to Krugersdorp where she met P.W.S. Schumann, the author of *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) She worked closely with Schumann's wife, a social worker in the Krugersdorp district, and encountered the type of circumstances from which the play developed. After Krugersdorp, Anna Neethling-Pohl moved to Pretoria where she was one of the founding members of the Volksteater (The People's Theatre) in 1935. One of the aims of the Volksteater was to promote the idea of a National Theatre Organisation. In 1938 she went to Europe. In Germany she was a spectator of the big Nazi festival. These became prototypes of the many historically-

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inspired folk festivals in South Africa such as the Voortrekker Centenary of 1938 to which she contributed. She was instrumental in staging N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Die Dieper Reg* (1938) for this Centenary. During the Second World War her husband was interred for his participation in the activities of the Ossewabrandwag.

In her memoirs (Neethling-Pohl 1974) she describes her boredom in the 1930s with the refined and civilised theatre productions of the day until she discovered *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955): a play which immediately addressed her 'rebellious spirit'. She described it as a piece of realism, crude and raw, which was greatly applauded when performed, leading to the founding of the Cape Town Afrikaans Drama Society (Kaapstadse Afrikaanse Toneelvereniging).

4 *Hantie kom huis toe* and Naturalism

4.1 Decor

The decor of *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) as described in the text is realistic, although the prologue, in contrast to the other three acts, evokes a dream-like atmosphere of wealth: The front stoep of a house in a Boland town points to the 'good taste' (Schumann 1955:7) of the owners who conserved 'all the elements of Cape architecture' (Schumann 1955:7); 'a motor car arrives' (Schumann 1955:7) with its lights falling on the details: a couch, two chairs and pot plants on the stoep testifying to 'the moderate prosperity and good taste of the inhabitants' (Schumann 1955:7).

The dream-like atmosphere of the prologue relates to Hantie's statement on page 64 that her past was like a happy dream. The car lights and the meta-theatrical references of the prologue further emphasise this dream-like quality. Hantie and Jan in the prologue have just returned from a student performance of Langenhoven's allegorical and historical play *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika*. Hantie still dressed in her costume resembling the idealised-woman-of-the-people covers of the *Kerkbode* (The Church Messenger) acts in the leading role as the 'Hope of South Africa'. This role also characterises Hantie as an example of someone who has transcended the limitations of class by being removed from her poor white environment, Wesselsdorp, where she was born and where she spent the first years of her life until her aunt took her away as a little girl.

The first act, in contrast to the prologue, introduces the hustle and bustle of the market at Wesselsdorp on a cold, windy and dusty morning. On the stage are bags and boxes of vegetables and fruit. A 'native crosses the stage with a bale of teff on his head and chewing on a straw' (Schumann 1955:22) among the shouting of auctioneers and the noise of workers and cars. It is the environment of the poor whites. The opening words by the

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aristocratic Mrs. van Niekerk are: 'here you can see the bare truth of poor-whiteism' (Schumann 1955:22). These words embody the representational nature, the realism, of the play as a whole. Its representational form is utilitarian, it wants to teach about the social evils spawned by poor white surroundings.

The decor of the second and third acts continues the representation of the poor white environment. The second act takes place on the stoep of old Abdool's shop. Abdool is the Indian shop owner who makes his living from selling items to poor whites. The didascalia indicates the realist detail:

> The shop is an old building, with rather small windows. In front of the door on the stoep is a pile of rope, a case of paraffin and a plough which serve as seats for the buying public, with other stock-in-trade (Schumann 1955:43)

The third act moves to the home of Annie Oosthuizen in the squatter area, Lappiesdorp. The scene, lighted by a street lamp, reflects on Annie who 'made no effort to make the place presentable, although she knew that visitors were coming' (Schumann 1955:70).

> A rusty old paraffin tin is placed on one side to catch the water from the roof-gutter. The couch, made of the left-overs of a motor car's front seat, is in a state of decay. Sheets hang inside the windows (Schumann 1955:70)

Inside 'the sound of a screeching old tin gramophone' (Schumann 1955:70) is heard.

4.2 The Social Worker

Like Schumann's wife, Hantie the main character, is a social worker 'called' to dedicate herself to the upliftment of the poor whites. The plot structure of the play is a variation (with many inversions) of that of the prodigal son from the Bible. A daughter, Hantie, returns to her lost poor-white family in the mining town of Wesselsdorp. She was brought up by a prosperous aunt in the Cape where she received her education and training as a social worker (at Stellenbosch University). It is the family that is lost, especially her real father whose identity becomes known at the end. The child, a daughter, returns, but she, through her education, has the power to intervene and to help them.

Hantie kom huis toe's (1955) appearance simultaneously with the Carnegie commission's report on *The Poor White Problem in South Africa* in 1932 points to a literature and social-science intertext. The main character, Hantie, the social worker, indicates a special power and knowledge configuration in the world, especially the world of the nationalist who is

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ultimately concerned with the *structuring* and *planning* of social reality within an image of civilisation.

As social worker, Hantie represents the concern with the poor from a sociological and a nationalist point of view. The play with its sociological concerns, relates to the 'scientific outlook' promoted in the manifestos of nineteenth-century naturalism. Naturalism, as depicted in Zola's manifesto—the preface to *Therésè Raquin* (1867)—shares the optimism of science: through the depiction of social degradation one comes to an understanding of the forces which produce that degradation and on the basis of that understanding one could implement social programmes which would rectify the situation. Alfred Vizetelly (1904:184), Zola's biographer, refers to science as 'the greatest humanitarian agency' and to the 'man who experiments, the man who dissects' as one who increases and diffuses knowledge for 'the benefit of the world'. In the case of Schumann the aim was to produce an awareness of the poor-white problem amongst Afrikaner nationalists through naturalist theatre.

Naturalism as literary programme complemented the new disciplining social sciences of the nineteenth century: sociology, anthropology, criminology, psychology and genetics. Making 'manifest' 'the imperfections and lapses of collective and individual life that seemed ... to require remedying' (Vizetelly 1904:184), its aims were humanitarian and utilitarian. The programme of naturalism made it inevitably a political form of literature, to be adapted in various ways by both nationalism and socialism as various brands of social realism in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia show. However, the practice of naturalism by Zola himself, in his novels, never had an explicit political message and rather developed as a defence against claims that his works were pornographic. It emerged from late nineteenth century decadence and aestheticism.

Hantie, the university-trained social worker, comes from a poor white family: she is tied to them by blood. This tie, which links her subjectivity with the subjectivity of the poor whites, undermines the demand of objectivity and distance demanded by science. As social worker she is further also confronted with people outside reason's disciplining institutions, outside the dominant economy, outside civilisation: people ultimately with their roots in existence economies and therefore free. The poor white is made to resemble the 'baboon' (Schumann 1955:11) or 'those Bushman sculptures from the ethnographic section of the museum' (Schumann 1955:11f). These images point to Hantie and the author's fear of social regression, of the Afrikaner 'going native', of the distance which might emerge between the poor whites and the wealthy if they are not brought back into the fold of the nation. Her bond of blood with the poor whites represents the nationalist image of nation as a family and the need for intervention on the basis of family.

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The play's recommendation for the upliftment of the poor whites, embodied in Hantie's subjection to her criminal father at the end, is implicitly different from the recommendations of the Carnegie commission. There is with Hantie an impatience with the 'congresses' (Schumann 1955:87), 'commissions of inquiry' (Schumann 1955:87), 'deputations' (Schumann 1955:87) and 'blueprints' (Schumann 1955:87) generated by the politicians.

Her work is the result of a calling to serve the poor amongst her people. This calling has a mystical and psychological cause as her mystical conversations with the Lord, her alter-ego father figure, show. The imaginary conversations with a father figure point to an experience of a lack of a father in her life. When she eventually meets her real father, the violent criminal, Hans Labuschagne, she finds him repulsive. God and evil become indistinct—the God she addresses in the following are blurred with the father:

> Him?—Then I have his blood in my veins? My flesh from His, and my nerves, my constitution, my spirit derived from his? Not a part of my body, or of my soul without his imprint . . My Creator and my Moulder, who saw me even before I was, who knew me before my birth—is it your will, was it really your intention with me? (Schumann 1955 91)

Hantie's idealism concerning the poor whites is contrasted with the poor whites's frivolous conception of the wealthy Afrikaners, embodied by the character, Jan, to whom she is engaged. The difference between Hantie and Jan is developed into two different interpretations of Afrikaner history. The wealthy Afrikaners romanticise, but at the same time belittle, this history Jan, for instance, refers to the Afrikaner people in the diminutive as 'volkie'. The text describes some of Jan's nationalist utterances, such as the following, as 'overstatements':

> Here are the people Their ancestors were from long ago, from the trekking days which started in the time of the Dutch East India Company They were not accustomed to the gathering of possessions or the pursuing of comfort or pleasure! Nature was their wealth, and freedom their only comfort and pleasure (Schumann 1955 85)

In another passage Jan assumes that the poor white, Oom Krisjan, was a 'bittereinder' in the Anglo-Boer war. Krisjan though does not even know what the word 'bittereinder' means He states that only the insane would fight for Paul Kruger and then accuses President Kruger of corruption.

The non-heroic role of the poor whites during this war is also emphasised in the other characters. Hans, Hantie's poor-white father, was a hands upper in the war. Annie Oosthuizen who was in the concentration

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camps with her mother and sister, is half Anglicised and her sister married a Tommy (British soldier). All these examples in the text try to indicate a class rift, try to show that the poor whites did not consider themselves to be part of the main narrative of Afrikaner history, or the Afrikaner nation as family.

One of the disillusioning lessons that Hantie has to learn is that she would not be able to approach the poor whites with preconceptions of the privileged class. They resist being objectified, labelled or patronised. Annie, the woman with whom her real father lives, rebukes her:

> Look, Cousin, if you want to visit me then you must not call me 'sister'! I do not allow myself to be 'sistered'. Do you think you are the clergyman's wife ... (Schumann 1955:74)

and:

> I'm no 'blinking street woman' and also not a 'poor white' (Schumann 1955:76)

and:

> It is the 'charities' and the 'Distress' and the 'Mayor's Fund' and all those type of people who are trying to make 'poor whites' of us My husband always said they are like the doctors who diagnosed a new ailment and now want everybody to suffer from it (Schumann 1955:76).

4.3 Satyrs in *Hantie kom huis toe*

The text, through the character of Annie Oosthuizen, states the difference between the 'poor whites', as diagnosed by the social scientists, and reality as experienced by those diagnosed as 'poor whites' ('I'm no "blinking street woman" and also not a "poor white"' Schumann 1955:76). An alternative interpretative metaphor for them would be that of the satyr. The satyr is not an economic category, like the 'poor white', but is an antagonist to 'civilisation'. To Nietzsche (1956:61) the satyr is half animal, instinctual and an image of 'sexual omnipotence'. The satyr as Other to reason is associated especially with alcohol and music (especially with the folk song in which 'language is strained to its utmost that it may imitate music') (Nietzsche 1956:53). Music goes beyond reason in that it does not need images and concepts, but passion, desire and madness. Alcohol similarly dulls civilised reason.

In *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) the poor white characters are linked both to nature and the instinct, while they, like Bacchae, are also portrayed as nomadic. The Diedericks family lives in their hawker's wagon. They are described in terms of their Voortrekker ancestry:

> Nature was their wealth and freedom their only convenience. They moved here and there with their stock and animals, to where there were the best opportunities

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> for survival. Just like their descendants today, move here then there, from the Rand to the diggings, and from the diggings to the settlements, wherever instinct leads them (Schumann 1955:85)

Alcohol and music are two recurrent motifs in *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955). Hans's criminal activities consist of selling liquor illegally to the blacks and he has been imprisoned twice for it. He is repeatedly described as a drunkard. In the opening scene of the last act his simple-minded stepson, Andrew, is half-drunk. He is also often referred to as playing the guitar. Tant Grieta imagines the following possible idyllic future with Hantie:

> If only we had some music on the farm! Aunt Lettie wrote that Hantie can play the piano beautifully. Then Krisjan can play the concertina and when Andrew comes to visit, every now and again, he could bring his guitar and we could have a good time (Schumann 1955:54)

The gramophone player is a prominent part of the stage props in the last act. Annie describes the happiness of the poor whites:

> Listen there (*the gramophone is playing a waltz, voices are heard*) You saw how drunk Hans is tonight. It is Grieta and him dancing there. And small Grieta is sitting on Andrew's lap and he is telling her how he cheeked the manager today And she admires his masculinity (Schumann 1955:81)

From the point of view of Hantie these poor whites are a people that is sinking, sinking until 'they are out of reach' (Schumann 1955:85). To Jan they represent a social disease (Schumann 1955:87). The text itself repeatedly states that they are happy the way they are: 'They are satisfied where they are, and the way they are. They cannot imagine that they are capable of anything better' (Schumann 1955:16). The concern is therefore not with these people's happiness, but with the image of racial regression that they represent. The poor white is described as looking like a 'baboon' (Schumann 1955:11) or like the 'Bushman sculpture' (Schumann 1955:11) in the ethnographic section of the museum. Mrs. Van Niekerk scolds tant Grieta for addressing her as 'Missus' because she is also 'a white person' (Schumann 1955:23). When the poor whites are slipping out of reach, they are slipping especially into a satyr-like existence of alcohol abuse, uninhibited sexuality and unthinking violence

5 *Siener in die suburbs*

5.1 The Reception of *Siener in die suburbs*

Siener in die Suburbs (1981) is one of the most popular and most performed Afrikaans plays. It was first performed in 1971 by PACT (The Performing

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Arts Council of the Transvaal) at the Breytenbach Theatre in Pretoria. Country-wide performances followed in all the major cities of South Africa. In the next two decades it was sporadically performed at smaller venues all over South Africa. It was also toured by the coloured group Cosair who performed it at black universities in the late seventies. In 1973 it was made into a film which was shown on TV4 in 1986 and in 1988 on the M-Net channel.

At a symposium in 1973 on the Sestigers, P.G. du Plessis stated that he wrote the play with a popular audience in mind ('the ordinary and warm blooded people' Du Plessis 1973:88). In an interview, Du Plessis (*The Cape Times* 21/1/81) said:

> I coloured the picture with the sadness and the exhilaration of the life I got to know during my teaching days in the suburbs—during the ducktail-era, when my pupils and I were young, and part of the town where we lived, old and rotten around us

The play in its early years was slated as 'gutter literature' (see review 'Siener uitgekryt as rioolliteratuur' TV editors of *Oosterlig* 22/7/86) and it is stated that

> It was the first time that Afrikaners from the ghettos were depicted on stage and many were shocked: no such people were supposed to exist

Siener in die suburbs, though had many predecessors. Many plays focusing on poor whites were produced in Afrikaans in the first few decades of the twentieth century. P.W.S. Schumann's *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) is the one usually mentioned. J.C. Kannemeyer (1983), the major Afrikaans literary historian, makes this clear in his discussion of *Siener in die suburbs*. He states that the play belongs to the tradition of Grosskopf, Fagan and Schumann (authors who were active in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s). According to Kannemeyer (1983:440), the link with Schumann's depiction of the 'degenerate, and urbanised Afrikaner' is especially strong. Like Tjokkie in *Siener in die suburbs* (1981), the character, Gertjie in *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955), has premonitions of the future. *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955), though, portrays many different outdoor settings: the Boland house, the market at Wesselsdorp, the veranda of the Indian shop and Lappiesdorp. *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) on the other hand is limited to the claustrophobic space of a backyard in the southern suburbs of Johannesburg. There are also more deep-rooted differences: *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955) is explicitly political and ties in strongly with the historical discourse of poor whiteism in the 1930s. *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) is only very indirectly political: and if it is political, then the message is opposite to that of *Hantie*

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kom huis toe (1955). There is no message of upliftment in *Siener in die suburbs* (1981). Instead, one senses a degree of identification with these marginal people and their futile attempts to signify within the broader urban and modern world. They are embodiments of love and the hurt and betrayal which accompany love. The choice of the poor white theme has to do with Du Plessis's concern with what he considers as 'real' people in contrast to the hypocrisy, boredom and material wealth of the Afrikaner establishment.

In the early 1970s when the play was produced, South African Literature was dominated by themes of race and Apartheid (as represented by authors such as Breyten Breytenbach and André P. Brink.). P.G. du Plessis consciously reacted against this trend. In his contribution to the symposium on the Sestigers in 1973 he argued, in reaction to the demand for a politically-involved literature, for the search of a 'deeper reality' (Polley 1973:83), 'fundamental patterns' (Polley 1973:83) which would lead authors beyond the politics of a particular time to the universal in the deeper chaos and the great myths of death, exile and love (Polley 1973:84). He wanted to move beyond 'the showing and the knowing' to the 'unconscious' (Polley 1973:87). The political is conceived by him as part of conformism, the droning of the literary and academic establishment (Polley 1973:89).

5.2 *Siener in die suburbs* as Tragedy

The representation of contemporary life in the New Attic Comedy of Euripides, according to Nietzsche, meant the death of Greek tragedy. Through Euripides

> the everyday man forced his way from the spectator's seat onto the stage, the mirror in which formerly only grand and bold traits were represented now showed the painful fidelity that conscientiously reproduces even the botched outlines of nature (Nietzsche 1956.77).

Looking at it from this point of view (and also ironically when Du Plessis's pleading for the 'universal' is considered), *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) does not qualify as tragedy in the Nietzschean sense. The characters seem to be representatives of contemporary South African life, although outcasts living in the southern Johannesburg suburbs. The decor, too, is realistic in the greatest detail.

All the acts take place in the backyard of Ma's semi-detached house. On the right-hand side of the stage is the kitchen door, a small veranda, the kitchen window and a wall closing in the backyard. Against the wall is an old hen-coop which acts as a storing-place of wood and coal. There is a washing line with a few bits of washing. On the left-hand side there is a garage with decaying wooden doors showing green paint of years ago. In the

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open garage is a jacked-up 1948 Buick without wheels. From the beam just behind the door hangs a pulley with which the engine was removed earlier. Against the wall is the oil-drenched work-bench with the disassembled engine of the Buick on it.

The title of *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) refers to Tjokkie who was born with the caul and therefore has the ability to see/dream the future. He introduces the supernatural into the apparently naturalist play. His psychic powers is a 'talent'—an ability to have access to the future—something inexplicable by scientific naturalism.

Tjokkie is also a dreamer in another sense—he dreams of living on the other side of the railway line, of having a better life. His anger at Giel for sleeping with his mother without being married to her and his anger at his sister's unwanted pregnancy, point to his highly moral character. He resists the sexuality which keeps his family, and the people of the suburbs, entrapped in their impoverished circumstances. Giel describes Tjokkie as being without love. Tjokkie, therefore, embodies a wish, dream and repression combination.

The antagonist in the play is the ducktail, Jakes. Jakes brings the alcohol and marijuana, 'the drug of the truth', (Du Plessis 1981:36) onto the stage. To him, life is about 'juice and love' (Du Plessis 1981:31). On an allegorical level, Tjokkie and Jakes could be seen as naturalist transpositions (or masks) of the Nietzschean opposites of the dream and intoxication central to tragedy. Tjokkie's 'crucifixion' by block-and-tackle in the car's engine space, and his death under the car make him a reincarnation of the Dionysian god being torn apart. Jakes on the other hand is the voice which seeks 'justice' (Du Plessis 1981:54), and ultimately embodies Dionysian justice:

> Tiemie: Go away, Jakes. What do you want here?
> Jakes. Justice
> Tiemie: Justice! Was it justice when you wanted to bring me into trouble on purpose? You never had any feelings for me.
> Jakes: I had love. Lots of love (Du Plessis 1981:53).

A Nietzschean reading of the play would demand that these characters on an archetypal level become equated with the 'demigods' and 'drunken satyrs' as against the 'everyday' persons of the New Attic Comedy. The 'everyday' person of the New Attic Theatre was one of reason; one who wanted to comprehend the seemingly irrational notion of justice embodied in traditional tragedy: the 'unequal' 'distribution of good and bad fortune' (Nietzsche 1956:80). The principle according to which Euripides operated was Socratic and its dictum, 'knowledge is virtue' or 'to be beautiful everything must be intelligible' (Nietzsche 1956:83). Nietzsche refers to the 'audacious reasonableness' (Nietzsche 1956:83) of Euripides and states that 'Euripides

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as a poet is essentially an echo of his own conscious knowledge' (Nietzsche 1956:85).

Siener in die suburbs (1981) is not a moral play, it does not dramatise an intelligible world of effects with intelligible causes. The whole play centres around a vision. Tjokkie's talent to see the future is in itself something inexplicable. On the bases of this vision the character Giel bets, against all odds, his life's savings on the outsider horse, Natty Tatty. Tiemie makes love to the ducktail, Jakes, although she despises the idea of a life with him in the suburbs. People act contrary to what they consciously want. Central to this absurd world is the motif of love: love for others, self love, self interest and sexuality, is what drives people, and inscribed in this love is blood, pain and betrayal. Ma summarises this when she says:

> I'm sitting between the kinds (of love), it seems to me Where the one type hurts, the other makes good, where the one pleases, the other pains (Du Plessis 1981:42)

and she warns against too much love: too much leads to hurt.

Jakes refers to himself as 'a goat for love' (Du Plessis 1981:31) and it is on the basis of love that he demands his place within this family. When Ma asks him what he knows about love, he answers.

> Because I jump the iron and because I'm a bit with-it the old lady thinks I do not know those things? My outsides are not nice to the old lady, but in my insides there are things working. Love is love (Du Plessis 1981:45)

He points to the fact that the love coming from the insides is working a bit on the strong side in his and the old lady's case (Du Plessis 1981:46).

Tiemie points out to him that his so-called love for her was nothing other than a selfish search to have a child with a mother of class. Love is irrational, its reasons may be construed from Jakes's need for a family, for respect, whatever. The point is, there is nothing that can be done to prevent the violence and hurt of love.

The last scenes are central to the reading of this play as tragedy. While the seven-single 'Sugar-Sugar' is playing, Tiemie is killed by Jakes inside the house and Tjokkie kills himself underneath the car. Jakes appears with a bloody altar cloth which he throws in Ma's face muttering: 'There is your bloody love' (Du Plessis 1981:56). Ma then says to herself: 'There is blood on it ... there is always blood on it' (Du Plessis 1981:56). The words on the altar cloth 'God is Love' (Du Plessis 1981:30) and the violence indicated by the blood, signify God's (and by implication Reason's) absence in the world, but also on a deeper level, God's presence in what is beyond reason. It states the deeper reality of Dionysian ecstasy. Blood and love, death and sexuality,

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are the intertwined instincts through which the amoral 'artist-god' expresses 'in the good and in the bad, his own joy and glory' (Nietzsche 1956:22). It points to the triumph of pessimist laughter, the mindless omnipotence of the dramatist who tears his characters apart through Jakes, the character who is seeking justice. The blood on his hands and the altar cloth is the answer to his search. 'God is love' (Du Plessis 1981:30) and 'there is always blood on God's love' (my reformulation of Du Plessis 1981:56) are statements of universality. It is this universality, the *always* in Ma's words, which makes this play an example of a ritual rather than a depiction of a particular historical and sociological reality as one finds in earlier Afrikaans naturalist drama.

While Jakes slaughters a screaming Tiemie in the last act the popular seven single of the sixties 'Sugar, sugar' is playing. Music, especially folk music, represents 'in the highest degree a universal language' (Nietzsche 1956:101). The music in *Siener in die suburbs* precedes the last words: 'There is always blood on it' (Du Plessis 1981:56) which formulates the universal condition.

In *Siener in die suburbs*, Tjokkie and his half-sister, Tiemie, reject their suburbs environment, which implies a repression of the 'urges' of 'nature'. Tiemie, who does not know who her father is, is described as beautiful and intelligent. She was always in the A class at school. She therefore has the qualities to escape from the suburbs. She is repeating her own tragic history though in falling pregnant with the child of Jakes:

> Tiemie: Little Brother, if I have this child now it would be the same as me. I do not want it like that .. I .. I didn't want it. I hated Mother too much about myself when they discovered the truth at school (Du Plessis 1981 24)

And:

> Tiemie: Ma, I cannot marry Jakes I do not want to live here I do not want this life, also not the men, Ma I do not want a husband who comes home drunk ... if he comes home .. being abused with little ones I do not want to be old before my time. Ma, you know, they do not know about us ... at work, they think we do not *exist* they laugh when they hear of us, or they do not know where to look when they hear where I live. They are embarrassed about us—us They do not know about us They do not know how we live or what we feel They do not know. I want to be known, Ma, I do not want to die like a dog, I want to be known . I so desperately wanted to be known (Du Plessis 1981:26)

Tiemie is driven by the desire to be, to be representable, to be part of a class and a life where she would signify. She wants to transcend her 'annihilation' as 'individual'. She embodies the struggle between nature and civilisation. Jakes formulates this struggle in Tiemie:

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> You are ashamed of your ducktail, but that is not all You do not have the guts You do not have the guts to say that you are crazy about a low class bastard You do not have the guts to admit how you grabbed your ducktail on those Saturday nights (Du Plessis 1981:52f).

Jakes also wants to enter the realm of representation: he wants a class mother for his child. Tiemie is that class mother. The way in which he is looked down upon by Tjokkie and Tiemie motivates his vengeance on this family. Tjokkie calls him a 'nobody' and 'low class'. It is against this background that he is searching for justice.

At the root of signification is the presence of the father. Tiemie's search for meaning relates to the absence of a father: 'Little brother I don't know who my father is' (Du Plessis 1981:24). Jakes never felt that he had a father: 'I was never my father's son' (Du Plessis 1981:49). He feels he will get the recognition he desires through a son: 'He looks up to you' (Du Plessis 1981:48). The hawker and gambler, Giel who lives with Ma in sin, exploits the social need for father figures by selling proverbs such as 'What is a house without a father' (Du Plessis 1981:15).

The father ultimately, though, signifies fate and death. In his vision, Tjokkie sees a man at the gate, a man with a uniform, looking half-familiar. He sees himself leaving with this man and inviting Tiemie to join them. This vision indicates his wish to re-unite with the dead father. It translates in his own and Tiemie's death: he commits suicide underneath the car and Tiemie is killed by Jakes. The escape from the suburbs is ultimately an escape into death.

The only character who benefits from Tjokkie's vision is the gambler, Giel. He placed all his money on the race-horse Natty Tatty, the grey outsider with not much of a chance to win—the ash-coloured duck of Tjokkie's dream. This points to the role of fate in the lives of the characters. It is fate rather than naturalist determinism which is decisive. According to Nietzsche, Moira (fate) is 'enthroned above gods and men as eternal justice' (Du Plessis 1981:69).

Tjokkie explicitly refers to this fate and its relation to his 'talent' to see the future:

> One cannot play around with this. Just when you are trying to force the future in a direction, it will turn against you (Du Plessis 1981:29)

The quest for clarity about the future amongst the different characters leads to greater uncertainty, and the eventual complete destruction of the family. Tjokkie and Tiemie are punished because they thought they were better than their surroundings, Ma and Jakes are punished because they loved too intensely. But ultimately the hubris and destruction are a universal condition

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God is love and love is blood. Sexuality and death underwrite the imaginary world of life. It is this realisation, this pessimism, which makes *Siener in die suburbs* (1981) different from *Hantie kom huis toe* (1955).

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More than just a Love Story: Investigating the Literary and Social Significance of the Young Adult Novel in South Africa[1]

Claudia Mitchell and
Ann Smith

In Dawn Garisch's young adult novel *Not another Love Story* (from which the title of this article is derived) published in 1994 but set some years earlier in apartheid South Africa, the young reader encounters the reality of the impact of the Immorality Act when fifteen year-old Gail goes to stay with her Aunt Stella who is white and who is living illegally with Bert who is coloured, the impact of the appalling working conditions in the mines, and the impact of the colour bar. The reader is also immediately involved in the controversy surrounding the relationship of writing to political change. Gail, the narrator, enters a writing competition for a magazine in which she investigates the relationship between lung cancer and asbestos mining. Her interest is sparked by the condition of her friend Sarel, a miner who is dying of mesothelioma. Bert reads a draft of her essay and is impressed with her work:

> 'You write well', he said. 'This is a very good standard, and I'm pleased to see you tackle something political'. This was news to me. I considered the issues to be medical, not political. 'If you want my advice, you should bring that out a bit more clearly. The asbestos companies were aware for many years of the link between asbestos and cancer, yet they blamed it on smoking and did nothing to

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Association of University English Teachers of South Africa annual conference, Pietermaritzburg, July 9-13, 1995

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> protect their workers. Your friend Sarel would be well today if they had cared as much for people as they did for their profits'.
>
> This was damning stuff, and I could see a place for it in my article. It meant some editing, and shifting around of passages, and I worked on it with Bert for the next few hours. The net result was sensational. I couldn't wait for Monday to show Mrs. Bolton
>
> Stella had a look at it too. 'It's very interesting, and well written', she said, 'But isn't it a bit too political for a school piece? It makes some pretty damning accusations, too. If you were writing this for a magazine, you wouldn't want a libel suit from the asbestos companies. You must be sure of your facts'.

Bert and Stella debate what is 'fact' and what is the manipulation of facts as part of a power game, with Bert declaring that journalists must take risks and face the firing line: 'Otherwise you might as well interview cordon bleu chefs for *Fair Lady* or speculate about the sex lives of pop stars in *Scope*'.

Stella in defence observes,

> Do you know how many times you've had your belly satisfied by a good recipe from *Fair Lady*? You would be awfully thin if I fed you from the editorial page of the *Cape Times*. Not everything in life is political, thank God (Garisch 1994:100-102).

As it turns out the judges of the writing competition agree with Stella. Even Gail's mother, herself a writer, thinks the essay is too political and advises Gail to 'Leave that to the politicians' (Garisch 1994:126).

This article locates contemporary South African fiction written specifically for the young adult market, notably young readers between the ages of about 11 to about 16, from two equally important perspectives. One focus is on the significance of this relatively recent genre of literature which explores issues of identity-formation and the process of 'becoming'. The other focus is on the literary, social, and political significance of these texts, and the unique role they play in both the South African literary arena, and in terms of social change within the country. Our use of the phrase 'more than just a love story' in the title serves to draw attention to the devaluation of books written *for* the adolescent as being necessarily limited to plots containing teenage romance, sexual exploration and angst with 'high interest and low vocabulary', written *by* people who could never write real books for an adult market, and received *within* a milieu driven solely by didactics, literacy development, entertainment as escapist strategy, the literary study of a novel only in terms of its being a set school text, or by those who see reading as being only for study purposes and not for pleasure.

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In exploring young adult literature within a literary critical framework, we seek to render visible a literary genre which, while interrogative by nature, has traditionally been marginalised within academic study. As well-known children's literature critic, Aidan Chambers, observes in relation to taking seriously the literature that is read by children and young adults:

> We need a critical method which will take account of the child-reader, which will include him (sic.) rather than exclude him, which will help us to understand a book better and to discover the reader it seeks. We need a critical method which will tell us about the reader in the book (Chambers 1980 quoted in Sarland 1991:xi)

At present there is only one major literary critical study that includes reference to 'the reader in the book' in South African literature for children and young adults—Elwyn Jenkins' *Children of the Sun*. It is an important pioneering study in which the author himself indicates that there is need for much more scholarship in the area of South African children's literature. Reviews of this book also highlight this need (Krynauw 1993; Rosenthal 1993). While there has been some attention to the political context of literature for children (e.g. Shannon's *Becoming Literate/Becoming Political*; Bacon's *How Much Truth Do We Tell the Children?*) this is still a relatively new area of investigation. Moreover, while there are a number of professional books for teachers related to the young adult novel (e.g. Thomson's *Understanding Teenagers Reading*), and several which attend to ideologies expressed within such texts (Evans' *Reading Against Racism*; Sarland's *Young People Reading: Culture and Response*), there has been little literary critical work which specifically attends to the young adult novel as a 'real' novel and a literary genre in and of itself, to the writers of these novels as 'real' writers, or to the particularised 'uses' of literature in effecting or attempting to effect social change.

As Jenkins (1994:136) observes in his consideration of the role of young adult literature and social change:

> Children are, or can be, less inhibited than adults. This has resulted in recent novels for teenagers, in depicting a tension between the mores of a conservative white society and child characters who intuitively reject them. The same may be said for children's book on the whole: they have gone where adult fiction has not Some of their themes, plots, subject matter and even genres have broadened South African English literature beyond what has been recognised by literary critics.

Similarly Flockemann (1992:140) observes of the political significance of recent books within the young adult genre:

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> Many of these texts deal with a youthful protagonist's entry into, exclusion from, or resistance to dominant hegemonies—the adolescent's 'rites of passage' into adulthood frequently serving as an index of contending South African gender, race and class 'realities' at different stages of its history.

Like Barbie's friend, Skipper who in a recent issues of *Barbie* magazine (No. 3, 23 Nov. 1994), a magazine for much younger readers, is depicted flying into Africa where she gazes out over the airstrip of Niamy, Niger asks '... But where are the elephants, the zebras, the giraffes?' many of the protagonists in the contemporary young adult novel in South Africa are depicted in a state of 'becoming' through initiation, seeking as they are interpretations of a 'political landscape' that they are just entering. Consider for example, the initiation into and interpretation of the events of June 16, 1976 in this political landscape depicted in the South African young adult novel. In some cases, the outsider status of these protagonists, like Skipper's, is highlighted in a literal way so that the events of June 16 are 'interpreted' for the visitor to South Africa, as in Barbara Ludman's *Day of the Kugel* where Michelle, an American teenager is sent to stay with her aunt and uncle (a professor at Wits University), or in Barbara Baumann's *Without a Conscience* where Jayne, a young physiotherapist from a dull Canadian prairie town where the focus of conversation has been the bitterly cold weather arrives in Durban just prior to June 16. Similarly, the impact of racial integration in a secondary school in Pietermaritzburg is viewed through the eyes of Mark who returns to South Africa after a year in England with family which has been in exile in Dennis Bailey's *Khetho*. This outsider status is also used by Janet Smith in *Joe Cassidy and the Red Hot Cha Cha* where we see the changing South Africa through the eyes of Diane who with her mother is returning to South Africa after a period of eight years of exile in England where her father has been killed by a letter bomb.

In other cases, the outsider status has nothing to do with being foreign, but is rather a type of coming of age or rite of passage for young people who have lived all of their lives in the world of apartheid, and where they are entering into a period of development distinctly interrogative, 'resistant' and urgent. Thus, a character such as Candy in Toecky Jones' *Go Well, Stay Well* is outraged to realise that her so-called liberal white parents will not allow Becky, a black girl from the township, whom she has just met to visit her in her northern suburbs home. The strain on their liberalism is expressed in the mother's reservations about Becky coming to teach Candy Zulu:

> 'You've asked this girl to teach you Zulu?'
> 'That's right. She's an ideal person, being a Zulu herself. It's tremendous luck to have found someone suitable at least .... Perhaps Becky could teach you Zulu as well, Mum' she suggested cunningly. Her mother was always saying how much

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she wished she could speak an African language 'Don't you think it's good idea, my having Zulu lessons?'
'Of course I do, dear I think it's an excellent idea, if you're really serious about it Only ' Her mother smiled a little anxiously
'Only?' Candy prompted
'Well, how can you be sure this girl would be able to teach you properly I mean it's not as if you know her at all, do you? And where would she teach you?' (Jones 1979 37-38)

As the parents struggle to find reasons why it would be inappropriate and unwise for Becky to come to their home, Candy begins to realise the limitations of their liberalism. The events surrounding June 16 are interpreted for the reader by Candy, insider to a privileged white world, and Becky, insider to the world of the townships

We also see the significance of June 16 in the 1980s as interpreted through the insider world of sixteen year-old Nicholas in Jane Rosenthal's *Wake up Singing*, when he not only refuses to participate in cadets at school, but stays at home on June 16. His father, a military man, confronts Nick in the morning when he fails to appear in his school uniform

'I'm not going to school today,' he (Nick) announced, before they could react to his clothes
'Is that so', said his father sarcastically 'You're going to hole up in Soweto?'
'Hardly Dad Though I might be going to a memorial service there'
'What!'
'It's June 16, remember?'
'Oh god, so it is Turning to Claire (his wife), he went on, 'We're expecting hardly anyone to come in today People can take a day's leave if they want to'
'A day's leave But there's a three day stayaway, Dad'
'Are you bunking school for three days?' His father was getting ratty again
'No Just today I thought it'd be the least I could do
'Do! Is not going to school doing something?'
'I think it is It's making a statement
Too late Nick regretted opening his mouth His father had put down his shoe brush
'Statement'! Tell me, what is a statement'
'About black education ' Nick started but Roy cut in, 'Black education'! They should be goddamn grateful for their schools—it's the best bloody black education in Africa' (Rosenthal 1990 78)

When Nick returns to school he is confronted by his ex-cadet master, Bossies, who accuses him of 'bunking' and 'celebrating' June 16. The sympathetic classroom teacher Longley, however, takes Bossies to task

'What do you mean, 'bunked', 'celebrated'? You should be more careful with your language'

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> 'He bunked man', Bossies insisted.
> 'But he didn't celebrate. Commemorate, observe. One doesn't celebrate the death of hundreds of children' (Rosenthal 1990.88).

In Elana Bregin's *The Red-haired Khumalo* we see this resistance as a conserving force in relation to the changes in the new South Africa, complete with a newly constituted family that contains its own 'rainbow nation'. Chelsea cannot understand how or why her mother could suddenly run off and marry a black man, and offers arguments against this union that sound remarkably like those of the 'liberal' parents of Candy in *Go Well, Stay Well:*

> 'Mom—he's a black man!' Chelsea said despairingly He comes from a completely different culture to ours. Don't you see? It doesn't matter how wonderful you think he is—its never going to work .. what happens when we starts wanting to slaughter live goats and chickens in our garden for his Ancestor ceremonies?' she demanded. 'It's no good shaking your head at me Mom—they do that—it's their culture .' (Jones 1979.17).

In still other novels, it is not the characters but the readers who find themselves interrogating the hegemonic discourses which create the world of the street child. This can be seen in Lesley Beake's *The Strollers* and *Serena's Story*, Jenny Robson's *Mellow Yellow*, or Sandra Braude's *Mpho's Story*. Throughout all of these novels the interrogation and resistance characteristic of adolescence and of the young adult novel in other parts of the world provides a backdrop for a type of interrogation, and an urgency characteristic of much of the resistance literature of South Africa written for adults—from protest poetry and township theatre, to the works of the Gordimers and Coetzees of this country.

Even many of those stories which have an explicit 'love story' agenda such as those written as part of Heinemann's Heartbeats series where the peritext—i.e. the cover art, the blurbs, and the insignias promise romance, the content is much more interrogative through an explicit form of feminism-in-action. Thus, the backcovers contain the following description:

> Heinemann Heartbeats look at love in a thrilling and romantic way. Titles include: African Sunrise, Star of Love, Circles of Gold, The Jasmine Candle and Stolen Kisses.

Meanwhile, the actual storylines often contain a strong 'political' agenda. Consider for example, Christine Botchway's *When the Broken Sing* where the peritext includes this storyline description:

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> Marabek is beautiful, but she won't let any man get close to her Osei sees that she hides a secret sorrow Can he unlock the past, and win her for his own?

Marabek, we learn in the story, is a counsellor in a women's centre where she deals primarily with violence and wife abuse in a small African village. Her own secret sorrow refers to the violence and abuse that her father meted out to her mother, and it is only when Osei, a young doctor comes to the village that Marabek begins to confront her past.

Metaphorically we see the particularised place of literature within social change presented in Barbara Baumann's novel *Without a Conscience*, written as part of an educational series for a young adult audience, and dealing with political events between 1976 and 1990. John Peele and Zuma, two black activists, disagree on how to best effect change. John Peele who has been educated in England suggests that the way to effect real change to Bantu education is to appeal to the consciences of the whites through artists:

> In England I learned that novelists, journalists, playwrights and actors are very important to society Their words act as an inner voice South African artists, both black and white can change the attitude of the whites (Baumann 1992:28)

His fellow activist disagrees:

> 'Have you gone mad!' Zuma said ... 'What is all this talk about artists? Unrest is building in Soweto We need people out there who really do something! I say that a demonstration is the only way to make the whites listen

> The room filled with whispering voices Many of the people were at a loss to understand John Peele's words the things he talked about—artists and the conscience of the whites were unknown to them. They understood their basic needs, like salaries, housing and education. At the same time, Zuma's proposal to hold a demonstration frightened them Images of Sharpeville—the brutal scenes of police opening fire on anti-pass demonstrators were rekindled in their minds. (Baumann 1992:28).

In focusing on the 'inner voice' to be found in contemporary South African literature written specifically for the young adult market, we draw attention to the need to examine the role of literature as a type of social change-in-action, not only in terms of the politicisation of children and young adults in South Africa following 1976, but also in terms of social change where issues such as HIV and AIDS, the status of girls and women, and domestic violence are part of everyday reality. In situating the urgency and immediacy, general characteristics of the young adult novel in Australia, Great Britain, Canada and the United States, within the literature of protest and resistance in South Africa, we would contend that these novels have played and continue to play

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a unique role both in terms of the South African literary arena, and in terms of social change within the country.

Nowhere is this better exemplified than in South African young adult novelist Dianne Hofmeyr's winning the MNET literary award for *Boikie, You Better Believe It*. Although no newcomer to literary accolades, having been described by Elwyn Jenkins (1993:101) in his critical perspective on South African children's literature as being 'one of South Africa best children's writers' and having won numerous book awards such as the Sanlam Silver and Sanlam Gold awards for *When Whales Go Free* and *A Red Kite in a Pale Sky* respectively and the Maskew Miller Longman Young Africa series award in 1993 for *Blue Train to the Moon*, her MNET award represents a departure from her being regarded as 'just' a fine children's author and winner of awards designated for books for 'just' children and young adults. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate what counts as 'award-winning writing' irrespective of whether it is the much sought after international Booker prize, the Pulitzer Prize, or a national prize, we use this recent public recognition of Hofmeyr's novel as acknowledgement of the value of a particular group of writers, a literary genre and a readership to political process.

We highlight the significance of 'political process' here On the one hand, some of the best South African writing has been about politics, social change, protest and resistance. Indeed, the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to Nadine Gordimer is a good example of this, and who could deny the social and political significance of the late Barney Simon's work in South African theatre? On the other hand, the role of serious literature when it involves a non-adult audience brings into question from some—teachers, librarians and parents, the people who do take children's culture seriously—serious ethical issues. These include references to indoctrination, to writers joining bandwagons on AIDS, to the need for the politicisation of children. These also include charges laid against many writers, including writers for children and young adults, that they are not writing from their own experience, so that, as one person who works within the field of children's literature recently asked: 'What does Elana Bregin know of newly constituted 'Rainbow Nation' families?'

But, as Dianne Hofmeyr explains in an interview (with Marion Marchand, August 11, 1994), she sees herself primarily as a novelist and not an educator She observes that readers are still, after all, in search of a story, so that the 'issue' cannot take over the story.

> Stories based on facts like whaling or AIDS have to be researched carefully and often the first draft is read by an expert in the field to ensure accuracy But the basis of the story needs to be visualised before the research, otherwise the story is

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> transparently a vehicle for 'education' Once a main character and storyline emerges, only then can research begin. At that stage the two grow concurrently and often a small research detail can be a pivotal point in the story Readers might feel cheated if they picked up a book believing it to be a good story, and found it full of didactic facts ... A book should expose teenagers to sensitive issues but I don't believe it's the prerogative of the author to take sides or be intrusive. Blue train to the moon is not a book on AIDS It's a story about textures of relationships. About a girl questioning society and the rules that are imposed on her and at the same time dealing with changes in her emotional as well as intellectual powers I don't even explain fully how Mario comes to be HIV positive so that an educator might see me as being neglectful Yet I think if the book were used in a classroom discussion, the teenagers themselves would come up with some very important and plausible answers

In making this statement, Hofmeyr reminds us that, like writers of novels for 'grown-ups', she is first and foremost a novelist and story teller, albeit on 'the side of the line' that is less likely to be taken seriously by traditional literary criticism. That attention to genres of literature for children and young adults is frequently non-existent at scholarly conferences on literary criticism, that so few copies of award-winning books for these readers are stocked, even by the leading book-sellers, and that so few interviews are conducted, and even fewer reviews written, and those that are, frequently focus only on the content and not the literary merit of the works, all point to the serious lack of awareness in the critical mind of the value and significance of these 'middle brow' as Virginia Woolf would have it, texts. However, as Antony Easthope (1991) and others who work within Cultural Studies point out, the very interrogation of the divisions between high and low literature, popular and serious literature, formulaic and non-formulaic literature, literature for adults and children is necessarily political. In South Africa where more than half of the population is under the age of 15, where change in a new South Africa is still in many ways 'visionary', and where topics of 'high interest' to young people are necessarily about the creation of this new landscape, social change is necessarily about a literary literacy at all levels. Consistent with remarks made by Mbulelo Mzamane (1995) on English departments in transition in South African universities, the literature for children and young adults has particular literary and political significance

In conclusion, therefore, we return to Dawn Garisch's *Not another Love Story*. when her mother advises her to leave the political to the politicians, Gail consults a dictionary regarding the meaning of the words political and politician.

She finds the definition in the *Concise OED* inadequate in its semantic sterility and observes, 'I couldn't help feeling that it left something unsaid' (Garisch 1994:126). Perhaps we should take care to ensure that literary

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criticism in South Africa cannot be similarly charged in leaving some very important things unsaid.

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Language and Apartheid: The Power of Minorities

Elizabeth de Kadt

Language is never neutral, and in a country such as South Africa with its long history of political struggle, language will be all the more tied in to existing power relationships. Today, after the transition to democracy, structures forged under apartheid still exist and language is one of the means by which these continue to be perpetuated. Hence one of the urgent tasks of a future language policy is to clarify power relationships which are underpinned by language and in this way to open these up for change.

However, to date no adequate model of the 'power of language', a precondition for such an analysis, has become available. Even though the topic of language and power has over the last ten years become a long overdue focus of discussion among some linguists -see for instance the investigations by Andersen (1988), Bourdieu (1991), Fairclough (1989), Kachru (1986), Kramarae et al. (1984) and Wodak (1989) most of these authors have not attempted to clarify the notion of power from a theoretical point of view, and have used substantially different approaches, which renders comparison difficult. This becomes less surprising when one turns to the neighbouring disciplines of sociology and politics, for even theoreticians such as Lukes (1974), Galbraith (1986), Foucault (1984, 1986) and Connolly (1983) have not succeeded in defining the notion of 'power' unequivocally. Indeed, Connolly (1983:149-150) concludes that the notion of power is 'essentially contested' and that a generally accepted definition of power is unlikely. Hence it seems appropriate, when considering the 'power of language', to admit the problems of definition and the contested nature of 'power', so as to turn this into an advantage by considering different perspectives on the 'power of language'.

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On the basis of these considerations I draw the following conclusions (see de Kadt 1991 for a detailed discussion):

1. In spite of the suggestive power of the phrase 'power of language', language in itself never possesses power. Rather it is individual languages, in their individual societal locus, which exercise power—and this power is a function of the roles of these languages in 'their' society: a language mediates the power relationships of its social context.

2. Three aspects of the 'power of language' can be differentiated. On the one hand, the 'overt' exercise of power (Lukes 1974:24) results in the 'pragmatic' and the 'symbolic' power of language. A language has pragmatic power insofar as it is used as means of communication (in the widest sense of the word) in a society, and the domains of usage rather than the simple number of speakers will give the clearest indication of pragmatic power. A language has symbolic power insofar as it is esteemed in its social context. This symbolic power draws on the emotive and symbolic aspects of language and can also be negative in impact. On the other hand the 'covert' exercise of power (Lukes 1974:24) results in what will here be termed the 'signitive' power of language, a power which language exercises over its speakers. This type of power is linked to the representation of 'reality' by language. In daily use values and concepts—indeed, an interpretation of world—are deposited in a language and perpetuate themselves. Anyone who uses this language adopts these values and concepts as well usually unwittingly. In this way language contributes towards constituting the apparently 'personal' world view of each subject.

This is in brief the model of the 'power of language', on which the following analysis is based. The focus will be on changing power relationships in a changing multilingual society. To this end two of the languages spoken in South Africa, Afrikaans and German, will be discussed. To what extent and in what ways are these minority languages?

Afrikaans and its future prospects in South Africa has featured prominently in newspaper and journal articles over the last five years. In particular I have drawn on *Beeld*, *Rapport*, *Die Burger*, *Die Volksblad*, *Weekly Mail and Guardian* and *Die Suid-Afrikaan* (Albrecht 1992, anonymous 1994; Coetzee/Mare 1993, Degenaar 1994; De Jong 1992; Swanepoel 1995) as well as the numerous scientific publications (e.g. Alexander 1989, 1994; Coetzee 1990; Du Plessis 1992; Heugh 1995; Kotze 1995a, 1995b; McCormick 1995; Pokpas/Van Gensen 1992; Ponelis 1994; Reagan 1995; Stone 1995; Swanepoel 1992, Van Heerden 1994; Van Rensburg 1992; Webb 1992, 1995). My point of departure is the period leading up to 1992.

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A first difficulty of interpretation reveals the centrality of considerations of power in the debate. In nearly all the documents discussing Afrikaans or the future of Afrikaans, the word 'Afrikaans' is used with two different meanings: at times the language as a whole is meant, at times—without this being mentioned—only one variety of Afrikaans, only 'Standard Afrikaans', the variety used in the public domain. It is always necessary to ascertain the exact meaning of the word 'Afrikaans' in its particular context, for it is not Afrikaans as such which has power (as implied by the unqualified use of 'Afrikaans'), rather it is Standard Afrikaans which has power. A second difficulty is the one-sidedness of the sources: with some few exceptions it is the promoters and users of Standard Afrikaans who debate the future of Afrikaans. This bias is a further indication of the power of Standard Afrikaans as sustained by a well-developed infrastructure. Every analysis of the power of Afrikaans—and, clearly, this present one as well—cannot but pay greater attention to Standard Afrikaans rather than to the non-standard varieties. By merely participating in the debate the existing discourse structures are utilised and hence the existing power structures once again perpetuated.

The power of Afrikaans during apartheid was characterised by an imbalance between pragmatic and symbolic power. The clear and detailed summary of numbers of speakers and domains of use by Webb, Dirven and Kock (1995:25-68) demonstrates the language's pragmatic power—with the reservation that the authors are actually referring to Afrikaans as a whole only when the general statistics on number of speakers etc. are presented. Once domains of usage are discussed—and as noted above it is the domains which really inform as to the pragmatic power of a language—the reference is to Standard Afrikaans. Clearly the use of Afrikaans prescribed by law for the public domains (politics, public service, law-courts, television and radio including advertising which is broadcast) is not only a matter of status or 'freedom, rights and privileges' (vryheid, regte en voorregte) (Webb et al. 1995:46), but also of the economic protection of (some) speakers of (Standard) Afrikaans. The use of Afrikaans as a language of technology and science draws on some forty years' work at developing the requisite scientific-technical terminology. The numerous language organisations such as the Akademie, the FAK etc. which continue to watch over the interests of Afrikaans recall the earlier roles of the all-important language movements and the substantial financial input required for any language development. The existence of a developed language variety such as Standard Afrikaans presupposes economic and commercial interests which are in a position and willing to carry at least part of the costs.

Nevertheless the pragmatic power of (Standard) Afrikaans in the 1980s showed significant gaps, most noticeably in education: very few black pupils used the language as medium of instruction at school. The much-

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discussed symbolic power of Afrikaans provides an explanation. Through the perceived link to Afrikaner nationalism, Standard Afrikaans has been politicised to such an extent that, following on the events of 1976, a neutral use of the language is no longer possible: whoever is not explicitly against it, creates the appearance of being for it. The symbolic meaning of Afrikaans—and hence its symbolic power—is similarly polarised, leading either to passionate identification or to an equally strong rejection. For the Afrikaner nationalist, Afrikaans, the successful symbol of Afrikaner identity, became the mythologised 'language miracle', and in Afrikaner thought was depoliticised. Those, on the other hand, who experienced on a daily base the effects of Afrikaner politics, rejected together with this depoliticisation Afrikaans itself as the 'language of the oppressor'. The clash of two so strongly felt interpretations led at times to vehement reactions: some felt their own identity endangered through the rejection of their language, others withdrew from the language by all possible means. This clash finally triggered off the Soweto-riots in 1976.

There has been much discussion of the pragmatic and symbolic power of Afrikaans, albeit in somewhat other terms; but as yet little consideration of the 'signitive' power of Afrikaans, doubtless because this is exercised covertly. Yet the confusion mentioned above between 'Afrikaans' and 'Standard Afrikaans' is a clear instance of signitive power. In that this confusion can only be avoided by a very conscious critical awareness, often leading to what one feels is clumsiness and redundancy in expression, language—and discourse—exercises power over its users. Only recently have South Africans begun to investigate the 'apartheid experience of world' and its reflexion in South African languages. Here too it is doubtless also the polarisation around Afrikaans as discussed above which has led to such completely different results: the book-length investigation by Dirven (1995) comes to the 'extremely surprising conclusion that apartheid ideology has found no reflection in Afrikaans metaphors ...' (die uiters verrassende slotsom dat die apartheidsideologie geen neerslag gevind het in Afrikaanse metafore ... nie) (Swanepoel 1995:48), whereas van Heerden (1994) focuses on racial pejoratives as used in Afrikaans literature and the impossibility of simply 'disinfecting' (1994:71) works of literature by replacing these words. It would seem likely that the 'apartheid experience of world' would involve a tendency to create human relationships on the basis of race and of difference rather than of similarity. However, it is possible that precisely the political exposure of Afrikaans (in contrast to other languages, which might more easily be felt to be neutral) may contribute to creating an awareness of the language's signitive power—even if almost exclusively with those critical of the system. For example the Afrikaans authoress Marianne de

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Jong, musing on her contradictory relationship to her own language, has expressed such an awareness very clearly:

> In my academic work psychoanalysis taught me that it is language which precedes the individual, which can never belong to him because he or she, the individual, belongs from birth to the language. When I learn to say 'I', I also learn 'I child', 'I daughter of my mother' and 'I female' In Afrikaans we also learnt 'I white' [One could doubtlessly add: 'I white' or 'I black' or 'I coloured'] And so I experience my love for the language which I speak as ambiguous I love it because it gives me identity, but I have to be distrustful because it constantly tries to make decisions for me, because it constantly tries to make me forget that its truths and values are full of history So to have a mother tongue means for me to protest in my language against my language [1].

This type of thinking points to the urgent need to emancipate Standard Afrikaans from apartheid politics—and this, as van Heerden (1994) has pointed out, is only possible if one comes to terms with history which cannot but leave its tracks in language.

In terms of the official language policy proclaimed in 1994, South Africa now has 11 official languages, and the Constitution is to safeguard the linguistic rights of the individual. Hitherto the reality of this policy—guidelines for its implementation are presently being developed—has proved to be an increasing dominance of English, in the context of which Afrikaans has already suffered substantial restrictions of its pragmatic power. For instance, the politics of the country are increasingly being conducted in English, in public and in the ministries. It is not a future role of Afrikaans which is being denied, it is the claim to a special status. Hence the future of Afrikaans is likely to be on a regional basis. This is confirmed by the new television policy announced by the SABC, which will reduce the exposure of Afrikaans considerably—and this will in the long run certainly have consequences for usage patterns of Afrikaans. Just as foreseen by the participants in the reformist 'gesprek oor Afrikaans' of the 1980s, the pragmatic power of Afrikaans will diminish substantially

The reaction of mother tongue speakers of Afrikaans to these changes is also completely polarised. With the initiation of the 'Stigting vir

[1] Die psigoanaliese het my in my akademiese werk geleer dat taal dit is wat die individu voorafgaan, wat nooit aan hom kan behoort nie omdat hy of sy, die individu, vanaf geboorte aan die taal behoort As ek 'ek' leer sê, leer ek ook 'ek kind', 'ek dogter van my ma' en 'ek vroulik' In Afrikaans het ons ook geleer 'ek wit' Daarom ervaar ek my liefde vir die taal wat ek praat as dubbelsinnig. Ek het dit lief omdat dit my identiteit gee, maar ek moet dit met wantroue bejeen omdat dit gedurig probeer om my te bepaal, omdat dit gedurig probeer om my te laat vergeet dat sy waarhede en waardes vol geskiedenis sit. Om 'n moedertaal te hê, beteken daarom dit vir my om in my taal teen my taal te protesteer (De Jong 1992:31)

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Afrikaans' in 1992 (generously supported by Afrikaans printing houses such as Perskor and representatives of the commercial sector such as Sanlam), a 'Third Language Movement' has begun, following a well-tried tradition, but once again raising the question of the link between language and privilege. The Stigting has been very active, firstly in not missing any opportunity to defend and promote the use of Afrikaans (i.e. supporting its pragmatic power), generally in terms of the language rights clauses of the Interim Constitution. Individual protests are organised around particular issues, the topic of Afrikaans is kept ever-visible in the press. More significantly, however, a new vision of Afrikaans has been proclaimed: an attempt is being made to substitute a new symbolic meaning for the former contested one. As suggested by a small minority of Afrikaans-speakers during the 1980s, who used the concepts of 'opening' (oopstelling) and 'democratisation' (demokratisiering), Afrikaans is now being presented as the 'friendly language for everyday use' (die vriendelike gebruikstaal), in the expectation that in this way Afrikaans will become accessible for all speakers.

It is doubtful whether the symbolic power of Afrikaans can be strengthened in this way. The 'Third Language Movement' may be very visible, but it is also very lonely; it represents a minority of Afrikaans-speakers. In the progressive language debate, on the other hand, Afrikaans is considered simply as one language among many and so is hardly mentioned. Hein Willemse has pointed out that the promoters of Afrikaans are in a considerable dilemma:

> The languages of the blacks are not lobbying for themselves. So when Afrikaans begins to lobby for itself, it is accused of exclusivity and referred back to the other languages. But when the champions (of Afrikaans) turn to the other languages, there is no purposeful programme which they could join [2]

The urge to reduce the status of Afrikaans (and not, for example, of English) seems to be directed primarily against Standard Afrikaans, in that this variety has been experienced as an imposed minority language. It could be objected—as Ponelis (1994) has recently argued—that every official language has to be an standard language, and that hence the claims to power made on behalf of and by means of the 'culture variety of Afrikaans' are indeed legitimate. Such reasoning ignores the degree of politicisation of Standard Afrikaans. In spite of the subsequent attempts to sanitise this variety as a 'language miracle' and a 'friendly language', it cannot be easily

[2] Die swart tale lobby nie vir hulself nie. Dus as Afrikaans vir haarself begin lobby, word sy van eksklusiwiteit beskuldig en na die ander tale verwys. Draai die stryders na die ander tale, is daar geen doelgerigte program om mee saam te werk nie' (quoted in anonymous 1994).

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forgotten by outsiders at least that Standard Afrikaans was conceived and developed as an exclusive language and with decided political aims. What at first served the empowering of a minority cannot but turn against the same minority, given a change of political constellation. Even though the pragmatic power of Afrikaans has been reduced, history—and to be specific a history of empowerment and disempowerment—has left its traces in Standard Afrikaans; and history cannot be undone simply by declaring one symbol out-of-date and proposing a new (and equally depoliticised) symbol.

Afrikaans is not in itself a minority language; as we are constantly reminded, it has substantial numbers of mother tongue speakers. Yet, in that one variety was isolated and developed into a political instrument against a background of exclusivity, a potential majority language reshaped itself into a minority language and into one of the means through which the actual majority of the country was disempowered. Every attempt to perpetuate the special status of what is now indeed a minority language, and especially through what appears to be a further negation of history, will be only too likely to be understood by the formerly disempowered as a renewed attempt to perpetuate political privilege.

The second language to be discussed here is in every sense a minority language. During the first three hundred years of colonisation, most German-speakers arriving in South Africa were quickly assimilated; but especially in kwaZulu-Natal small rural communities came into being during the second half of the nineteenth century, some of which—unexpectedly—have retained the German language until today (see Bodenstein 1995; De Kadt 1995).

During the last fifty years, the pragmatic power of German has been greatly reduced by the removal of much of the earlier isolation of these settlements. At present these 'German-speakers' are typically multilinguals who use German in only a few domains: at home, for religious purposes and, to a limited extent, for schooling. Nevertheless, such retention of German over five or six generations is astonishing and must be attributed largely to its strong symbolic power: for these colonists it served to proclaim an own group identity. By means of German, these settlers felt able to distinguish themselves from other English-speaking colonists on the one hand, and from the Zulu-speaking indigenous inhabitants on the other. Tendencies and strategies discussed above become visible here as well: a polarisation in terms of otherness, and the mythologisation of language. In the minds of its speakers, German became depoliticised and associated with 'eternal' values such as decency, diligence, conscientiousness, honesty, closeness to the soil and faith. That these values are themselves historically mediated and largely products of nineteenth century Germany becomes invisible, as well as the relocation of the German language to a new African context.

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Why did these German colonists experience such a strong need to isolate themselves and perceive themselves as 'other'? Certainly, external factors must have contributed: it was whole families who emigrated and who settled in closed groups, and economically these colonists were able to be more or less self-sufficient. Doubtless the rising German nationalism of the nineteenth century played a role, as well as the substantial class difference between the English-speaking 'gentlemen farmers' and the North German peasants. But it would seem that the link between language and faith was decisive, as indicated by the fact that in each settlement the first communal buildings to be erected were always church and school. (Many of these settlers were indeed Lutheran missionaries.)

Two further factors then assisted the retention of this typically nineteenth century symbolism into the late twentieth century: the close links which were forged with Afrikaner Nationalism, and the economic power of modern Germany. A number of German-speakers became prominent in the economic and commercial sectors in South Africa. This was not unimportant as regards preventing linguistic assimilation: for example, when schooling was taken over by the provinces, four years of teaching in German were maintained and are still permitted today in so-called 'German primary schools'. Similarly, the 'German Festival Year 1992', commemorating the 'German contribution to the development of South Africa' (Lantern 1992:1; see also Pakendorf 1992) was supported by prominent industrial and commercial instances—as well as by the then Prime Minister.

Yet the new political dispensation will doubtless accelerate the trend towards assimilation which can already be observed. The language is rapidly losing its symbolic power, as increasing numbers of young people reject this value system as an anachronism. In this regard, too, reactions are polarising: some German-speakers are consciously rejecting the exclusivity implied by being a tiny linguistic minority and accept linguistic assimilation as inevitable, whereas other groupings are vigorously attempting to maintain this minority status. The Vryheid community for example has recently completed a self-funded school hostel solely for German-speaking children. But at this stage in South Africa's history, such attempts have little chance of success in the long run, and these communities too, are likely to assimilate linguistically over the next two generations. The clearest indication of this is the increasing trend towards marriages with speakers of other languages, and the gradual introduction of church services in English and Afrikaans.

The above article has analysed aspects of the power of two South African minority languages, Standard Afrikaans and German, as well as responses by speakers of these languages to the present period of social and political change. The choice of these two languages for discussion might well appear rather arbitrary, and indeed as once again contributing to the

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perpetuation of presently existing linguistic power. Yet, for a historical linguist, Afrikaans and South African German are without doubt of significance, in that they have been involved in out of the ordinary linguistic developments in South Africa: on the one hand the emergence of a 'new language', the 'youngest Germanic language', Afrikaans, and on the other, the ongoing maintenance of a minority immigration language, German. Our consideration of recent trends would seem to indicate that the symbolic power of these two languages as offering a distinctive own identity, has been a crucial factor. Both languages became characterised by a high degree of polarisation into 'self' and 'other' and a refusal to dialogue in a meaningful way with this 'other'. The challenge of the new language policy has resulted in some renewed attempts at language maintenance, in which the old polarisation persists: openly in some German communities, and as a perhaps unrealised subtext among some speakers of Standard Afrikaans, in the attempt simply to submerge the past in a new symbolism.

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Black Women, Writing and Identity

Johannes A Smit

Review Article

Black Women, Writing and Identity.
Migrations of the Subject.
by Carole Boyce Davies
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0-415-10087-9 (pbk)

> [P]ostmodernist positions or feminist positions are always already articulated by Black women because we experience, ahead of the general populations, many of the multiple struggles that subsequently become popularly expressed (for example, drugs in communities, teen pregnancies, struggle for control of one's body, one's labor, etc.) Black feminist criticisms, then, perhaps more than many of the other feminisms, can be a praxis where theoretical positions and the criticism interact with the lived experience (p. 55).

Central to the modernist colonising arsenal was the hegemonic and coercive use of travel, map/boundary making, practices of naming and the extraction of slave labour/use- or exchange-value. Together with the (re)presentation of Empire as being racially superior, as civilised and having a civilising mission in the colonies, these instances effected the forced displacement/removal of indigenous people(s). In this context, 'theory' served to articulate the colonial order(s), bolstering the European political, economic and cultural identities. After the protracted liberation struggles, 'post-coloniality' inaugurated the era of the developing of neocolonial and neonation arsenals, which, in the alternated forms of global capitalism and western cultural hegemonies, continue to serve the same identities and regulate migrancy.

In the context of 'gender politics' (p. 61), these mutating identities can be seen to emanate from male dominance/domination and power. Since

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nobody has experienced the real effects of male(d) force and authority like Black women, *Black Women, Writing and Identity* (1994) consciously unthreads some of these interrelated experiences, theorises Black women's identities, researches African, Caribbean, U.S. and British Black women's writing crossculturally and deconstructs feminist, postcolonial and post-modern theories.

Prominent in Boyce Davies's argument is the well-known position that male dominance has resulted in Black women's 'homelessness' and a sense of 'unbelongingness' (cf. pp. 84,87; Jeyifo 1990:33-47; Parry 1987:34; Mukherjee 1990:6; Riley 1985). The 'contradictory contested spaces' which function as 'principal sites of domination and conflict' (p. 49) of Black women's 'misrecognition and alienation' (p. 113) generating 'homelessness' and 'unbelongingness' are: the 'compulsory domesticity and the enforcement of specific gendered relations' in the male-dominated home space (e.g. in the family/house/village) (p. 65); experiences of (physical and psychic) abuse and injury (homelessness) in one's own home (and we may add, workplace); male(d) theoretical constructs of heritage, 'self, ... community, nation' (p. 49); deportations from imperial countries (pp. 96f); the migrant's fallacy of idealising and romanticising home[1] (Grewal et al. 1980); practices which relegate women to the (same) status of slaves[2] (pp. 75f). 'Home' as space of harmony is here—see especially Black women's autobiography—deconstructed in experience.

Homelessness, resulting from the enforced displacement of women through indenturing and/or their migrancy through choice leaves (especially first generation migrant) Black women to live as uprooted 'stranger-outsider[s]' in the contradictory spaces of 'nowhereness and everywhereness', between 'back home' (the country of origin) and 'home'[3] (the imperial country) (pp. 98,1,100-107; Bridglal 1988:88). In this context, 'patriarchal immigration legislation' benefiting racist, patriarchal and class structures across boundaries, exploits women's labour, adding to their homelessness (p. 97; Amos & Parmar 1984). Even though some writings espouse home in cultural geographical links (the heritage/ancestry relationship) between Afro-Americans or Afro-Caribbean people and Africa (p. 115; cf. Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* 1959 and *Praisesong*

[1] Black British women writers have importantly contributed to the anti-imperialist critique of the meanings of empire, post-coloniality as project and the various nationalistic identifications of home (p. 96ff)

[2] Like slavery in history, Black women's homelessness primarily results from the capitalist induced circulation of labour (workers), goods, services and information

[3] Similar experiences are present in *Waiting in the Twilight* (Riley 1987), *Going Back Home* (Fuller 1992) and *Boy-Sandwich* (Gilroy 1989)

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for the Widow 1983; Audrey Lorde's *Zami* 1982 which articulates her lesbian identity with Grenada's experience of U.S. hegemony), homelessness is also encountered here. This is due to the experiencing of Pan-Africanist, Black/African nationalist, Afrocentric and even Africa-diaspora discourses as being 'totalizing [in] nature' and functioning like homelands or reservations similar to that under apartheid (p. 50; cf. Enloe 1990)[4]. Each functions as a

> singularly monolithic construction of an African theoretical homeland which asks for submergence or silencing of gender, sexuality or any other ideological stance or identity position which is not subsumed under Black/African nationalism (p 49f)

One could, if your normative context is that of male(d) identity, conclude that the tragedy of Black women's lives and experience is that they do not have (an) identity. Wrong, says Boyce Davies. Since Black women do not have only one identity—coerced by patriarchy—but multiple identities, theorisings appropriate to their variable experiences and identities must be developed rather than the other way round.

Boyce Davies faces up to this challenge by reviewing the validity of the 'visitor theory', theorising 'migrancy' as the dominant experience of Black women and developing her own notion of 'critical relationality' in terms of 'migrancy'.

The 'visitor theory' (p 46ff) articulates the way in which Black women have used and negotiated other established theories (e.g. feminism, postmodernism, nationalism, Afrocentrism, Marxism, etc.) in mapping their experiences, identities and critique. Drawing on the common practice of accompanying a visitor when leaving, 'a piece of the way'—the quality of the relationship determines the distance—Black women use other theories eclectically. The reason is that with all of them, their routes are 'cluttered with skeletons, enslavements, new dominations, unresolved tensions and

[4] Even though Africa serves as 'imaginary/historical basis of identity or self-assertion' for the multi-ethnic imagined community of the Black diaspora 'cut off from their past', for Black women, it cannot pose as an 'unproblematic, sacred homeland' devoid of oppressing nationalist discourses. Black women cannot respond positively when these Black nationalist discourses require that they 'accept their own oppressions as given', 'accept commodification', abuse, death, silencing, rape, to allow race-based discourses, i e Black/male discourses, to exist. Moreover, even though women have historically expressed nationalist zeal and patriotism as well as played significant roles in nationalist struggles, often, they have been dispossessed in the documenting of these nationalist struggles, the shaping and reconstructing of new societies and/or the construction of (Black) nationalist discourses (p 51) If they were included, it is quite certain that post-colonial nationalist constructions would have been quite different—especially since it would have included some of the issues (like critical relationality) Boyce Davies deals with.

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contradictions' (p. 46). Moreover, going 'all the way home' with 'theories/theorists',

> inevitably places me in the 'homes' of people where I, as Black woman, will have to function either as maid or exotic, silenced courtesan, but definitively not as a theoretical equal. Going all the way home with them means being installed in a distant place from my communities' (p. 46).

It seems to me that Boyce Davies's underlying argument is that it is precisely for these reasons that a theorising different from the 'visitor theory' and more akin to Black women's experiences (and identities) be developed. She does this by theorising from within the dominant governing Black women's experience: 'migrancy'. 'Migrancy' (or 'diaspora') is preferred above Deleuze's (1977; cf. also Grossberg 1988 and Radway 1988) 'nomadism', Hall's (1985) 'arbitrary' and 'articulation', Said's (1991) 'travelling' and Bhabha's (1990; 1994) 'hybridity' theories, because these are still implicated by male(d) sites of 'speech, language and authority', serve as male and/or racial (white) prerogatives (e.g. 'travel'), operate through hierarchical interpellations or because they do not treat agency in its senses of opposition and action (pp. 43f,46; cf. Wolff 1993). 'Migrancy', however, does not only account for the fact that '[m]igration and exile are fundamental to human experience' to various degrees (pp. 4,128). Arising from the 'transnational dimension to black identity', spun by the 'slave trade' which had 'little regard for national boundaries' (p. 13; Hanchard 1990.99), Boyce Davies's choice (following Hanchard) in theorising 'migrancy' signifies a 'symbolic revolt against the nation-state', and for that matter, any homogeneity or homologicity.

In this context, she expands her notion of migrancy with Anzaldua's of 'borderlands'. Anzaldua's (1987:49) theorising of 'borderlands', articulates those incidences where 'two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races, sexualities, classes, genders occupy the same territory' or 'where multiple identities collide and/or renegotiate space .... boundaries [are] the sites of constant transition' (p. 16). Epistemologically, this means that knowledge is always 'situated' in boundary circumstances, is itself a 'boundary project' and subject to 'mapping practices'. Moreover, since boundaries are themselves unstable in migrant experience—they 'shift from within'—the knowledge they contain 'remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies' (p. 66; cf. Haraway 1991:230). As such, they both articulate 'the multiple discursive and political positions that subjects occupy or resist in a variety of given situations' and the 'myriad possibilities and conflicted spaces that are expressed in ... text[s]' (pp. 63,66).

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As each (Black woman) is displaced or migrates through choice, she leaves situations and moves to new circumstances for particular reasons—for liberatory reasons or in search of opportunity. Since she establishes new *relations* in each different situation, she negotiates and renegotiates her identities in terms of available subject positionings (pp. 13,18,49,50f). Her identity is therefore always 'multiply', determined by all the past, present and future migratory experiences and relations and never closed. Finding representation in Black women's writing, these must equally be read as 'a series of boundary crossings' in crosscultural, transnational, translocal and diaspora frameworks[5] (p. 4).

Articulating both the critical/resistance and constructive/creative aspects of Black women's identity, Boyce Davies's theorising of 'critical relationality' then

> means negotiating, articulating and interrogating simultaneously a variety of resistant discourses relationally and depending on context, historical and political circumstances . [which is] progressively multiply articulated in the face of a variety of dominant discourses (p. 47)

In order to explain more comprehensively how 'critical relationality' accounts for migrant Black women's experiences and activities, Boyce Davies relates it to Becquer and Gatti's (1991) 'vogueing' and Haraway's 'situated knowledges'. 'Vogueing' functions through 'syncretic articulation' or as a

> "syncretism", [which is inherently] "*antagonistic*", i.e. in relations which are animated by the partial presence of the other within the self, such that the differential identity of each term is at once enabled and prevented from full constitution (p. 48)

'Vogueing' constitutes 'those articulatory discourses which "traverse sexualities, genders, races, and classes in performance" in multiple ways' (p.48). In these complexes, all is repetition, which, in its poststructuralist sense, means that meaning is always unsettled, always open to new analyses as 'repetition brings necessarily a difference and deferral' and is never the repetition of the same (cf. Rojo 1984:431f).

[5] Ranging from more general accounts to studies focused more on Black women, contributions to the understanding of migratory consciousness concerning education, family life, history, migration, social and economic conditions, urban conditions, struggle, resistance, organisation, policing, agency, postures of servility, institutionalised prejudices ranging from racism, through sexism to intolerance towards aliens can be found in Bryan, Dadzie & Scafe (1985), Dabydeen & Tagoe (1988), Gilroy (1976), Hiro (1992), James (1985), Mirza (1992), Ngcobo (1988), Saakana (1987), Wilson (1978)

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That the critical and creative processes of 'critical relationality' never stop, is evident in the way Boyce Davies critically analyses, deconstructs and identifies new relations in the 'migration horror stories' (pp. 5,14,23f,27, 30), language/the tongue and signs/labels like Black, African, African-American, Black British, Minority, Latina/o, West Indian, Carribean, Third World, alien, imigrant, etc. The 'migration horror stories' provide the possibility of showing how women traverse ideologies in re-mapping and re-naming, how they redefine geography[6] in crossings making possible re-connections and invasions, how black women's migratory experiences permanently displace the tourist ideology of 'playful world travelling', how migrancy serves as creative impetus behind Black women's writing and critical movements and how they, through writing their migrancy and lives, move out of a culture of silence and being silenced[7]. *Language* and the *tongue* are deconstructed to show that it is always open to women's articulation of their own experiences ('It's not everything you can talk, but ...'), how writing and the black female body is related and how lesbian sexuality deconstructs the tongue (pp. 152-165). The precariousness of the various *signs* are shown to be not only negative, degrading labels but can be used positively as they strategically affirm various identities. They should, however, be analysed and interrogated on a continuous basis (pp. 5-14).

On the question, then, where are women (or Boyce Davies's theorising) in *postcoloniality* and *postmodernity*? Boyce Davies says they are 'elsewhere doing something else'. The type of postcoloniality and postmodernism (and postmodern feminism) mobilised in *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, is neither a de-politicised multiplicity or hybridity, nor an African/Black nationalism. As subjects who

> are/were exploring their myriad identities outside of these discursive fields [they] have produced/are producing a different range of wonderfully textured articulations ... They participate as pieces in a growing collage of textualities. Their works exist more in the realm of the 'elsewhere' of diasporic imaginings

[6] Redefined geography is viewed as 'spaces [functioning as] locations or sites of contest, of flux, of change' [which] engender a 'consciousness' of 'crossing over', '"perpetual transition", plural personality which resists unitary paradigms and dualistic thinking ... [and] borders [as] those places where different cultures, identities, sexualities, classes, geographies, races, genders and so on collide or interchange' (p. 15f).

[7] *Negatively*, the migration horror stories reveal foreign countries's insensitivity and unsupportive attitude toward the writings by women of African descent and the publishing of such writings, governments's inflexible attitude toward the family life of migrants, western holiday makers's insensitivity to histories of colonialism and their exploitive attitude towards Other cultures, African-Americans's predicament of fighting their own kin when joining the U S army and patriarchy's silencing of women.

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> than the precisely locatable Much of it is therefore orientated to articulating presences and histories across a variety of boundaries imposed by colonizers, but also by men, the elders and other authorized figures in their various societies (p 88)

Politicised, Black women's migrancy facilitates the displacing of patriarchal systems and the creation of 'uprising textualities'.

'Uprising textualities' (pp. 107-112) indicates that Black women's multiple identities articulated in webs of significance are and ought to be produced to challenge, displace and ultimately replace patriarchy's authority, power and domination. Black women caught up in closed systems of 'imperialism which eschews colonial borders, systems, separations, ideologies, structures of domination' must here, as part of their 'uprising' realise the 'politics of the possible' (Sangari 1987), assertively represent themselves and empower one another to realise the liberating potential of a theorised 'migrancy' beyond the 'constraints of circumscribing definitions' (pp. 108,112)

On her own position on postcoloniality, Boyce Davies says that for her,

> postcoloniality represents a misnaming of current realties, it is too premature a formulation, it is too totalizing, it erroneously contains decolonizing discourses, it re-males and re-centers resistant discourses by women and attempts to submerge a host of uprising textualities, it has to be historicized and placed in the context of a variety of historical resistances to colonialism, it reveals the malaise of some Western intellectuals caught behind the posts and unable to move to new and/or more promising re-/articulations (p 81)

Central to *Black Women, Writing and Identity*'s postmodernism, is the articulation of 'agency' as constitutive of their 'uprising textualities'. Boyce Davies refers to Susan Hekman (1991:51; p. 41) who argues that:

> Postmodernism articulates a subject that is subjected to multiple discursive formations But elements of the postmodern critique address the ethical issue that feminism raises the need to retain agency They thus posit a subject that is capable of resistance and political action This conception of the subject is articulated not by retaining a Cartesian concept of agency but by emphasizing that subjects who are subjected to multiple discursive influences create modes of resistance to those discourses out of the elements of the very discourses that shape them

She also quotes Teresa Ebert (1991:115) with approval who refers to this as 'resistance postmodernism', which

> is not a 'logic' but a *critique* of late capitalism based on a social and historical rather than a textual theory of difference as the site of social conflict and struggle

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Here, 'resistance postmodernism' is an 'oppositional political practice: an interventionist and transformative critique of ... culture under the sign of late capitalism' (Ebert 1991:115; p. 42).

Boyce Davies also replaces the refracted decentred/postmodern subject (arising from radical diasporic elsewheres), here, with 'agent'/'agency'. Social agency allows for the re-connection of threads of refractedness to political, meaning and ethical realities in which people actually live and actually experience things (cf. Smith 1988). Such re-connections, again, allow for performances of resistance, traversal, the challenging of repressive political, denominational subjectivities and a view of the 'radical Black [female] *diasporic* subjectivity' or agency as always being in process (hooks 1990:15-22; Hekman 1991:44-63). 'As "elsewheres denotes movement", Black female subjectivity asserts agency as it crosses the borders, journeys, migrates and so re-claims as it re-asserts' (p. 37; Hanchard 1991:101).

In the context of postmodernism's pessimism and inability to name the current theoretical or academic conditions (pp. 107f), Black women not only name oppressions but also find voices in the '"elsewhere" of rearticulated worlds, operating on the same poles as "maroon societies", "slave rebellions", "underground railroads"'. It also links up with the language, innovation and energy of Rastafari and certain strands of rap music (pp. 108f). The 'uprising' consciousness 'moves us out of postcoloniality and the state of "postness" or "afterness" and into a more radical consciousness of our creativity' (p. 110). Such creativity is present in real resistance lead by black women (in contexts of sexuality, politics, culture, etc.), those writing or using photography, film, art, performance to convey their multiple journeys (from the Caribbean to England for example), their sojourns (in England) and how these experiences refract and belie the well-defined imperial identity (cf. p. 111).

> The performative/activist basis of much of the creativity of Black British women writers frees the creative to exist outside of the academy and in the practical, pedagogic and experiential community contexts Thus a great deal of the work is produced in workshops, small groups and community organizations, and as such constantly escapes institutional and publication-oriented identifications (p 111)

Writing out of their current experience of the former colonial 'homeland' (Britain), Black British women rebelliously 'articulate temporalities and locations outside the paradigms set by men, white society, British literary establishments'. These 'different spaces' are the sites where women are encouraged to continue developing and to work, write and speak here, outside the dominant 'master discourses' (pp. 122;89).

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'Black feminist politics' can become a truly 'oppositional, transformational, revolutionary discourse' if it 1) makes sharper distinctions within systems of domination and activates its principles practically; 2) consciously focuses its creative energies on 'sites of resistance' to liberate from 'multiple oppression: whiteness, maleness, bourgeois culture, heterosexuality, Anglo-centeredness'; 3) displaces dominant 'social conditions and processes' with social constructs currently rendered 'silent or invisible'; 4) distinguishes between 'activist Black feminists and conservative Black women scholars' and supports 'those who are committed to social change and [not] those who want fuller participation in systems as they exist'; 5) makes sharper distinctions between Black feminist scholars of different alliances and locations (social position, class-position, privilege, etc.) (p. 27f).

Dialectical journeys 'for long distances' and 'through homes', returns and 're-departures' (to one's heritage for example) enable the development of various new identities/subjectivities and homes[8] (p. 107; Trinh Minh-ha 1990). These complexes of critical resistance to patriarchy and creative theorisings of identities of self, home, community, nation (transnationally, transhistorically and crossculturally) are present in Black women's writings (drama, poetry and narrative). Apart from briefer readings of numerous other writings by Black women, Boyce Davies illustrates it in her thorough (re-) reading of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970) and her intertextual tracings of representations of experiences in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), *Daughters* (1991), Jamaica Kincaid's *At the Bottom of the River* (1983), *Annie John* (1985) *Lucy* (1991), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986), Marita Golden's *Migrations of the Heart* (1983), *Long Distance Life* (1990) and Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979).

In the southern African experience of migratory moves to the cities (to provide labour for the mining industry/because of natural disaster/in search of opportunity) or elsewhere (past forceful removals/evictions), the various forms of mobility/constraint which accompanied it impacted on Black women, men as well as families/groups of people. The constructive possibilities which these migratory pasts had/have for the creation of webs of significance, 'uprising textualities' in the female as well as the male contexts

[8] bell hooks (1984.19) says in this regard that the 'meaning of "home" changes with the experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times home is nowhere. At times one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting (p. 49)

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and more importantly for the migrant family/group, cannot be ignored. In her rereading of *Anowa*, Boyce Davies had the opportunity to expand her theorising to include such relationships.

Closely related to this issue is Boyce Davies's strategy of positively articulating 'migrancy' At base arising from slave labour, and the various forms of patriarchal oppression inducing 'homelessness' and 'unbelongingness' she turns 'migrancy' inside out, developing it positively as providing the avenues for the mobility through which critical relationality can in various situations develop in a web-like manner. Similar in strategy to Irigaray's (*Speculum*) of parasitic and ironic analogic mimicry, the question is whether this is politically effective: whether it does not, in its reproduction of the effects of male power and domination in 'migrancy'—even in its developing of 'uprising textualities'—leave the space open for male power to continue its domination in effecting migrancy in theory as well as in the material effects of male discourse for women[9].

The latter point raises the question whether Boyce Davies's critical theorising of the multiple identities/subjectivities of Black women has liberating potential in real terms for Black women in African contexts. I suggest that the challenge which her theory in our contexts has to address, is best formulated by Rose Waruhiu (1995:140):

> They [Black women] have been brought up to exhibit the perceived feminine qualities of compliance and harmony. If they shed these attributes, and step out of prescribed roles, they find themselves undermined and continually on the defensive. This impairs their ability to communicate their case They are diverted from 'concrete' issues; they cannot act decisively and forcefully without criticism. While they may deal with personal and emotional conflict privately, displaying such ability in public is seen as aggressive

The assumption of Waruhiu's question is that for many Black women in African contexts/cultures/households, their attempt (individually but arguably more importantly collectively) at opposing and displacing patriarchal culture(s) may meet with various fates. The only option remaining, then, is to continue in situations of 'homelessness' and 'unbelongingness' without positive results generated by 'uprising textualities'. It seems to me that here, Waruhiu is too pessimistic. As African Black women become more vocal in their writing/articulation of their experiences of colonialism, apartheid, various forms of patriarchy, we may find that much of what they have

[9] In this context, 'the object (of speculation) would lose its stability and thus unsettle the subject itself . If the woman cannot represent the ground, the earth, the inert or opaque matter to be appropriated or repressed, how can the subject be secure in its status as a subject?' (Moi 1988:136)

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already been doing during times of extreme duress, have created important alternative social bondings, economic strategies and structures, practices in fields of education, their families/group(s) (which may be quite different from western/white feminist theorisings of female identity).

Boyce Davies's theorisings provides important insights in how to articulate these alternatives constructively. In southern African academia, such approaches, as processes, may amount to more than yet another 'cultural dogma' (Said 1991:247). Important, however, is to trace particular resistances of uprising textualities as it impact(ed) on class and race systems. Here, hegemonic practices underlying society can constructively be replaced with strands resonating with many of Boyce Davies's views.

If the future was in the past the prerogative of men (Obbo 1981:143), the positionality of Black women's identities in Boyce Davies's theorising importantly suggests that it is now available for Black women writing their lives and speaking their identities. 'It is not everything you can say, but .. '.

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Caution: Disciplinary Intersection

Shane Moran

Review Article

Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-Century South Africa
by Leon de Kock.
Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, 1996, 231pp
ISBN 1868142981

Civilising Barbarians is concerned with 'cultural exchange' (p. 3) in a colonial context that dictated the terms of dialogue with such violence that oppressed interlocutors were forced to interpellate themselves within the deafening monologue of the coloniser. This involves tracing the interstitial 'mediation, subversion or mimicry' (p. 27) of the essentialising 'discursive edifice' of colonialist discourse. De Kock's project joins the work of those attempting to develop Edward Said's discourse-oriented approach to colonial history, and shares with Robert Young's *White Mythology* (1990) and *Colonial Desire* (1995), and Saul Dubow's *Illicit Union* (1995) a preoccupation with the doxography of colonialist discourse. The theoretical works of Michel Foucault, Clifford Geertz, Hayden White, Richard Rorty, Homi Bhabha, Mary Louise Pratt, and the American New Historicists are invoked to legitimate a focus on 'colonialist discourse on its own terms, and not as an adjunct to material history' (p. 22). Like Foucault, De Kock is concerned with the domination of human behaviour through the regular procedures imposed by the civilising process, here in form of the educative control of the Lovedale missionaries who implemented knowledge as power.

De Kock discusses the signifying dimensions of cultural exchange in a confessedly general and introductory work aiming 'to reveal the historical contingency and the literary constructedness of earlier attempts to pass discourse off as reality' (p. 27). His approach to the 'South African colonial order as a discursive event' (p. 21) is explicitly situated within the field of

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colonial discourse analysis that has produced John and Jean Comaroff's, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991), and Clifton C. Crais's, *The Making of the Colonial Order* (1992). The Comaroffs in particular are valued for their insistence on 'the subtle interplay of mutual influence and counter-influence between missionaries and their African interlocutors', a discourse in which 'hybrid forms of colonial identity emerged' (p. 13f,18). This approach is contrasted with an 'earlier emphasis on capital, class, and official politics' and is thought to be of more use than 'monolithic models such as a theory of class struggle' (p. 3,13). The new approach proceeds on the basis of 'a relationship between the "textual" and the "material" facets of history which recognises the discursive basis of historical depiction' (p. 25). Working with the 'more thoroughgoing sense of "historicism"' (p 37) associated with New Historicism is felt to be an improvement on ideology critique.

Despite being impatient with the category of class, De Kock is concerned to draw on the powerful Marxist critique of 'South Africans of English persuasion [who] have enjoyed the perception of themselves as purveyors of liberal cosmopolitanism' because

> if you listen to debates today, in the post-apartheid age, within organisations such as the English Academy of Southern Africa, for example, that benign history, and that convenient liberal opposition to apartheid, is still called upon as though the Marxist debate about English capital's deep collusion with apartheid never occurred. 'English' in its institutional forms often still wishes to present itself as innocent of a coercive colonial history for which it should bear any responsibility whatsoever (p. 191f)

He could have gone on to mention the neo-liberal stranglehold on English literary journals in this country. The critique of liberal complacency has marked out the best of De Kock's previous work which has shown him to be one of the more astute advocates of a critical engagement with theory. The present book shows his commitment to using theory to render explicit the presuppositions that underlie critical discourse. Whereas English literary studies looks at the results of colonisation in the form of 'black literature', De Kock significantly turns to 'describe some of the prior representational processes in which colonial subjectivity was negotiated' (p. 19) and from which 'black writing in English' and African nationalism emerged.

He attempts to fit theory to local concerns while problematising the referential presuppositions of standard histories, and so differs from those South African literary academics who dismiss theoretical concerns as marginal and congratulate themselves on having unmediated access to the primary materials that metropolitan theorists lack. This 'Disciplinary Intersection'—'the positioning of my research between literary theory and socio-historical enquiry' (p. 7)—is the contentious field he attempts to map

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in an ambitious and challenging work that invites debate. In taking up this invitation I am going to break with the usual protocols of reviewing since the interest of De Kock's primary material speaks for itself and will guarantee a readership. Rather I will limit my remarks to the following questions: What argument is made for the recognition of 'the discursive basis of historical depiction' and what does this mean for the 'material facets of history'? Once material history is marginalised what prevents the reduction of general social conditions to the experience of individual subjects taken to represent a commonality of experience? What is the genealogy of the focus on discourse?

De Kock concedes that *Civilising Barbarians* is one narrative among others, but one that can claim a 'greater degree of discursive reflexivity', 'the (unfair) advantage of metacritical awareness' (p. 27). Relativism is avoided because '[n]ot all accounts are equal', and De Kock claims 'certain affirming values' (p. 27) for his own account. He gives two reasons for this, firstly a claim to linguistic self-consciousness:

> there are important interpretive turns in my argument in which I fashion my own literary tropes to reconfigure the history under discussion in terms opposed to and different from its surface narratives (p. 26).

Secondly, an argument from historical omniscience:

> That is, one has the advantage of hindsight and review along with developments in theories of knowledge and historiography (which are historically embedded) (p. 27).

> In discussing such an order of discourse from the point of view of the late twentieth century, one has the advantage of sharing in theoretically sophisticated skepticism about metanarratives and totalising discourses in general (p. 76).

Affirming the value of writerly self-consciousness before the rhetoricity of language is itself a familiar trope with a history—one which always has its own blind-spot. However, isn't self-consciousness more than a writerly trope when the documents to be studied are the artifacts of black reaction to a colonising oppressor discourse? Surely methodological issues are joined by a moral imperative to respect the particularity of these counter-hegemonic traces; an imperative that is in tension with the pedagogical and theoretical need to use these texts as evidentiary *exemplum* and to generalise rules and norms of the greatest explanatory value? Isn't this situation itself historically and institutionally structured since the authorised academic persona is itself part of the historical process of oppression and dispossession under scrutiny? Even when one writes 'against the grain of that history's own legitimating

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terms' (p. 26) one is still writing with the historically complicit institutional validation of one's authorship.

With this in mind I am unclear as to why De Kock claims that 'metacritical awareness' is the preserve of contemporary writers and 'never available to historically embedded subjects who feature in this study' (p. 27). This contentious proposition effectively elides the very subject De Kock claims to be addressing, namely 'the orthodoxy of English as a dominant medium of educational discourse in South Africa', and the institutionalisation of this discourse 'that was won by blood' (p. 29f). Surely the presumption of 'metacritical awareness' by the interpreter pre-empts the

> question of how institutional forms of English teaching, including university teaching, continued to be a central facet in the colonising process (p. 191).

The answer to this question is already prejudged: the 'metacritical awareness' that comes with theory can enable the contemporary author to transcend ideological complicity. This is a challengeable position, not least because the vantage point of historical presentism is itself a trope of teleological supremacy integral to colonialist discourse. It also begs the question of the institutionalisation of theory in the specific disciplinary context of the South African academic division of labour; the institutionally amenable role of theory as a discourse of mastery, with its own canon of representative theorists, in the bureaucratisation of knowledge in the university.

De Kock limits the field of investigation to 'narratives of what are taken to be facts and not unmediated facts themselves', correctly pointing out that 'history is both discourse and event', and stresses that there is 'always *some* purchase on reality' (p. 25):

> But the point bears emphasising that there is often an artificial distinction between the 'text' and its 'background', and between 'texts' and 'history' (p. 37)

Such a New Historicist approach is contrasted with 'the historian's socio-empirical analysis'. Unlike the latter, the new historicism 'does not pretend to offer strictly diachronic and meticulously detailed empirical research on a micro-area of study' (p. 77,19). Now, the problem is that socio-historical analysis forms the basis for the Marxist revisionist historical accounts that De Kock wishes to supplement with analysis of discursive representation. De Kock draws on the explanatory power of the Marxian critique of liberalism at the same time as he questions its legitimacy. What is surprising is that no discussion of the limitations of revisionist arguments is given; they are simply homogenised as reducing everything to class and taken to be

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superseded by a more powerful hermeneutic model that takes as its object 'discourse' rather than 'materialist history':

> To understand the constitution of the country as a particular configuration of differential relations involving land, power and culture, one needs more than the materialist version of history in which relations and forces of production and their articulation in social classes are explained (p 8)

Apparently one doesn't need to argue for post-Marxism any more. Indeed the representation of simplistic Marxists with their reductive oppositions and monological narrative curiously resembles the strategy of the Lovedale missionaries who, though they were making empirical reports, were really enmeshed in metaphorical constructs determined by a rigid binary structure:

> Typical of neo-classical, empirical rendering of knowledge, their [the missionaries] mission was never to discover heterogeneity, but always to confirm pre-existent notions of the nature of 'reality' which they regarded as objectively true (p. 82f).

A linear narrative of academic progress assures that the revisionists, like the missionaries, have given way to more sophisticated theorists, and the Comaroffs and Crais have supplanted Legassick *et al.* But this narrative can cut the other way, as when Legassick's critique of liberalism is reduced to a recent publication so that he can said to be 'following' (p. 191) Crais and Keegan: Legassick, of course, published his seminal work in 1972 and 1974. A footnote pointing to Legassick's (1993) *South African Historical Journal* review of Crais's book claims that Legassick responded with 'apparent approval' to the 'fresh synthesis' (p. 200) in South African history. This is one possible interpretation of Legassick's muted and troubled review, but is hardly enough to justify the presupposition of discourse theory superseding materialist historiography. Neither does it take account of the more critical responses of Shula Marks and Jeff Peires to Crais's hermeneutic, which evidence the uneasy relationship between materialist historiographers and the newer discourse-oriented approach; 'nagging doubts', as Marks (1993:314) calls them.

The place of discourse analysis in South African historiography is treated by De Kock as if it did not have any history. In fact resistance to materialist analysis has formed an important thread in South African socio-historical debates. In *The Shaping of South African Society* (1979) Elphick and Giliomee advanced a modified frontier tradition thesis, Fredrickson's *White Supremacy* (1981) emphasised racial attitudes, Rich focused on the tension between *White Power and the Liberal Conscience* (1984) and Thompson's *Political Mythology of Apartheid* (1985) linked ethnic identity and national

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identity. These historians looked at the historical dimension of ideas of ethnic and national supremacy integral to the ideology of apartheid, and distanced themselves from the reductionism of the materialist historians. J.M. Coetzee (1991) continued this line of argument by appealing to Thompson in his elaboration of the personality of apartheid to criticise the materialist reductionism of Marxist historiography. Put bluntly, the emphasis on the doxography of racist conceptions and the genealogy of the colonialist discourse, rather than its material context, is a thread that links writers marginalising the role of socio-economic forces to those currently foregrounding regimes of representation. The usefulness of the discursive approach in a South Africa marked by the nonracial aspects of colonialism, in which non-discursive forces still structure a nonracial version of apartheid, is questionable.

Awareness of the disciplinary context to Foucault's work suggests that De Kock's dehistoricisation of the Foucauldian inspired New Historicism is a way of granting it an unwarranted authority. The *ecole des Annales*, founded in 1929 by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, foregrounded the arbitrariness of the sign and drew out the interconnected nature of cultural forces of an epoch in terms of *mentalites*, a code word for culture. The *nouvelle histoire* of the *Annalistes* was a sociocultural history that attempted to uncover the deep structure of an epoch, and followed in the idealist tradition of cultural history rooted in the work of Burckhardt and Huizinga on the role of value forming elites. These historians prefigured the concerns and methodology of Foucault's *epistemes*, Geertz's cultural anthropology, Greenblatt's New Historicist wall to wall textuality, and the Comaroffs's dubious co-option of Gramsci's notion of hegemony for their historical anthropolgy. Although Foucault rejected the linkage of his project to the structuralism of Levi-Strauss and Piaget it is clear that the notion of 'discourse formations' extends the notion of epigenetic system to historical research, and so fulfils the mid-1960s hopes of Lucien Goldmann and A.-J Greimas that structuralism would revolutionise historiography. The rethinking of historiography has a history which reveals that the stress on discourse was, and is, but one highly contentious option among others.

De Kock omits to mention the substantial critiques of Michel Foucault[1],

[1] Gayatri Spivak (1983) goes so far as to argue that Foucault's strategy amounts to a complicity with dominating ideologies, and Homi Bhabha (1994.243) also notes the 'Eurocentricity of Foucault's theory of cultural difference [that] is revealed in his insistent spatializing of the time of modernity'. For Said (1988.9f) Foucault's 'Eurocentrism was almost total, as if history took place only among a group of French and German thinkers'. De Kock (p 200) references Foucault's theory of madness without any engagement with Derrida's well-known critique of Foucault's own binarism Trenchant objections by MacIntyre (1990) and others to Foucault's genealogical method are simply excluded

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Geertz, and New Historicism[2]. The work of anthropologist Geertz shares New Historicism's preference for 'thick description' (i.e., anecdote) and is the theoretical source for the New Historicist perception of the 'artificial distinction between text and context'. For Geertz (1973) the text of culture and cultural exchange enables us to see a dimension of our own subjectivity, and culture is both text and context at the same time. In Geertz's approach interpretive meaning swallows causal analysis and might serve a conservative political function. Perhaps theoretical reflexivity or metacritical awareness is not the only motivation behind the shift away from socio-economic analysis and towards cultural analysis. After all New Historicism has flourished in the period of ascendant U.S. hegemony that marked the conclusion of the cold war; a period in which the dominating super-power may have an interest in drawing attention away from the military and socio-economic elements of its domination. My point is that the very theories that De Kock draws upon are decontextualised to a degree that their filiations with Western hegemony and neo-liberal quietism are obscured[3].

[2] The central importance of Hayden White to de Kock's (p. 179-81) confusing theory of 'metaphorical discourse' as structuring antagonistic identities also raises questions. White's 'New Historicism' of the analytic tradition reduced history to written history, to the texts and practices of the historian. And what of the positive sense of metaphor stressed by Derrida, its drawing different elements into analogic participation on the basis of resemblance *rather than* identity an equivalence integral to translation? Those engaged in 'historical materialism' have sought to challenge the demotion of agency in Greenblatt's New Historicist Renaissance studies. The British theorists Jonathan Dollimore (1989) and Allan Sinfield (1992), in the tradition of Benjamin's 'historical materialism' and Raymond Williams's 'cultural materialism', have distinguished their programme of cultural studies from New Historicism on the grounds that without some form of Marxian materialism aiming at the transfiguration of existing material conditions historicisation simply confirms the omnipotence of ideology. Put at its most schematic New Historicists normalise their historical conjectures by contiguity, while cultural materialists seek to establish some form of causality. As Lynn Hunt (1990:102) notes of New Historicism the general stress on culture 'was a way of disengaging oneself from Marxism, or at least from the most unsatisfactory versions of economic and social reductionism'. From this perspective Robert Young's (1996:170) criticism of New Historicism for containing 'difference, but not deferral', and of being in need of 'a certain dislocating time interval', may not be the most incisive objection.

[3] Recall that for the New Historicist Stephen Greenblatt (1991.9) 'the momentous events of 1989 and 1990' mean that 'it is easier than at any time since the late fifteenth century to perceive all of the ways that Europe has a common culture and destiny' This unifying narrative of the events of 1989 is less convincing than accounts that focus on the complex mixture of imperialism, nationalism and class alignments in the context of the collapse of the Eastern Block. Greenblatt's grand narrative is an ideological component that contradicts Jameson's (1991:184) view that it is 'a shared writing practice rather than any ideological content or conviction that seems to mark [new historicism's] various participants'.

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One is, of course, free to take whatever is useful from the various theories on offer but one still needs to respect differences and engage in critical discussion of theories which have material and discursive contexts that shape their production and reception. Otherwise one risks granting authority and legitimacy to theorists who also function as reactionary ideologues. A striking example of this danger is De Kock's (p. 45) reference to the philosopher Richard Rorty, the libertarian champion of U.S. cultural supremacy, as the authority for the proposition that language is contingent. For Rorty what is right and just is pragmatically determined by what those in the dominant culture decide is right and just: the constitutive values of a culture and its traditions, which are always local and ethnocentric, determine what is and is not of value, and there are only ever good or bad ethnocentrisms. Rorty's cultural libertarianism, and the hypothesis of contingency, is linked to the fact of U.S. economic and military supremacy, and is part of an ideological position concerned to ensure that any 'common culture and destiny'[4] is one sanctioned by the U.S. Why the sensitivity of the South African academic to the ideological function of domestic intellectual discourse deserts him when reading metropolitan theorists is puzzling, particularly when the subject of analysis is supposed to be Western hegemony.

These disappointments in combination with the following infelicities suggest De Kock's poor treatment at the hands of his editors: 1) the lack of distinction between 'Western metaphysics', 'Western Enlightenment', 'Renaissance humanism' and 'Western modernity', 2) the presentation of 'race', 'representation', 'narrative' and 'metaphor' as if they too lacked a history, 3) the rudimentary philosophical error of conflating 'identity' with 'sameness' in the conceptualisation of Self and Other, 4) and the limited discussion of the gendered nature of colonial identity.

It seems to me that the massive task of disentangling the complex threads of Western discursive and material domination must also involve problematising the notion of 'exchange' in 'cultural exchange'. 'Exchange' here appears to operate by analogy with economic exchange but is in fact dependent upon *the prior institution of the socio-economic system* with its structuration by class and discourses. The very notion of 'cultural exchange'

[4] The prognosis of an emerging 'common culture and destiny' facilitated by an imperialising capitalism has precedents that include Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* (1910), and the 1914 work of the Czech Karl Kautsky who gave a Marxist interpretation to Angell's optimistic scenario of the Great Powers realising that war was not in their economic interests. In 1915 Lenin (1986:198) offered the following observation the notion of 'ultra-imperialism' 'implies a tremendous *mitigation* of the contradictions of capitalism' The same can be said of Greenblatt's vision of a common European culture and destiny

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condenses an analogy that erases the history of economic discourse, and the relation of aesthetic and critical discourse to the commodification of the market and emergence of 'value'. If one wants to avoid complicity with neo-liberals acting as though the Marxist critique of English liberalism never occurred, then socio-economic analysis must remain an important element in any account of hegemonic ideologies aiming to demonstrate that racial capitalism was as much a cultural system as an economic one. Otherwise discourse analysis is likely to join the liberal-pluralist project of revaluing the identities of dominated social groups on the evidence of testimony and personal experience, a project that can all too easily reduce politics to representation and deteriorate into an identity politics which loses sight of the social conditions that constrict subject positions.

Other theorists have learnt this lesson, perhaps too late. In the conciliatory introduction to his *Torn Halves*, Robert Young (1996:7) belatedly concedes that his own anti-Marxist work may have 'participated in a movement that became too successful. Oppression, exploitation, and poverty now strike without risk of systematic challenge'. This cautionary example should be borne in mind by those working towards the production of a theoretically informed study of oppressive discourses. But what I find more worrying is the dangerous lack of discourse between those of us sharing that goal with De Kock. This danger is, I think, attributable to the defensive and balkanised functioning of the various South African academic communities that makes negotiating disciplinary intersections so hazardous and so necessary. As 'historically embedded subjects' ourselves, English literary theorists cannot lay claim to anything but the most bitter historical irony when asserting 'metacritical awareness'.

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Book Reviews

The Black Diaspora

The Black Diaspora
by Ronald Segal
London: Faber and Faber, 1995, 477 pp
ISBN. 0-571-1601-1

Reviewed by Meredith M. Gadsby
Binghamton University

> It is this epic quality, of the commitment to endure and resist, surmount and create, and above all else to be free, that has informed the culture of the Black Diaspora. And it is the failure of so many blacks to value this culture in its integrity that in large measure keeps the Black Diaspora, and black America in particular, psychically so divided and subverted (p. 363)

This, according to Segal, is one of the most prevalent tragedies of African experience in the West.

In the preface to *The Black Diaspora*, Robert Segal makes it clear that his work is not intended for scholarship. The white Jewish South African scholar and activist argues that it is instead designed to catalyse interest in the study of African peoples amongst those with little knowledge of the subject or who are looking for a point of departure. The thirteenth of his twelve books (among them *The Race War*, *The Crisis of India*, and *The Americans*), it is decidedly

> mainly a synthesis that has drawn on the scholarship of others, with observations, a compass, and an argument of my own.

In no way a definitive text, it was written to bridge the gap between 'scattered' collections of essays and articles written by various scholars who succeeded only in 'tracing African tracks'. His was to be an entire text devoted to the development of the Black Diaspora from it's genesis in the Atlantic slave trade to the present day.

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Segal argues that his reason for titling his text *The Black Diaspora* was his intention to study the history of the Africans South of the Sahara who were sold into slavery. Moreover the *blackness* that he discusses took shape as a result of diaspora in connection with the racism and other forms of subjugation that supported and sustained slavery.

> This blackness came to include lighter complexions and any other features, such as lips, nose, and hair, which revealed traces of a black ancestry (p xiii).

Part One is a discussion of the genesis of the Atlantic slave trade in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle Passage, and the emergence of slavery in the Americas. Each chapter contains fragments that piece together the history of slavery in the new world. In a narrative that begins in Classical Greece and ends with the abolition of slavery in Cuba in 1886, Segal traces the history of slavery in the West leaning on the scholarship of Philip Curtin and Jan Vansina among others in his discussion. However, one is surprised not to see work by Caribbean historians such as Hiliary Beckles, Barbara Bush, and Brenda Stevenson who have written extensively on the complexities of interracial sexual relations that existed between the enslavers and the enslaved.[1] In the chapter devoted to slavery in the North American South entitled 'Alienable Rights' Segal submits that though

> [t]here were doubtless slave women who resisted inducements and were ready to risk being sold as sterile into harsher conditions rather than produce children for slavery, .. [t]he record suggests, however, that most bore children willingly, some of them influenced by the favor with which fecundity was rewarded (p 61).

One is forced to question the notion of 'voluntary' procreation within an institution that punished refusal to bear children with beatings and the threat of being sold to other plantations. The willingness to bear children for slavery could also be understood as fear coupled with a lack of willingness to be torn away from kin. (Segal does argue that sexual relationships with slaves were 'overwhelmingly' rape—p. 59.) Segal also argues that comparatively speaking, Southern slaves were not driven as hard as slaves in other parts of the hemisphere, that they were taken better care of, and were provided with a better diet.

Section Two, 'The Insurgent Spirit' deals with the history of organised revolt against slavery and therefore colonialism. Once again Segal provides brief discussions of slave resistance in North and South America and the

[1] For instance see Beckles's *Natural Rebels* and 'White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean', Brenda Stevenson's 'Distress and Discord in Virginia Slave Families, 1830-1860', and Barbara Bush's *Slave Women in Caribbean Society (1560-1838)*

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Caribbean. Section Three, 'Chains of Emancipation' is an exploration into the circumstances surrounding emancipation in each slaveholding colony and the conditions that awaited free men and women of colour.[2] As has been argued by many scholars of diasporic history, the economic conditions that followed the abolition of slavery differed very little from those that existed prior. The chains of slavery merely became the chains of emancipation as free people were forced to continue working as plantation labourers. On the small island of Barbados, for example, the gradual move towards emancipation via the apprenticeship system at first entailed only the emancipation of children under the age of six. All other emancipated slaves were to continue working for their former owners as apprentices for a term of four to six years. The small flat island was all but covered with plantations, severely limiting the amount of available land for cultivation and escape into the hills. Segal carries his discussion of post-emancipation Barbados into the early 1980s. Subsequent chapters continue with brief chronological developments of slave colonies from emancipation to the recent present, including a discussion of Blacks in Britain from the sixteenth century to the present. (This is the only mention of the Black British in the text.)

'Travels in the Historic Present' (Section Four) is just that—Segal's own personal reflections of travels made throughout different regions of the diaspora. Generally sharp insights are marred by highly subjective generalisations of the peoples he encounters based on discussions with a few people in each of the regions discussed. The chapter entitled 'The Bajan Cage' bears in its title and content a disturbing relationship to highly exotic descriptions of the Caribbean and Caribbeans found in colonial travel narratives. Juxtaposed with a critical discussion of class stratifications on the island are confusing assessments of Barbadian culture. For example Segal writes:

> Despite the reputation of Barbados for interracial accommodation, the reality is *bizarre* .... The working day brings black and white together and ends at 6 o'clock with their departure for effectively segregated residential areas. Social crossing of the border at private functions ... is said by some Bajans to be increasing but admitted by the same Bajans to be still rare At least two white clubs are widely known to bar Bajan Blacks. A small group of visiting Jamaican blacks succeeded in gaining entry to one of them, but only after providing proof of their foreign identity. My informant, a prominent Jamaican journalist who was one of the group, was even more startled when she subsequently broached the

[2] See for instance *Black Reconstruction* in American: 1860-1880 by W E B DuBois, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* by Eric Foner and 'An Empire Over the Mind: Emancipation, Race, and Ideology in the British West Indies and the American South' by Thomas Holt.

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> issue with black Bajans. '*Why should we mind?*' they responded. '*We don't want* to mix with them' (p. 291).

Why is this phenomenon bizarre? Does it not exist in other parts of the atmosphere and world? If the bizarre nature of the phenomenon is located in the denial of Black entry into a night-club situated in the capital of an all Black republic, then his point is well taken. But given his earlier discussions of the history of the Black diaspora (slavery, colonialism, emancipation, decolonization) and the contemporary economic disparities and social and racial stratifications existent in Barbados and globally, why should Black refusal to integrate *into* spaces guarded by what George Lipsitz refers to as 'the possessive investment in whiteness'[3] when they have their own spaces and institutions seem odd?

Segal endeavours to end the text on a triumphant note in the fifth and final section, 'Selections from an Anatomy of Achievement'. In it he celebrates the Black Diaspora's contribution to the world in the area of arts (namely music, painting), literature, languages, and sports. The chapter 'An Ear for Music' catalogues the variety of musical forms created by Black peoples as a direct result of diaspora from spirituals, to blues and jazz in the United States, the evolution of samba in Brazil, salsa in Afro-Latin New York, merengue in the Dominican Republic, calypso in the anglophone Caribbean, and zouk in the francophone Caribbean, and African based belief systems. 'The Innocent Eye' examines painting and sculpture. In 'Voices' Segal explores the Black diasporic conquest of colonial languages by chewing up that which was force fed and spitting out entirely new languages into the face of the coloniser. His discussion of Black participation in sports in 'The Outstretched Arm' lapses into back-handed complement:

> Sport should essentially be a measure of individual human striving and achievement. *Yet it is not altogether irrelevant to consider what it is that accounts* for the disproportionate dominance by Diaspora blacks. The question is certainly asked. One answer, which does not descend to Hitler's explanation of a 'primitive' and 'jungle' ancestry, nonetheless argues that there is a decisive genetic element involved: that slaves were selected from the physically strongest Africans, and that it was mainly the strongest of slaves who survived the tribulations of the ocean crossing and the subsequent ill-treatment and excessive labor demands (p. 425).

Though this statement does not descend to a Hitlerian level, it is merely a few notches above.

[3] See George Lipsitz's 'the Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the "White" Problem in American Studies'.

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It is quite interesting to note that Segal's first choice of an author for the text refused the offer with the comments 'such a book needs a hundred scholars working for twenty years'. Segal's response was that such a venture would 'end up with a directory, doubtless with its own value', when what he had in mind was 'the adventure of a single mind' (p. xii). This exchange calls to mind the incredible amounts of time, scholarship, and energy the late sociologist and Pan-Africanist thinker W. E. B. DuBois invested in the compilation of the *Encyclopedia of African History*, which to this day remains unfinished. Too important a task to leave to just one scholar, DuBois instead called on some of the best writers and thinkers the Black Diaspora had to offer in this massive undertaking. Segal, however, claims that he himself has the knowledge at his disposal and enough love for the Black Diaspora (p. xv) to embark upon the writing of this much needed text.

When Segal presented the synopsis of *The Black Diaspora* to one publisher in New York City, the publisher expressed enthusiasm for the subject matter of the text but promptly told Segal that the only problem was that Segal is white. As a friend to the late African National Congress leader Oliver Tambo and publisher of *Africa South* (an anti-racism and anti-apartheid international quarterly), who was subsequently expelled from his country and forced into exile for his anti-apartheid activities, Segal was deeply offended. Segal is also the founder of the Penguin African Library. Though it can be argued that racial identity does not inhibit one's ability to competently write and research history, one must bear in mind that no works, scholarly or otherwise, are ever written in a vacuum. The subjective realities in which authors live inevitably affect their relationships to the people, places, and histories represented in their texts. Segal's love for and commitment to retelling the story of the African diaspora do not preclude his racial, economic, and social location as a white South African Jewish male.

With the writing of *The Black Diaspora* Segal accomplished his goal, however flawed. Much of his well written text suffered from periodic generalisations, particularly in Section Four of the text. Also, his arguments might have been helped by a discussion of Black diasporic gendered identities (much of which has been written about by various scholars) in this section. Despite his love for the Black Diaspora and his desire to tell its story, his work falls prey to some of the politics which he had hoped to avoid.

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Inventing Cultural Identities in African, African-American, and Caribbean Drama

Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African-American, and Caribbean Drama
by Tejumola Olaniyan
New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 196 pp.
ISBN: 0-19-509405-0 (hb); 0-19-509406-9 (pbk).

Reviewed by Meredith M. Gadsby
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Tejumola Olaniyan's intervention into the recent scholarship on theatre and cultural studies, African Diasporic Studies, postcolonial studies, and gender studies orbits around five central questions:

a) Can a truly authentic black cultural identity be symbolised in European languages and according to European modalities? b) Why is the language question an issue at all for African-American and Caribbean dramatists, whose languages bear no such radically disjunctive relations to English as is the case with Africans? c) Do we need an epistemological shift from the West? d) How do Black peoples create/recreate/explore cultural identities through and in performance? and e) Who and what are these performances for?

Olaniyan insightfully explores the dramatic artistry of Wole Soyinka, Amiri Baraka, Derek Walcott, and Ntozake Shange for answers to these questions. This impressive study is a comparative exploration into the ways that African, African American, and Caribbean dramatists embark upon 'the black quest for cultural identity' (p. 140) using theatrical performance as their means of expression. As this quest coincides with 'the break up of Empire and the birth of political decolonization and general critical interrogation of European cultural hegemony', (p. 140) it is at the same time (as reflected by the title of the text) a scar and a mask: a scar of conquest and a mask of resistance (p. 140). Therefore, violence perpetuated on the collective historical, physical and mental bodies of diaspora Africans by the

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combined history of slavery, colonisation, neo-colonisation, and decolonization has inscribed Black people with a mark of cultural *difference*. This difference is mediated by both Blackness and domination:

> Blacks across the three continents studied are questing for cultural identity not because they are black but because they are black and dominated (p. 140).

This quest then reflects first, a critique of a Eurocentric understanding of difference that locates blackness as anathema, and second, a movement toward a resistant cultural identity that progresses toward an epistemological shift, moving from a Eurocentric space to a liberating Post-Afrocentric space.

In his investigation of the 'refashioning of the cultural self in the drama of English-speaking peoples of African origin cross-culturally and cross-continentally' (p. 3). Olaniyan begins with a discussion of the concept of discourse. He argues that one cannot begin to discuss 'African' or 'Black' cultural identity, drama, or theatre without examining the competing discourses out of which they arise and with whom they compete. Discourse is here defined as a multiple, dispersed and contradictory practice of constructing reality. At the level of discourse, battles over the framing and definition of reality determines which discourses become privileged or subordinated. The formation of societies is fraught with competition between discursive practices in a constant struggle over the power to name, and thereby define the parameters of subjectivity. Chapter one is an explication of the historical construction of African diasporic dramatic forms, broken down into three categories of discursive formations: hegemonic Eurocentric, counter-hegemonic Afrocentric, and emerging post-Afrocentric. Olaniyan situates these discourses within a history of contestation and struggle between themselves for mastery/destruction of the other. He also contextualises them, placing Eurocentric discourse in the context of the rise of empire, enslavement of Africans, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and ongoing imperialism, and Afrocentric and post-Afrocentric discourse in the context of slave rebellions, waves of decolonization/arrested decolonization and contemporary assaults on the hegemony of Western culture.

Olaniyan examines the dramatic works of Soyinka, Baraka, Walcott, and Shange through the lens of

> the conflictual interaction of three discursive formations. a hegemonic, colonialist, *Eurocentric* discourse distinguished by its prejudiced representation of black cultural forms, an anticolonialist, *Afrocentric* counterdiscourse preoccupied with subverting the Eurocentric and registering cultural autonomy; and a budding, liminal, interstitial discourse that aims at once to be both anticolonialist and *post-Afrocentric* (p 4).

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The dramatists' work exemplifies the possibility of creating an empowering post-Afrocentric space, a space that critiques, challenges, and radically revises Eurocentric narratives of modernity. Olanayin submits,

> In showing us that the space and its attendant performative conception of cultural identity are possible, the question they ask, I think, is whether the space can really flourish without its own supporting structures, that is, within still Eurocentric institutions ... (p 139)

These institutions language, genre, artistic value, the theatre, Western-style education and its institutionalised modalities of canonisation continue to define the politics of publication of many articulations of Black subjectivity in all genres.

Chapter Three, entitled 'Wole Soyinka: 'Race Retrieval' and Cultural Self-Apprehension' takes us through what Soyinka understands as the process of claiming and registering 'the presence of a culture whose reference points are taken from within the culture itself' (p. 44). Olaniyan discusses how this process, called race retrieval is implemented in Soyinka's works, namely *Death and the King's Horsemen* and the essay 'The Fourth Stage: Through the Mysteries of Ogun to the Origin of Yoruba Tragedy'. This essay, which Olaniyan argues might very well be Soyinka's greatest contribution to the philosophy of culture, contains the main motivational thrust of the dramatist's work:

> the sources and roots of African literary creativity, even cultural and cognitive modes characteristic of a continuously changing and lived and critical criteria form African sources, epistemologies, cosmologies; and the general move away from European thought-systems except as illuminating analogies to concepts and principles locally derived.

To exemplify this point Soyinka's examination of the birth of Yoruba tragedy begins with the original Yoruba tragedy located in the myth of Ogun. Departing from the Western conception of the evolution of tragedy as discussed by Fredrick Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Soyinka writes that the study of tragedy must be culturally specific, with a knowledge of the world view of the culture out of which it was born. He forwards a theoretical approach to the philosophy of culture that displaces Western (Greek) dramatic traditions as the primary source of drama and tragedy against which all other traditions must be measured. Viewing Yoruba tragedy through the lens of Greek tragedy ignores the relationship between Yoruba notions of cyclical time, the simultaneity of language, music, and poetry, the manifestations of past and future in the lives of the living in the myth of Ogun. In this myth Ogun, the deity in the Ifa pantheon of gods who (among

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many other things) is the essence of creativity (urge and instinct), humane restoration of justice, and guardian of man ascends into the pantheon after having twice committed suicide in an act of penance for the crime of murdering his kin out of misdirected anger. Ogun sacrifices himself in an attempt to restore the harmonious balance between existences that he had disturbed in this act of desecration of nature. He then falls into a spiritual abyss, the 'transitional essence'. For the Yoruba, this is the original tragedy, which embodies the horror of disconnection from one's cultural and spiritual identity and the battle of the combative will to piece oneself back together. Unlike Nietzsche's representation of the Greek tragedy in which the Greeks created a fictional world on stage where real life tragic dilemmas were acted out and resolved, Yoruba tragedy reaches into the essence of the everyday experience of a people, out of a collective spiritual consciousness of the simultaneous existence of gods, men, and the cycle, of life death and rebirth. Whereas the Greek tragedy involves divine resolution from a god or gods who pass judgement on and deliver resolution to the world of man from above, the Yoruba tragedy is in essence the tragedy of the separation of god(s) and man from one another and/or estrangement from the harmony that exists in a complementary relationship between existences.

Olaniyan continues that another important aspect of Soyinka's philosophy of culture nee African cultural identity is his proposition of a heterogeneous, contradiction ridden modern African world. This proposition exists as a challenge to Black nationalist notions of a monolithic Africa, particularly against Senghorian Negritude. Committed to exorcising 'the boring romanticism of the negro', Soyinka's dramas provide complex portraits of African life in which characters struggle with themselves, one another, and the West. In giving voice to this struggle Soyinka contributes to the creation of a post-Afrocentric space.

The notions of contradiction and struggle with the self and the West in the post-Afrocentric West exemplify the work of Derek Walcott. 'Derek Walcott: Islands of History at a Rendezvous with a Muse' investigates what seems to be the best example of the contradictory nature of the struggle for cultural identity in the work of an artist whose work bears all of the markings of the tragedy and triumph of New World African identity. Walcott's quest for Caribbean cultural identity involves a rearticulation of history as myth, the struggle with the English language as both a tool of and weapon against European cultural hegemony, and the psychological battle of the colonised to resist the internalisation of the coloniser's definitions of cultural difference. His critique of the West revolves around an understanding of difference that does exactly what poet and essayist Audre Lorde warned us against in *Sister Outsider*—using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house. Instead of deprivileging the English language as a tool of cultural imperialism,

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Walcott instead embraces it in such a way as to honour his difference as a triumph of Caribbean cultural identity. Olaniyan writes,

> For him, it is not so much the rage of Caliban that is important as the beauty of his speech—as if one could separate the speech from what it utters, as if rage necessarily corrupts beauty (p. 115)

As such, Walcott has offered strong critiques of Caribbean writers who came of age during the Caribbean Black Power movement such as Edward Kamau Brathwaite who attempted to locate and reclaim the importance of African culture, language and history in the modern Caribbean. Embodied in what Walcott calls mulatto aesthetics is the opposition between history and myth and history as politics, a distinction that Olaniyan doubts is even possible to make. Mulatto aesthetics involves a syncretism of history as myth and the Adamic vision, or the 'annihilation of what is known' (p. 101). For, according to Walcott, history has never mattered in the Caribbean; what matters is the recreation of history, the creation and development of the Caribbean *man* who has reinvented himself in spite of the violence of history (enslavement, Christianity, and loss of language). For Walcott, therefore, to lament (literarily) what the Caribbean *man* has lost is a thankless and pathetic exercise; what is much more important is the celebration of our difference in challenge of its degradation by the West.

Walcott's dramatic artistry entails then the process of renaming, recreating Caribbean identity that is always reflective of an unproblematised relationship with history and Europe. In so doing, he deprivileges, however aspects of Caribbean culture that are part and parcel of the process of identity recreation, namely carnival and calypso. These two cultural media have been indispensable to his dramatic art. Walcott reads carnival and 'folk culture' through the eyes of one whose worship of European culture has caused him to look with an ambivalent aristocratic scorn at aspects of his own culture. The spectacular performativity of class, racial, and sexual politics found in carnival and carnival culture in the Caribbean is according to Walcott vulgar and in need of refinement. For Olaniyan, Walcott's dramatic art involves what the latter understands as a refinement, an elevation of Caribbean cultural identity to a high art that rivals European culture in its greatness. In 'Leroi Jones/ Amiri Baraka: The Motion of History' (Chapter Four) Olaniyan moves into a discussion of just the literary enterprise that Walcott works against. For instance, in a review of *Dutchman and the Slave* in 1965, Walcott called Baraka's politically charged theatre 'The Theater of Abuse'. Despite this and numerous similar criticisms, Olaniyan argues that 'the vision governing Baraka's performative work is that of art as practice. Where Walcott's notion of difference is cloaked in a

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parallel notion of sameness, Baraka's representation of difference embodies an oppositional, confrontational, and polemical stance. Borrowing from Barbara Ann Teer, founder and director of the National Black Theater, Olaniyan uses the word-concept *decrudin* to describe Baraka's construction of an African American cultural identity. *Decrudin* is defined as 'the process of refusing subjection and reforming subjectivity, a conscientising (consciousness raising) pedagogy that is at once critical and visionary' (p. 71). Its primary purpose is to (ritually) cleanse the audience of the cumulative effects of forced marginalisation, the result of which is 'positive self-appreciation and reformed subjectivity'. Olaniyan continues that Baraka's participation in the decrudin process has placed him at the forefront of revolutionary theoretical interventions: Black Cultural Nationalism, Marxism, the development of a Black Aesthetic, and the development of a Jazz Aesthetic. In one of his most read essays, 'The Revolutionary Theatre', Baraka argues that the revolutionary theatre is a new theatre of the 'victim' who will confront their victimisers on stage. It will be a theatre that white people of any ideological character will hate, and that is fine, for the revolutionary theatre will hate them right back for hating in the first place. Language in this theatre will be transformed from a language that serves 'tired white lives' into one that creates a new world view from the bowels of Blackness and Black subjectivity.

It is interesting that Baraka's conceptualisation of 'The Revolutionary Theater' marks a movement away from a notion of art as disconnected from politics to an art that practices politics, a politics of the marginalised masses. After being labelled a 'cowardly bourgeois individualist' in Cuba by a Mexican delegate during the July 26, 1960 celebrations, Baraka deserted his colleagues in the Beat Movement and his white wife. He moved to Harlem, founded the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School (BART/S) where he began to put his theories into praxis. This move is the first implementation of his Black aesthetic project, which entailed a celebration/valorisation of Blackness, a denigration of whiteness, cultural nationalism, cultural and racial separatism, celebration of urban Black cultural forms and language, and a search for 'authentically black techniques' (p. 82). By 1974, Baraka's task as a Black revolutionary writer had changed. In true post-Afrocentric style, his work moved away from a preoccupation with binarisms based on white vs. black to a 'strategic performative identity articulating the complexities of gender, race, class, ... international solidarities', and history (p. 87). During this period Baraka became a devout Marxist, which he remains to this day. Olaniyan locates Baraka's work during his Bohemian and cultural nationalist stages as part of his expressive identity, whereas his current Marxism is illustrative of the performative. The corpus of Baraka's work is post-Afrocentric in its exemplification of the principle of change, of constant negotiation and renegotiation of boundaries, of ideologies and political

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approaches. With each change in approach and politics, Baraka's practice plays out the principles of decrudin.

Despite his shifts in thought and politics, Baraka's post American/ post-Afrocentric space makes little room for a complicated discussion of gender and sexuality. Though his most recent Marxist phase he alleges to examine the complexities of gender, race, class, etc., his theory of cultural identities fails to include a complicated exploration of constructions of Black male and female subjectivity. Each of the three dramatists aforementioned neglect, in their discussions of *difference*, to discuss gender. Olaniyan argues that each also never really escapes their preoccupation with difference and 'its affirmation against Eurocentrism's definition of it as deviance'. Difference becomes an unproblematised category that, when the West or the Euro-American world disappears, also disappears.

> It is as if the multiple constitutive differences of the dominated cultures have little or no bearing on the great project of formulation resistant cultural identity against Western imperialism (p. 117).

In the works of Soyinka, Baraka, and Walcott, then, the politics of Black cultural identity is a masculine politics, in which women participate as 'Maidens, Mistresses and Matrons' (Carole Boyce Davies), the 'proper' black women (read servile), or clichés (Elaine Fido), respectively. Olaniyan, then posits Ntozake Shange as the only one of the dramatists discussed in the text whose work truly creates a post-Afrocentric space. Shange's work presents a gender-informed Black cultural identity, that simultaneously engages Eurocentric discourses and male dominated Afrocentric counterdiscourses.

Shange defines her contribution to the discourse on cultural identity as 'combat breathing'. Borrowed from Frantz Fanon's use of the term in an appendix to the essay 'Algeria Unveiled' in *A Dying Colonialism*, combat breathing is characterised as a weapon of the dominated that is used against 'the involuntary constrictions n amputations of their humanity' (p. 121). Olaniyan likens Shange's project of simultaneously challenging 'the hegemony of Western culture and interrogation of the subdominant, male-centred discourse of black difference' (p. 122) to that of Algerian women who during the struggle against French colonialism transformed the veil into camouflage and battle fatigue against French colonialism and challenged the traditional constructions of womanhood symbolised by veiling. Probably her most famous example of combat breathing is the choreopoem *for colored girls. for colored girls* makes room within the post-Afrocentric space for the voices of young Black girls in collective Black feminist and individual resistance to an external and internal environment that is often hostile to their very existence. The seven girls, named after each of the colours of the

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rainbow, give testimony to the crimes of humanity and gender oppression committed against each of them, and join forces to struggle and heal themselves, collectively. Against the Afrocentric universalist notion of one monolithic Black cultural and communal identity, Shange posits 'singularity', the individual experience of one woman, whose difference as such is weapon against oppression.

As do Soyinka, Walcott, and Baraka, Shange uses language as a weapon against cultural hegemony. Much to Walcott's horror, she shatters the English language with her 'verbal gymnastics'. In rebellion against discursive rationalisation and a force-fed, dehumanising language, she refuses to use capital letters or standard punctuation. Unlike Walcott's Caliban who appropriates the master's tongue and uses it against him, Shange's Sycorax rises from the ashes to speak of an experience and history erased by masculinist cultural discourse in a language all her own. She argues,

> i can count the number of times i have viscerally wanted to attack deform n maim the language that i waz taught to hate myself in/ the language that perpetutates the notions that cause pain to every black child as he/she learns to speak of the world & the self. '... in order to think n communicate the thoughts n feeling i want to think n communicate/i haveta fix my tools to my needs/ ... i have to take it apart to the bone/ so that the malignancies/ fall away/ leaving us a space to literally create our own image' (p. 126)

Shange's art, dramatic and poetic, is wrapped in a politics of black feminist cultural identity.

Olaniyan presents an important intervention into the study of Afri-Diasporic drama. His comparative study of the four dramatists chosen provides valuable insight into the struggle of Black dramatists to fashion an empowered cultural identity. His own critiques of the authors coupled with that of scholarship of noted literary theorists provides a rich context and historical background for the works discussed. Most impressive is Olaniyan's ability to clearly convey the necessary tension inherent in Afri-Diasporic and post-Afrocentric cultural identity: the struggle to theorise around and away from the reality of one's relationship to the West with the knowledge of the immutable fact of one's Western-ness. Olaniyan argues that cultural identities are created and performed in socio-political spaces subject to constant contestation, confrontation, and changes. Black cultural literary expression and dramatic performance as exemplified in the works of Wole Soyinka, Amiri Baraka, Derek Walcott, and Ntozake Shange constitute mutually dependent sites of New World African resistance.

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Southern African Literatures

Southern African Literatures
by Michael Chapman
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The connotation 'South Africa Literature' is metonymical for the literatures of South Africa. If there are eleven languages as the South African Constitution states then one can expect that there would be at least eleven literatures—rather than the two literatures (Afrikaans and English) that have been empowered through colonialism and apartheid. The 1993 concise historical perspective of Bhekinkosi Ntuli and Chris Swanepoel, *Southern African Literature in African Languages*, lists nine written literatures, with modern productions in Xhosa, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Zulu, Setswana and Tsonga. But white monolingual, even bilingual (Afrikaans, English), literary historians know nothing about these texts.

After reading Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures* one does not learn much more about these 'other' literatures. He does not use, or even mention, Ntuli and Swanepoel. In undertaking a history of literatures one should—it seems obvious—be able to read texts in these languages (although Albert Gérard apparently didn't?). There are, I suppose, very few, if any, persons with the necessary knowledge of the eleven languages, their literatures and literary theory in general, to be able to write a history of all this. A team of writers would probably only manage an encyclopaedic project, where no basic theory is necessary, only the facts about writers and their productions. This Chapman admits, but prefers his own 'particular view' (p. xx).

The matter of language is crucial. A fact which Chapman admits in more than one instance (cf. ' ... a challenge facing South Africa in the future is the resuscitation of African-language literature as an intelligent, adult activity' p. 216), yet he asks whether it is not inevitable that English becomes the 'metonymic master-code' (p. xx). This is no doubt true; but then one should guard against the imperialism which seems to be inevitable

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among monolingual English speakers. One could, for instance, deconstruct the manner in which 'Southern African Literature' is being appropriated for English by this history. The book is published by 'Longman Literatures in English Series', and the Series List includes Pre-Renaissance English Literatures, English Poetry, English Drama, English Fiction, English Prose, American Literature, and among 'Other Literatures' (the old colonial us-them dichotomy): Irish Literature since 1800, Scottish Literature since 1700, Australian, Indian ... in English, African ... in English, Caribbean and Canadian ... in English. 'Southern African Literatures' do not have the qualification 'in English'. That could mean that they are, by implication, in English, or that the history of these literatures is now written in English; English being a lingua franca, and everyone accepting that any literature of any worth will eventually land up and be canonised in English. Or—and this could be the most reasonable assumption—that the language in which this history is written does not really matter.

Unfortunately Chapman's history does not imply that. His monologic use of the term 'South African Literature' is a case in point. Some examples: Thomas Pringle in SALit (p. 87); rewriting SA literary history (implying only English, p. 97); Blackburn and SA thinking (p. 141); SA literature from 1910 to 1970 (where only English is meant, p. 147); increased literariness in the SA literary scene within the context of William Plomer's work (p. 183); how Plomer 'impinges on the South African literary scene' (p. 185); Van der Post and SA fiction (p. 187); South African literature in university syllabuses (p. 224, while African and Afrikaans literatures have their own departments at universities); the significance of *Drum* in SA literatures (p. 241). And he says 'in 1978 I began studying South African literature by considering, specifically, the poetry of Douglas Livingstone' (p. 423).

Chapman says that his *Southern African Literatures* contains his own particular view 'of the several distinct but interrelated literatures of southern Africa'; that defining national literatures within such a context is problematic; that his method is comparative and the arrangement mostly chronological; that it is not an encyclopaedic survey (which would have to be undertaken by a team of scholars), and that the source material is taken mostly from English translations or commentaries, where the originals were not written in English.

In his summary at the end of the project—'should this study find itself the subject of literary, social or educational debate' (p. 430)—he gives what one could consider as the four main objectives of his contribution: ' ... the need to rehabilitate identities, practices and aesthetic possibilities in the context of a just idea'; ' ... to examine the potential of a common humanism'; where subjects have become marginalised it has become necessary

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> to recover an 'African' justification for the accessibility .. of communication as well as for the moral agency necessary to effect change;

and the pragmatic situation at hand has determined theory (p. 430).

The key concepts here are: national literatures, a comparative method, chronological, identities, a just idea and moral agency, a common humanism, the African, the situation at hand. In examining these concepts or ideas one would have to problematise some of the following: one-nationness, identity, Africanness, the comparative method, the view of history, the moral, and material conditions as determinate.

Can there be one nation without a common language? Although cultures in their widest sense may differ, as languages differ, one may have to rethink the political and social dream of one nation where there will always be major and minor languages; and where major and minor does not refer to the number of speakers, but to the language of power. In South Africa English is becoming that language; and if the speakers of all the other languages will become excluded from the discourse of power their literatures will remain minor, and only accessible through translation into English. Becoming appendages to English literature; until everything is written in English. The shift has already begun: André P. Brink is writing his novels in English and Afrikaans, but in future he might as well write only in English. Ellen Kuzwayo, Matsemele Manaka, Mtutuzeli Matshoba, Zakes Mda, Es'kia Mphahlele, Mbulelo Mzamane, Njabulo Ndebele, Sipho Sepamla, Wally Serote, and Miriam Tlali, for instance, have been writing in English. Chapman cannot give enough information on writing in the 'indigenous languages', because only those who produce literature and read literatures in those languages have the knowledge, and we—the white theorists—have never learnt those languages and developed the theories to integrate the 'other' literatures into English. And should we, if the major African writers in our region have turned to English, and Afrikaans literature is still writing itself within its own and still powerful hegemony of publishers?

On the question of identity. What is a white African? 'To be a white African is, perhaps, to live and write if not exactly in contradiction, then in paradox' (p. 344) says Chapman with regard to Patrick Cullinan and Peter Horn. Is Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* South African or 'universal'? Are questions that he asks. Does a black African novel differ from that of a white African, because—as in the case of the Soweto novel—it is positive and hopeful, and the other often apocalyptic? And writers such as Breyten Breytenbach, a French and South African citizen? But he does not pursue the matter enough. He could still have asked about Elisabeth Eybers, a highly respected poet in Holland writing in Afrikaans. And Afrikaans? Is it Africanised, bastardised, Dutch?

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The question about identity is obviously led by the ideal of the unified nation, where our identity would be 'South African'. But if one asks what a white African is, one has to first qualify what an African is. This is a matter of genealogy, of beginnings, and of establishing identity as a stable and immutable phenomenon. Can this be unambiguously determined? Then there is also the term literature, with its genre divisions of novel, written poetry, drama based on Greek concepts. This is surely Western?

The comparative method cannot succeed unless all literature written in all languages of the country are known. I can only illustrate the deficiencies of his method with reference to some comparisons with Afrikaans literature.

His major critical reference to that literature seems to be Jack Cope, an English writer and critic. The authoritative literary histories of J C Kannemeyer are hardly mentioned, and his work is not even listed under the 'Notes on biography, important works and criticism'. Chapman's 'Story of the Colony' (Chapter 4) does not mention Karel Schoeman, and *Another Country* is read within the criticism of J.M. Coetzee. He talks of Sophiatown becoming Triomf, but has not taken note of the significant modern novel of Marlene van Niekerk, *Triomf*. The importance of the short story in black and white (English) fiction is mentioned, but not its equal significance in Afrikaans writing, especially the post-modern, subversive, stories of Koos Prinsloo. There are many more examples, and numerous factual errors (translations of titles: 'Oom Gert Vertel', *Skryt* as 'Screech'; authors and books: *Pa maak vir my 'n vlieër pa* was written by Chris Barnard, not Bartho Smit, and Smit did not write 'Euro-absurd' plays; misreadings, such as Opperman's *Joernaal van Jorik* being 'a hotch-potch of unresolved ideas', etc.).

The comparative method also forces one to compare the space allocated to writers. For instance, imbalances such as: one paragraph on Samuel Mqhayi, the father of modern Xhosa literature; about one page on the poetry of Breyten Breytenbach (only referring to one volume, *Skryt*, because apparently it seems the most political); almost four pages on one book of short stories by Mtutuzeli Matshoba, and the same amount of attention to all the work of J.M. Coetzee! Almost all younger Afrikaans writers since the 1980s have been left out. But the ultimate one-sidedness is the space allocated to Elisabeth Eybers. Apart from the fact that her name is spelt incorrectly (p. 193), she is reduced to an end-note, with scurrilous remarks on her as one of the many

> white middle-class women poets, for whom culture means the holiday cruise to the art museums of the Mediterranean and nature means the family household (p. 202, Afrikaans women, of course!).

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Eybers is a very talented poet. If one talks of literature as a specific discourse, one has to take note of the aesthetic in poetry as well. He has not read one of her poems. His comment in this end-note on one of her poems transforming the Boer woman and the war is nonsense. Reading this kind of comment one has to conclude that Chapman did not write in the 'spirit of reconciliation' when holding the moral high ground as critic. Perhaps most of his book was written before South Africa became democratised?

The chronological approach does not differ much from the treatment of texts in history in conventional literary histories (the best example being that of Kannemeyer). That is the teleological view of history, with beginning and 'development' towards an 'end', or with an end or purpose in view. History is not seen as fault, disruption, discontinuity, with no definite genealogy; but broadly in historical materialist terms, rather than discursively. The text is determined to a great extent by experience and society, with the emphasis on societies that have been oppressed. The task of the critic then becomes moral, a search for the just, often manifested in the desire to re-write or rehabilitate texts. The ideal of one-nationness and of reconciliation would then guide the analyses and the choice of texts. Political ideologies which could be considered liberatory and just are actively chosen by Chapman, for instance the insistence on introducing Steve Biko's philosophy of Black Consciousness as a key to reading the new black poetry (p. 337). He is therefore cynical of post-structuralism for its 'endless deferral of moral consequence' (p. 389), which ignores material conditions; and the personal story of Coetzee's main character in *Age of Iron* does nothing towards a 'national metaphor', whereas the absolute belief in rebirth in the Soweto novels are to be admired. (Perhaps Chapman needs to read Aijaz Ahmad's critique on Fredric Jameson's 'national allegories'.) This kind of criticism on literary experimentation and concern with the text in itself comes close to a sophisticated, morally justified, kind of socialist realism.

The extent to which historical materialism is practised in this study is also illustrated by the chronological genealogy of 'Literature and Historical Cultural Events in Southern Africa' at the end. This is interesting to read regarding the silences of literary events compared to historical matters. For instance, the latter half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth was the time of massive land appropriation by the colonists. But no texts, yet this was the beginning of the 1913 Land Act. The Dutch texts of mercantilism which are not mentioned may give some clues.

Because of his orthodox methodology causing periodisations of authors and their work Chapman often chooses representative authors for periods and forms of literary expression. Thereby canonising writers, such as Mtutuzeli Matshoba, and de-canonising others, such as many Afrikaans writers (Eybers, for instance, and Ernst van Heerden, Opperman, Schoeman,

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Anna M. Louw, Etienne van Heerden, Eben Venter, Lettie Viljoen). This is, of course, intentional in his endeavour to bring out the voices that have been silenced (and also admirable); but by silencing the heard voices the process of marginalisation is merely inverted and not deferred.

In his 'Author's Preface' Chapman says that he will tentatively suggest 'points of common reference'. He also quotes, with approval, from Isabel Hofmeyr that a history of South African literature should include

> the modes and discourses of all South Africa, be that discourse oral, be it in newspapers, archives, magazines and pamphlets, in a comprehension of the text as embodying social relationships (p. 421).

But yet, although his study is teeming with pointers, he nowhere considers reading literary expressions as statements within Foucauldian discursive formations—as literatures being statements producing constructs; and using literature as a creative indicator to write a history of textual formations in South Africa. This approach may be a synthesis of the materialist and the post-structuralist approaches.

In a country of disruptions and contradictions a history of texts could be approached by identifying discursive formations, where discontinuity is highlighted rather than the continuity implied by a teleological history.

The most exciting part of Chapman's study to me has been identifying these discursive formations, the distribution of statements constituting them. An indication of some of them might point to where future studies in South African literature could look for the differences and similarities between texts that can narrate the story of this country. As literary historians the principle statement would obviously always be the literary, because, to refer with acquiescence to Phyllis Lewsen's view (repeated by Chapman): the effect of oppression come more forcibly from creative writing than from commentaries and social analysts.

The following discourses become apparent, where 'discourse' is not 'theme', because both content and surface of texts have to be taken into account throughout. In African literature and systems of thought the society seems to have preference over the individual. Or is that an invention? And what about modernism and posmodernism in (black) African literature? A popular discourse among modern cultural studies researchers is the travel text; and within it statements on Africa the wild world, and the wild man. Missionary discourse. African nationalism, which includes the genealogy of identity, Black Consciousness, belonging (to Africa or Europe). The ideal of the nation-state, one-nationess, a national literature. As a construct by politicians and literary theorists? The 'real life story' of millions in Africa: Jim comes to Joburg. The discourse on land and the *plaasroman*. Re-

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energising past texts for the present generation: the philosophy of interpretation and re-interpretation. The veld, the city, the story of city life, the tradition and the modern. The short story as discursive formation: its socio-political uses, its aesthetic. Autobiography as discourse. The silent decade, the 1960s. bannings, extradictions. Yet the 'beginnings' of modernism in Afrikaans literature? Women's studies, gender. The wasteland, the apocalypse, especially in white English and white Afrikaans novels.

The doubts I have expressed about Chapman's history will not distract from its significance. It is the first, brave, contemporary attempt at documenting the impossible in one book, in one story; and therefore the most important statement in the discourse on south(ern) African Literature. It will also become a source book for researchers into this field in the future, as well as being the basis from which meaningful dialogue can advance. Apart from the possible discursive formations identified some other insights have to be noted. Such as: literature in southern Africa is mostly about urbanisation; one should attempt to give speech to silenced voices; the praise poem is southern Africa's 'most characteristic form of literary expression' (p. 55); early Afrikaans writers and the quest for a language that could find the essence of the veld (p. 122); although some black writers of the 1970s may have had very little literary training, their testimonies from experience (autobiographies) have 'shaped their voices into expressive forms' (p. 376). Some of his comments and analyses of the work of individual writers are most enlightening: Fugard, Gordimer (who could nor write outside of European fictional conventions, p. 385), Elsa Joubert's *Poppie* (where he can read in translation), and André Brink as an exploiter of the political situation.

Finally, conclusions such as these bring the serious study of literature to the forefront:

> To keep the text of the book in debate with the text of the world is to remind us of literature's potential as a rhetorical enterprise beyond the art genres of the poem, play and novel (p. 412)

And on the role of the critic:

> not as stock-taker, but as contributor to the making of literary meaning and purpose in the movement of society (p. 331).

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Multilingual Education in South Africa

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This book, written for the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa and the National Language Project, sets out to persuade its readers that multilingual education works. For most South Africans, multilingualism is accepted at home, at the work place and in the streets, and we accept that the demoscopic distribution in school classes will be multicultural and multilingual. To imagine truly multilingual teaching procedures may, however, be a novel concept and, for many teachers, a daunting challenge. As is summarised on the cover of the book, educators have, in recent years, increasingly

> sought new ways in which to approach the language question in the classroom. On a policy level, the debate has broken new ground with the enshrining of *multilingualism* in the constitution, although details have yet to be spelled out.

The publication offers not only theoretical orientation, but, for the practitioner in the school, interesting models, practical guidance and helpful suggestions. It sets out to

> give content to the debate about multilingual education by providing both a conceptual framework and examples of successful practice in bi/multilingual classrooms. Based on the firm belief in the maintenance and development of first-language medium of instruction throughout schooling, and on the need to learn at least a second language, the book argues strongly in favour of a policy of additive bi/multilingualism for formal schooling (text on the cover of the publication).

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As far as the contents are concerned, the editors establish a fine balance by dividing the contributions into four different sections, each section focusing on multilingualism from a different angle. The first section, written primarily for teachers, examines the classroom practice, quoting interesting case studies. The second section has a more theoretical orientation and addresses the major issues of multilinguism on a broader and deeper level. The third one looks towards the future and explores a number of proposals and models, whereas the final section examines specific implications of implementation of multilingual policies, for instance from a publisher's point of view.

The use of mother-tongue instruction is central to the proposed policy of additive bi/multilingualism for formal schooling. This may remind one of models used in Bantu Education during the apartheid era. It is important, however, to distinguish between the subtractive bilingualism of the past and the additive bilingualism advocated in this book. Referring to UNESCO's report on 'The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education' (1953), in which the international support for the use of mother-tongue in education was reconfirmed, Heugh points out that

> it was opportune for the National Party government that the publication of the UNESCO report coincided with the passing of the Bantu Education Act by parliament in 1953 (p 42).

Clearly, the effect of the mother-tongue policy in Bantu Education was very different from that intended by UNESCO's recommendation. The main reasons are shown to have been the cognitively impoverished curricula that were used and the inflexible requirements of a sudden transition to an English medium of instruction for content subjects, in std. 6 at first, and later in std. 5 and, since 1979, in std. 3. In contrast to the dismal failure of the model of bilingualism as Bantu Education understood it, the additive bilingualism which this book proposes envisages a well-developed proficiency in (at least) two languages and positive cognitive outcomes. Thus it is important that 'our questions around bilingualism must be as complex, nuanced and comprehensive as possible', as De Klerk points out, in order to

> implement, research and evaluate multilingual education scenarios that would empower children in scholastic performance as well as in social and emotional functioning (p. 61)

Generally speaking, the publication manages to create, through the ideas and models proposed, a sense of anticipation and excitement about opportunities presenting themselves in our new society. The notion that

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'multilingualism should be seen not as a headache, but as an asset' (p. 1) sets a constructive tone which is maintained throughout the book. As a positive assertion of what is good in our 'rainbow nation' and as a strong message of hope and encouragement, the authors' idealistic approach to the complex realities of our schools is commendable, and the appearance of the publication is timely indeed, given the prevalent climate of worry and despair about the future of education in South Africa, amongst educational planners, teachers, parents and school children alike .

The editorial quality of the publication is superb. It is a relief, for instance, to find an explanatory list of all the acronyms used. A useful preview of each of the four main sections, a short note about the profession and fields of interest of every contributor, a glossary of terms, and a complete subject index are further examples of the careful attention to detail which makes the publication easily assessable and truly user-friendly.

As far as the theoretical basis underlying some of the proposals is concerned, there is, however, an intrinsic fallacy that needs to be addressed. While I agree with the notion proposed that fixed norms of standardised language rules and paradigms are often overemphasised in (language) teaching, and that their status should be reviewed continuously, I disagree with the assumption that they should simply be played down in order to get rid of the problems they are causing, as Agnihotri is suggesting in his (otherwise thoroughly readable) contribution: 'Multilingualism as a classroom resource'. In the new, sociologically-sensitive, multilingual language classroom he proposes,

> accuracy and/or fluency in the target language or acquisition of specific skills to negotiate social (mainly business) encounters ceases to be the goal of language teaching (p. 6).

It is difficult to understand how simply discarding old teaching goals without replacing them with substantial, viable alternatives could lead to real empowerment of previously disempowered people. His reflections on alternatives are almost exclusively on a moral and philosophical level, e.g. when he spells out the importance of tolerance and respect for each others' differences in culture and language or appeals for community involvement on decision making levels. These reflections are valid, but the author is rather vague about the way in which syllabi should be transformed and liberating norms established or what they should entail. As far as language teaching is concerned, the notion proposed that multilingual language awareness classes should replace 'traditional' language lessons remains unclear. On what levels should this happen? Should L1-tuition also be replaced by this model? How does that make sense in the light of the importance of

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> maintaining and developing the first language in additive bilingual programmes, if cognitive development and the acquisition of a second language are to be facilitated,

as De Klerk and most other contributors emphasise so rightly? (p. 36). It should be interesting to hear what parents would say if their children were, for argument's sake, not learning a form of 'standard' English in their English L1-classes (or, for that matter, at L2 or L3 levels), but some other form of the language, agreed on by the (rather vaguely defined) consensus-seeking procedure advocated:

> given a set of sample multilingual materials, children, parents and teachers will collaborate in producing their own learning materials Local languages, history, geography and culture will not appear on the margins of this enterprise, but will actually form the very essence of the educational process (p 6)

I, for one, would object strongly, because it would obviously not be enough if the English (or whatever other subject) learnt in school were useful and valid to my children in the particular environment of the local community only. Clearly, one would expect the knowledge and abilities acquired at school to be as functional and acceptable in other parts of the world, precisely because they should enable the learners to participate as unique and dignified citizens, in local as well as international discourses of all kinds. Our schools have a responsibility to produce such citizens, empowered and emancipated to be who they are and who they want to be, rather than to be marginalised and crippled by a new set of superimposed and growth-impeding (regional) parameters.

In conclusion it has to be noted, therefore, that the crucial question of standards and norms has, to some extend, been sidelined[4]. This is unfortunate indeed, because it raises suspicions about the validity of many of the practical proposals and guidelines which the book has to offer. Unless there can be proof that the alternatives can really empower children and improve their chances of survival in the tough world 'out there', there will be little incentive for teachers or administrators to consider implementing the proposals on a more substantial level than simply to create a feeling of benevolence and to improve the general atmosphere in school classes. According to some of the other contributions, notably the accounts of actual

[4] This ommission takes place by situating norms and standards either on a purely historical level, (by suggesting that the colonisers were only following a hidden agenda in setting norms and standards in an attempt to prove the 'superiority' of their language and culture) or on the level of an irritating detail easily eradicated (by suggesting that we could produce a new generation of happy, self-confident pupils simply by getting rid of the standards and the norms forced upon us in the past)

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projects that have been successful, the models proposed do indeed warrant more serious consideration. Therefore I hope that this publication may encourage many readers, in all fields of education, to give the notions advocated a fair chance, to try out and to experiment with some of the ideas and as such to contribute to the on-going search for creative and humane but also functional and practical models for meaningful transformation in our educational institutions.

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Breaking Barriers - and Methodological Rules

Breaking Barriers. Stereotypes and the Changing Values in Afrikaans Writing 1875-1990
by C.N. van der Merwe
Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994, 137 pp.
ISBN 90-5183-590-6

Reviewed by Philip John
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University of the Transkei

A book such as C.N. van der Merwe's *Breaking Barriers. Stereotypes and the Changing of Values in Afrikaans Writing 1875 - 1990* brings with it a dilemma which periodically surfaces with regard to minority discourses such as Afrikaans literature. One is grateful when anything substantial is published in English on Afrikaans literature, seeing the dearth of such criticism. The problem comes with striking a balance between the two audiences which might benefit from such an undertaking, i.e. 'outsiders' with various degrees of familiarity with Afrikaans literature and the 'in-house' participants, sensitive to all the finer and variously obscure nuances of the discourse. Since the book attempts to address these two audiences, concentrating on one at the expense of the other in a review such as this one would be an injustice to the impulse behind Van der Merwe's study.

Van der Merwe explicitly states that he wrote the study in English to communicate with scholars in other South African literatures, aiming '... to start breaking down the barriers which have existed between students of the

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different literatures of South Africa' (p. 13). To this end he focuses on three 'categories' of stereotypes in Afrikaans prose and drama—ethnic, gender, religious—as an alternative approach to what he sees as the 'formalist' bias of Afrikaans literary historiography (p. 10). His study of the changes ethnic, gender and religious stereotypes undergo in the course of the development of Afrikaans literature is thus also an attempt to provide an alternative perspective on Afrikaans literature, which he characterises as a 'story':

> The story of Afrikaans literature is one of changing values. The combination of religion, patriarchy and nationalism, so boldly proclaimed in the earliest Afrikaans writings, was tested, nuanced and adapted throughout the years; and ultimately discarded (p. 8).

With regard to ethnic stereotyping Van der Merwe discusses the image of English, Jewish, black and Afrikaans people in Afrikaans literature. He argues '... that views on racial differences gradually change in Afrikaans literature, the prejudices disappear, as a common humanity is discovered' (p. 14). In a similar manner, the depiction of women in Afrikaans literature moves across a number of 'stages' from the veneration of an idealised 'volksmoeder' (p. 50), through more nuanced depictions such as that of Fransina in *Bart Nel* (p. 58), Ana-Paula in *To Die at Sunset* (p. 72), Poppie in *Poppie Nongena* (p. 73), and others, to the 'inversion' of stereotypes in André P. Brink's work and culminating in a rejection of patriarchy by female authors such as Ingrid Jonker, Wilma Stockenström, Jeanne Goosen and Rachelle Greeff. Van der Merwe includes a discussion of the debunking of traditional sexual roles in Afrikaans gay literature such as in certain texts of Jeanne Goosen, Hennie Aucamp, Marlise Joubert and Koos Prinsloo. This part of Van der Merwe's study clearly forms part of an established literary approach, namely 'Imagology' which focuses on images of peoples and groups in literature.

With regard to the 'religious' stereotypes which Van der Merwe discusses under the heading of 'villains and heroes' in Chapter 4, the situation is however less clear. The problem here might be that 'religious' stereotypes, unlike ethnic and gender stereotypes, are relatively rare. It is easy to think of the stereotypical Jew, Afrikaner, woman, and so forth, but the image of the stereotypical Christian, Calvinist, Roman Catholic, comes to mind less easily. What Van der Merwe, in fact, focuses on is not such figures but rather how certain aspects of Christian doctrine are associated with characters in the form of villains and heroes. The study thus edges closer to an ideological analysis, which is also possibly why this part of the study is more stimulating than the rest. This is especially true of the discussion of a 'tension between nationalism and Christian humanism' in

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Afrikaans literature (p. 84f) which he speculates could be linked to '... a crisis in the Afrikaner psyche, leading to political reforms in the eighties and especially the early nineties' (p. 85). Here, I think, he touches on an aspect of Afrikaans literature which promises rewarding study.

On the whole, the image of an Afrikaans literature moving from the adherence to and propagation of traditional views and values to a more 'enlightened' position, would accord with the general view that a significant number of Afrikaans literary scholars have of the literature. For scholars from other literatures the study will thus provide some insight into the perspective of Afrikaans scholars—and in addition convey valuable information about a large number of texts, as well as about authors and groups of texts, in addition to information about links between Afrikaner culture and literature. The real value of the study therefore probably lies on a 'pedagogical' level, that is, on a level where it can impinge on the image 'outsiders' have of Afrikaans literature. This approach can play an important role in breaking down any prejudices which might exist by adumbrating the variety and heterogeneity of Afrikaans literary texts. In this respect the study admirably serves the end Van der Merwe envisaged for it.

As a 'serious' literary study, that is, seen from the perspective of Afrikaans scholarship and literary scholarship in general, the study has to be approached much more circumspectly. Good intentions and an abundance of information doesn't guarantee conceptual coherency. In the case of Van der Merwe's study, the good intentions behind the study seems to be undermined by hubris of a special kind. Van der Merwe was seemingly not satisfied to limit his study to the analysis of stereotypes. Instead, he attempted to position his analysis within a much more ambitiously constructed frame, that of 'ideology'.

The basic point of departure on which the study is based is that there is a link between stereotypes and ideology and that the changes which take place in these two spheres are related:

> Stereotyping seems to be very common in a time of conflict, uncertainty and transition. Literature then forms part of a struggle, and the stereotypes must support an ideology trying to gain the upper hand. When the conflict is over and stability sets in, the world can be examined from different angles with disinterested curiosity. In Afrikaans literature stereotypes initially support an ideology of Afrikaner nationalism and ultimately supports the breaking down of this ideology; between the beginning and the end we find a time of relative stability (p 44).

Although this theoretical frame seems to be elegantly—even disarmingly—simple, it plays havoc with Van der Merwe's study. The main culprit seems to be the term 'ideology' which brings in its train a number of other,

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extremely recalcitrant terms such as 'nationalism', 'calvinism', 'identity', as well as issues such as the relation between the social and the textual. The issues which the use of these terms raise cannot be addressed in a study with the scope of Van der Merwe's. The result is that the complexity accompanying these terms—and their referents—disappear from view. The resulting simplification might be elegant and make for accessible reading—or a gripping 'story'—but it obscures just too much.

One example which might be mentioned is the extended debate which occurred with reference to the 'civil religion' of the Afrikaner in which the representation of the Afrikaner as—amongst other things—a 'chosen people' was criticised (see Du Toit 1983, 1984, 1985[5]) . Van der Merwe's discussion of the role played by Calvinism in Afrikaans culture (p. 81), because it takes no note of the debate, reverses time and takes us back to where we were before the debate, resurrecting precisely those views which were convincingly criticised.

The inclusion of the term 'ideology' in the study—and the fact that the problematic(s), developments and current state of the question which accompanies it is not engaged with—creates other problems of which the study appears to have little awareness or method to deal with. Some of the texts which Van der Merwe includes and discusses such as *Di koningin fan Skeba* by S.J. du Toit (p. 83f) and *Die laaste aand* by C.L. Leipoldt (p. 25) actually disproves his hypothesis of a 'cyclic' development of Afrikaans literature because these texts are not 'synchronised' with the rest of Afrikaans literature as represented by Van der Merwe. To circumvent the problem which these texts represent, Van der Merwe characterises the one as being 'ahead of its time' (p. 25) and the other as the product of a 'progressive mentality' (p. 84). The curt explanations which Van der Merwe advances with regard to these anomalous examples are not satisfactory and clearly point to the need for a more nuanced conception of the development of stereotypes and their interrelation with concepts such as 'ideology', 'society', 'identity', 'nationalism', 'calvinism', and others not included in Van der Merwe's view, such as 'capitalism'.

If the inclusion of texts in an imagological frame (as Van der Merwe's study purports to be) which should properly only have been included in an 'ideological frame' (such as the two texts mentioned above) leads to a

[5] See Du Toit's articles: 'No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology' which appeared in *African History Today* 88,4.920-952; 'Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm: Prof. F.A. van Jaarsveld and the Historical Evidence for the Afrikaner's Ideas on his Calling and Mission' in *South African Historical Journal* 16:49-80; 'Puritans in Africa? Afrikaner "Calvinism" and Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism in Late Nineteenth-Century South Africa' published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27:209-240

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representation of the development of stereotypes which can only be described as 'muddled', an even more fundamental flaw in the study can be traced to a related problem, namely the procedure by which texts were selected for the study.

Apart from a number of vague statements about the differential value of texts for formalist approaches and sociological approaches such as imagology (pp. 12,119), Van der Merwe doesn't specify which criteria were used for the selection of the texts discussed. He bluntly states that only 'key texts in the development of stereotyping' (p. 11) were selected for analysis. How did he arrive at his list of 'key texts'? What makes a certain text a key text'? What are the criteria according to which a 'key text' can be identified? These are important questions which cannot be glossed over in the manner which this study does.

As the study stands, it would seem that the criteria for selection were relatively random and arbitrary—where Van der Merwe wished to make a particular point, for example that Afrikaans literature had progressive tendencies from its incipience, an ideological criterium sufficed, and where a more general statement about a general tendency had to be made, an imagological or sociological criterium was operationalised.

The vacillation between a purely imagological description and an ideological analysis could arguably have been prevented had Van der Merwe followed a more conventional approach in the construction of the theoretical frame he uses. If he had started with a critical engagement with the basic approach, namely imagology, his ambition to make general statements might have been tempered. Such an engagement might also have contributed to sharpening the focus of the study.

As we have seen above, Van der Merwe's basic thrust is to correlate changes in literary representation with social change, be it as reflection or causation of this change, showing Afrikaans literature to be implicated in processes both of a nationalist struggle and humanistic enlightenment. The linking of textual forms and social reality has always been a highly controversial activity and imagology hasn't escaped criticism in this regard.

One of the most trenchant problematisations of imagology is that of Paul Voestermans (1991:221[6]) who sees in imagology's 'preoccupation with epistemology and ideology' a central conceit, namely that finished products (texts) can be meaningfully related to social reality. Voestermans argues that the 'preoccupation with literacy' which accompanies this conceit disqualifies imagological studies from being taken too seriously. Instead, it

[6] See his 'Alterity/Identity: A Deficient Image of Culture' which appeared in *Alterity, Identity, Image. Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship* edited by Corbey, Raymond & Joep Leerssen (1991) published by Rodopi, Amsterdam

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needs to be supplemented with a perspective which makes room for other factors:

> My point is that reflection on 'ourselves' whenever we presume to confront ourselves with 'others' is not just matter solely of texts and critical analyses of discourse. Self-reflection is not solely an epistemological affair, and I do not believe that the fabric from which our dealings with 'other' people are made will be properly elucidated that way (Voestermans 1991:222)

A critical engagement with the problematic as Voestermans sets it out could have benefited Van der Merwe's study, and would have tempered the tendency to generalisation in the study, which is one of the functions critical theoretical engagement is supposed to fulfil.

But maybe one should also not be too critical of Van der Merwe, seeing his study in context. Afrikaans literary scholarship is still struggling to free itself from the grip of formalism, a painful process for most (aesthetically inclined) literary scholars. Just at this level a lot of opposition still exists with regard to sociologically orientated study, and if Van der Merwe's study helps to break this barrier, it would have served its purpose, despite its shortcomings.

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Introducing Literature Criticism and Theory

An Introduction to Literature Criticism and Theory: Key Critical Concepts
by Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle
London, Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995, 238 pp
ISBN: 0-13-355215-2

Reviewed by Damian Garside
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This text has been prescribed for the first time for the English I students at the University of Durban-Westville as their text for the literary theory part of their course. It is a very different text from the usual introductions to literary

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theory that seem to have been written with undergraduate students in mind, such as Raman Selden's *A Reader's Guide to Literary Theory* (in its various editions), and Roger Webster's *Studying Literary Theory*. The book represents a near quantum leap advance in innovative thinking regarding the kind of literary theory that should be taught at universities (particularly to undergraduate students) and a more purely academic and theoretical level, and the nature of the relationship between literature and literary analysis and theory.

Bennett and Royle's text is far more user friendly than the kind of introductions to literary theory (or theory 'primers') that are currently on offer. Gone is the old chronological arrangement that gives an account of the historical development of the different theories, and which, whilst providing students with a map of the terrain, reveals a tendency to put theories into different pigeonholes, which to some extent falsifies the degree to which the various theoretical positions are the products of all kinds of interesting dialogues and cross-fertilisations. I would argue that rigid classifications here are often counter-productive when it comes to teaching literary theory to students whose conceptual development within the field is at issue, and whose initial question upon meeting literary theory for the first time is, invariably, 'How does it assist me in the analysis of the prescribed texts?'.

This is exactly the kind of question that Bennett and Royle's text answers, though their 'answer' is a lot more open-ended than the askers of such questions would seem to expect. The authors' refusal to deal with theories in a historical, compartmentalising manner is compatible with their clear intention not to separate theory and literature, to make the study of the two things so interconnected, as to be all part of one study. Theory is, obviously an ongoing process, and the authors have successfully captured both a sense of the openness of the discipline (that there will always be change, developments and even the new Copernican revolutions), as well as a sense in which the advances in theories have changed the perspectives that we have on the relationship between text and reader and text and world, and the way in which we talk about and conduct our practice within the discipline.

Whilst it is abundantly clear that the text has absorbed the most important developments in deconstruction, semiotics, gender criticism and cultural studies, what is most surprising and delightful about this text is the innovative and imaginative way in which such theories have been used to demystify the whole area of the literary, whilst at the same time addressing the deeper and more 'religious' issues regarding literature, such as its social and political role, and its relationship to such powerful ethico-religious categories such as 'evil' and the 'sacred'.

What Bennett and Royle have provided here is a map for wandering and self-exploration across the only recently recharted map of the 'fields' (forgive the pun) of literary theory and literary studies (the latter subsuming

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the former). Indeed, as they point out in their introduction, the book need not be read in a linear fashion at all: the student, they suggest, should feel free to read the chapters in whatever order she or he finds most interesting or profitable. The book is also singularly free from any of the authoritarian and mechanistic tendencies that bedevil some theories and critical positions; here their most radical insight regarding the relationship between text, reader and meaning is that readers are 'made' by texts, as much as texts (in the now traditional post-structuralist wisdom) texts are 'made' by readers.

Here Bennett and Royle's vision of the reader has very important implications for the teaching of literature to university students. Their idea that readers become textually engaged at a very deep level of subjective identification, and are often acted upon and changed as a result of this, has important implications for how the teaching of literature is conceptualised, and raises important issues regarding the presence and role of literary theory, the choice of prescribed texts, and the way in which these texts are taught. The inescapable conclusion to be drawn from their view of how important the reader/text interaction can be, is surely that the student should become the primary focus in all of these areas I have just mentioned, and that student input should be elicited at the level of primary planning.

Though the examples that are cited in the text are wide-ranging, including both high literature and popular literary and other cultural forms, they presume a cultural capital comparative with that of the British undergraduate to whom (and to whose teachers) the text is primarily addressed. Although the text does not have a Eurocentric bias at the level of theory or of cultural politics, because of its primary audience many of these examples presuppose a basic knowledge of literature and of contemporary cultural world, that South African students do not possess. This is, unquestionably the greatest drawback of this otherwise quite excellent text. The British undergraduate who has probably heard of Ozymandias, and who probably saw the film *Falling Down* and knows of the satirical *Absolutely Fabulous* television programme (three of the cultural examples the authors use) does not have many South African counterparts. The only reference to African or South African material is to Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savanah*: three separate references that include a brief comment on the way in which the text explores the social and political aspects of 'story', and two comments on the tragic dimension to Achebe's narrative.

Profoundly influenced by Bakhtinian and psychoanalytical thinking, the authors have provided very different angles on some of the key ideas in literary theory, which serve to connect hitherto seemingly quite disparate critical ideas and methods of analysis. The unusual choices for the thematic focuses of some of the chapters in the book clearly reveals the authors' receptivity to new thinking and approaches. They do not seem to be afraid to

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present the more radical implications of the new thinking—such as the impact on the literary institution and its concern with serious ideas and serious literature, especially of a canonical kind, of a thoroughly relativising and irreverent post-Bakhtinian politics of laughter.

Ultimately, as their marvellous little chapter on the postmodern makes clear, the authors present a view of literature that is thoroughly postmodern: that eschews certainties and master narratives, emphasises fluidity and offers a critique of the institution as too rigidly bound to categories that literature, the object of its whole pedagogic and discursive activity, would seem to confute and subvert. It could well be argued that it is this kind of postmodern critique, that asks basic questions and puts untested assumptions and preconceptions on the line that is particularly relevant to the South African situation with the popularity of theoretical (and political) models that are beset by a conceptual and categorial rigidity.

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Letters to the Editor

Albert S. Gérard

In his contribution to *Rethinking South African Literary History*, Professor Malvern van Wyk Smith, speaking of what he describes as one of CENSAL's 'grandiose plans for a unified cross-cultural and multilingual historiography of southern African literature', observes:

> One of its few products or possibly inspirations (the sequence is unclear) was a history of 'South African Literature to World War II', by A.J Coetzee, Tim Couzens and Stephen Gray, included in Albert S. Gérard's (1986) *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp 73f)

I may perhaps help solve this very minor conundrum in what could somewhat awkwardly be called the history of South African literary historiography.

The research for the Xhosa, Sotho and Zulu chapters of my *Four African Literatures* (1971) was effected in the sixties. Already in 1969, the new York publisher Thomas Crowell had invited me to produce a 'brief' historical account of the continent's literature. I enthusiastically set to work on a manuscripts which, by 1973, had reached more than 700 typed pages! It included a large section on South Africa, which is, I believe, the very first 'conspectual history' (Van Wyk Smith's phrase) of South African literature, including African-Language writing. With the economic crisis of the mid-seventies looming, Crowell found this unwieldy manuscript unmanageable: it is now resting quietly in my archives at the university of Bayreuth.

In April 1974, I had the opportunity to address the Liège conference of the European branch of the ACLALS (Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies) with a paper titled 'Towards a History of South African Literature'[7], in which I brought forward the idea of an integrated, multiracial, plurilingual approach to the country's 'national' literary history. I further developed my views at a conference on 'Literature in the Conditions of Southern Africa' that was held at the University of York

[7] The article is printed in Hena Maes-Jelinek (ed) 1975 *Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World* and published by Didier in Brussels (pp. 79-88) An expanded version appears in my *Contexts of African Literature* which was published by Rodopi in Amsterdam/Atlanta (pp. 105-119).

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the following year. The notion seemed egregiously commonsensical to me but it surprised South African participants, among whom I distinctly recall André de Villiers congratulating me because, he said, 'you are so right'.

Being an inveterate bookworm I had little personal contact with South African scholars. It was perhaps as a consequence of reading the Liège paper that C.F. Swanepoel came to visit me some time in the late seventies. This was the beginning of a long-lasting friendship.

At a conference organised by FILLM (Fédération des Langues et Littératures Modernes) in Sydney in August 1975, I met Henry Remak, who was presiding over the destiny of the impressive series, 'History of Literature in European Languages', published under the auspices of the ICLA (International Comparative Literature Association). He agreed to my proposal to include a volume or two about Sub-Saharan Africa. There were two conditions: only European languages were to be considered and the whole was to be written by an international team of scholars. This was henceforth known as the HALEL project, to which Van Wyk Smith is referring[8]. As due respect for chronology is the historian's basic duty, one of the first sections of the work was to deal with South Africa, and I recall that the Co-ordinating Committee that supervises the series had to dismiss irrelevant ideological objections raised by the representative of one of the organisations which financed the project!

I was fortunate in enlisting the co-operation of three keen, at the time junior, South African scholars: Stephen Gray (whom I first met personally at an African Literature Association conference in Wisconsin in 1977) for literature in English by white writers, Ampie Coetzee for Afrikaans literature and Tim Couzens for 'non-white' writing in English[9].

The two massive volumes reached print in 1986. As to my research on vernacular writing in the RSA, its results had been incorporated *African Language Literatures: An Introduction to the Literary History of Sub-Saharan Africa*, which had been issued in Washington and London in 1981.

Clearly, the integrated historical account of Afrikaans and English literatures in *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 173-213) is not a 'product' of what Malvern van Wyk Smith rather contemptuously describes as the 'project' of 'the ill-fated CENSAL, a

[8] I have told this story in French in 'Cartographie de l'Afrique littéraire. Le Projet HALEL' which appeared in *Neohelicon* 10,1 9-20 and published in 1983 (Reprinted in my *Afrique plurielle. Etudes de littérature comparée*; published by Rodopi at Amsterdam/Atlanta (pp. 161-176.)

[9] Stephen Gray described their close, inordinately fruitful collaboration in 'The Praxis of Comparative Theory: On Writing the History of Southern African Literature' which appeared in *SAVAL Conference Papers* VI:67-81 and published in 1986.

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tentacle of the HSRC octopus'. Whether it was one of its possible 'inspirations' is not for me to say. As far as I remember, I did not meet Charles Malan until the 11th ICLA conference in Paris, in August 1985

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*Alter*nation

Guidelines for Contributors

Manuscripts must be submitted in English (UK). If quotations from other languages appear in the manuscript, place the original in a footnote and a dynamic-equivalent translation in the body of the text.

Contributors must submit *one computer-generated and three double-spaced printed copies* of the manuscript. The computer-generated copy may be on double density floppy or stiffie in Word Perfect 5-6, Word for Windows 6 or ASCII. If accepted for publication, the disk or stiffie will be returned together with 10 original off-print copies of the article.

Manuscripts should range between 5000-8000 and bookreviews between 500-1000 words. However, longer articles may be considered for publication.

Attach a cover page to one manuscript containing the following information: Author's full name, address, e-mail address, position, department, university/ institution, telephone/fax numbers as well as a list of previous publications.

Maps, *diagrams* and *posters* must be presented in print-ready form. Clear black and white photos (postcard size) may also be submitted.

Use footnotes sparingly. In order to enhance the value of the interaction between notes and text, we use footnotes and not endnotes.

Authors may use their own numbering systems in the manuscript.

Except for bibliographical references, abbreviations must include fullstops. The abbreviations (e.a.) = 'emphasis added'; (e.i.o.) = 'emphasis in original'; (i.a.) or [.....] = 'insertion added' may be used.

The full bibliographical details of sources are provided only once at the end of the manuscript under References. References in the body of the manuscript should follow the following convention: Dlodlo (1994:14) argues .... or at the end of a reference/quotation: ..... (Dlodlo 1994:14).

The full name or initials of authors as it appears in the source must be used in the References section.

Review articles and book reviews must include a title as well as the following information concerning the book reviewed: title, author, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, number of pages and the ISBN number.

The format for the references section is as follows:

Head, Bessie 1974. *A Question of Power*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Mhlophe, Gcina 1990. Nokulunga's Wedding. In Van Niekerk, Annemarié (ed): *Raising the Blinds. A Century of South African Women's Stories*. Parklands: Ad Donker.

Mngadi, Sikhumbuzo 1994. 'Popular Memory' and Social Change in South African Historical Drama of the Seventies in English: The Case of Credo Mutwa's *Unosimela*. *Alter*nation 1,1:37-41.

Fanon, Frantz 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Markmann, Charles Lam (trans). London: Pluto Press.

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Call for Papers

Contributions towards the Second CSSALL Interdisciplinary Conference on **Body, Identity, Sub-Cultures and Repression in Texts from Africa** are invited.

Venue: University of Durban-Westville Date: September 1997

Scholars from various departments, especially history, anthropology, archaeology and the various African Languages are invited to participate.

Abstracts must reach the organisers by 31 March 1997 and can be forwarded to:
CSSALL Private Bag X54001, University of Durban-Westville, DURBAN 4000
(e-mail: cssall@pixie.udw.ac za)

Judith Coullie and Johan Jacobs will be editing a volume of critical essays on the work of **Breyten Breytenbach**. Contributions may focus on the poetry, fiction, autobiographical writings or paintings, or on the intersections of these

Although the language of publication will be English, submissions in Afrikaans are welcome.

Essays should be 20-25 pages long (8 000 - 10 000 words).

Abstracts should be submitted by **15 June 1997**, completed essays by **31 October 1997**

Submissions must be sent through to:

Judith Coullie (e-mail: assagay@iafrica com)
Department of English
University of Durban-Westville
Private Bag X54001
DURBAN 4000

Johan Jacobs (jacobs@mtb und ac.za)
Department of English
University of Natal
DURBAN 4041

Johan van Wyk and Lindelwa Mahonga will be editing a volume on **marginal literatures, marginal figures and marginal genres** in South African Literature.

Abstracts must be sent **as soon as possible**

Submissions must reach the editors by **31 July 1997**.

Submissions must be sent through to.

Johan van Wyk (e-mail: cssall@pixie.udw.ac za
CSSALL
Private Bag X54001
University of Durban-Westville
DURBAN 4000

Lindelwa Mahonga
Dept. of African Languages
P O Box 392
Unisa
PRETORIA

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The editors invite contributions to a special edition of *Alternation* focusing interdisciplinarily on **Discursive Formations and South African Literature and Languages**.

Amongst others, essays may focus on issues like land, race, urbanisation, Adamastor, Robben Island, prison literature, exile literature, miscegenation, war, women, Black women, working-class/labour, Bushmen, politics as literature, resistance discourses, Black Consciousness, slavery, law and literature, the history of ideas/philosophies and Literature/language, Marxism, naturalism, missionary discourse, travel writing, religion and literature, modernism, liberalism, canonisation, periodisation, aesthetics, history and literature, anthropology and literature, psychology and literature, sociology and literature, orality, literature for school and university prescription, publishers/printing presses, etc.

We request that essays contain as much historical facts/references to documentary evidence as possible. Focusing on institutions as well as individual and collective responses/interventions to institutionalised social formations, such facts may range from historical events, interactions, affiliations/alliances (locally and internationally), decisions, constraints, concepts propagated, significant persons (and their qualities/qualifications), hierarchies, successors, objects of interest/research, manifestos, traditions/paradigms and breaks in such formations, etc.

Scholars wishing to participate, will find this an important project to network with colleagues at other universities and are encouraged to apply for funding from the CSD. Where researchers choose the same topics/issues, the editor will put them in contact with one another to collaborate (via the internet).

Contributors to this collection of essays will also be responsible (together with other colleagues) for the entries in the discursive formation section in the Encyclopaedia of South African Literature currently in preparation

Essays should be 10-30 pages long (4 000-13 000 words)

Abstracts must reach the editors by **31 May 1997** and full texts by **31 January 1998**

Contributors wishing to participate may contact The Editor at
CSSALL, Private Bag X54001, University of Durban-Westville, DURBAN 4000, RSA
e-mail cssall@pixie udw ac za

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